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**HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH, WEAPONS, AND VIOLENCE:  
A NATIONAL SURVEY OF  
WEAPON-RELATED EXPERIENCES, BEHAVIORS, AND CONCERNS**

Final Report

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Submitted to  
The National Institute of Justice

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Executive Summary

The study described in this report was directed at estimating the extent to which a national sample of 734 male, high school juniors and seniors was involved in weapon-related activity (specifically regarding firearms and knives). Data were gathered by means of a survey instrument mailed to the students. A number of factors resulted in a sample that was not strictly random and one that possessed a partial "good boy" bias. Yet, the findings likely come closer to capturing the weapons "experience" of the average American juvenile than have most other studies to date. Prior research has focused upon incarcerated delinquents and inner-city youths or upon samples from select sites. The present study is the first to question a broader sample of youths about exposure to weapons in any serious depth. Data collected from the student respondents have been supplemented by survey data from administrators of the schools participating in the study concerning the schools' experiences with weapon-related incidents.

The survey results indicate, first, that levels of gun possession and carrying among the respondents were relatively low, at least compared to levels reported by more select samples. As we moved away from examining the issue of firearms that are more suited to hunting and sporting uses (rifles and shotguns), we found that fewer than one in ten respondents possessed a revolver, only one in twenty-five an automatic or semiautomatic handgun, and only one in fifty a sawed-off shotgun. Six percent of the respondents had carried a gun outside the home within the past twelve months, a considerably lower percentage than has been reported by more select samples. The most commonly carried guns were revolvers and automatic or semiautomatic handguns. Finally, nearly two in ten respondents had carried a knife outside the home during the past twelve months. Importantly, few respondents carried weapons frequently.

Second, we found that, while rifles and shotguns were more likely to be possessed by respondents from smaller communities, handgun possession was statistically no more likely to occur in smaller than in larger communities. Gun-carrying was more likely to occur in larger than in smaller communities; knife-carrying was unrelated to community size. Respondents from schools in rural neighborhoods were more likely than those from suburban and urban neighborhoods to possess guns though the reverse was true regarding gun- and knife-carrying.

Third, we discovered that, despite appeals to respondents to refrain from references to weapons used for sporting purposes, many recreationally oriented respondents answered affirmatively when asked about possession and carrying of weapons. This was not a reflection of a relationship between recreational weapon orientation and involvement in less legitimate weapon-related activities; no relationship was found. Recreational weapon-related activities appeared more likely to characterize respondents from more rural communities, suggesting that estimates of problematic weapon-related activities that rely on rural populations may be exaggerated.

Fourth, though carrying of guns and knives and involvement in criminal, drug, and gang activities were relatively infrequent in the present sample, links between these activities were as apparent in this as in any previous study. To the extent that respondents engaged in legally problematic behavior, their chances of engaging in weapon-related activities increased.

Fifth, the relationship between the pursuit of status enhancement through weapon possession and the actual possession of firearms was not strong overall, but it did pertain specifically to the possession of automatic or semiautomatic handguns and to the carrying of guns and knives. Importantly, however, once the effects of other variables were held constant, the status enhancement variable was related only to the carrying of knives.

Sixth, as it has in numerous other studies, the degree to which the respondent's social environment might be labeled dangerous had a direct and consistent influence on the likelihood that he would engage in weapon-related activities. This was true even of respondents who did not engage in unlawful behaviors such as crime and drug sales. We infer from these findings that much weapon possession and carrying among youth such as those in our sample is motivated by fear for personal safety.

Finally, our attempt to gain a sense of school violence through administrators' eyes produced two pictures. The first, constructed from estimates of the amount of violence and weapon-related problems in the schools, suggested a problem of fairly small proportions. Most administrators considered the possibility of physical threat to their students as relatively unlikely. The second picture was drawn from administrators' recollections of incidents involving guns, knives, and other weapons on their campuses during the past three years as well as the recollection of how many of their students had been shot, on or off campus, during the same period. While no consensus exists regarding the number of such incidents necessary to constitute a "problem," importantly, six in ten administrators could recall weapon-related incidents at their schools and nearly half reported that at least one of their students had been the victim of a shooting.

Schools' responses to the problem of violence, whether ex post facto or anticipatory, took fairly patterned forms. The average school both policed itself and attempted to educate its student body about violence. A much smaller percentage invited police onto or around school grounds to confront the problem of weapons and violence. Of significance, neither the amount of violence nor the institutional responses to it were related to whether or not the community in which the school was located was large or small.

The findings indicate the need for policy aimed at reducing the likelihood that youths such as those sampled in the present study will become involved in weapon possession and carrying -- this, rather than the more common call for policy to confront a problem already well developed. What we have found are few schools and few students with no experience with weapons and violence though few also with considerable such experience. Even considering those respondents who subscribed to a recreation-based use of weapons, the majority of students whom we surveyed did not possess weapons, and the vast majority did not carry them outside the home. Overall, the great majority of administrators did not consider their schools unsafe.

By the same token, one in five of our respondents feared violence in their neighborhoods, one in six had friends who routinely carried guns, nearly one in ten had been threatened with a gun during the past twelve

months, and about one in twenty considered it at least somewhat possible that he would be shot by the time he reached twenty-five years of age. Administrators in more than half of our sampled schools recalled recent weapon-related incidents on their campuses, and nearly half recalled the shooting of at least one student. Eight in ten schools had revised their disciplinary codes and six of ten their dress codes to counter violence. One in four schools had police patrols on school grounds.

In short, weapon-related violence is not unknown to most schools and students like those we sampled. Further, to the extent that it is known, it is influenced by the same variables that have influenced it in more troubled environments: crime, drug sales, gangs, and the perceived need for protection in a hostile world. While communities must do what they can to remove guns from the hands of juveniles, they likely will not accomplish this goal until they have removed the structural and cultural conditions that now promote gun-related activity in the youth population. If we are correct in this assessment, and correct as well that most of our current research sites have not yet "crossed the line" into truly unsafe situations, then the key to warding off problems lies in discouraging the conditions that have produced them in other settings, that is, in discouraging the development of a youth culture that defines gun-possession as necessary to one's survival. Once such a culture exists, criminal justice attempts to disrupt gun sales and acquisition markets may succeed partially, but will not rid communities of the problem because demand for weapons will remain. The issue for communities, then, is how to dissuade youths from resolving disputes through violent means and thereby convincing them that weapons are not necessary to the conduct of everyday living.



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Introduction

The study described in this report was directed at estimating the extent to which a national sample of high school males was involved in weapon-related activity (specifically regarding firearms and knives). A fuller statement of the research problem follows a review of the literature concerning youth violence and weaponry as inferred from studies of criminal, drug, and gang activity and more directly concerning juveniles and weapon possession, carrying, and victimization.

Violence In America's Youth Population

Violence committed by and against juveniles has come increasingly to define the public's image of its crime problem and the larger political debate over anti-crime policy. Young offenders now are frequently described, often accurately, as hard-core violent felons and their victims as rival gang members and drug traffickers or as innocent bystanders in urban war zones. According to the U.S. Senate's Committee on the Judiciary (1991:1), "no city, no town, no neighborhood has been spared this bloody plague." The Committee's majority report, *Murder Toll: Initial Projections*, painted the first years of the 1990s as precursors to a decade of bloodshed and argued that the causes of the problem are clear: "...[W]e need look no further than the 'three Ds:' drugs, and the mayhem caused by hard-core drug addicts and dealers; deadly weapons, particularly the easily available military-style assault weapons; and demographics, fueling a growth in violent teenaged gangs" (p.1).

## Youth Street Violence

Evidence seemingly documenting the problem of youth violence is abundant. Homicide statistics for the 1990s have indicated record-breaking tolls in many U.S. cities. For persons 15 to 18 years old, murder arrest rates have more than doubled since the mid-1980s. Black males within that age group have seen their rates approximately triple (Blumstein 1995; Christoffel 1992; Fingerhut 1993; U.S. Public Health Service 1992) to the point that 48 percent of all deaths of black male teenagers are firearm-related (for white youth, the comparable figure is 18 percent) (Fingerhut, Kleinman, Godfrey, et al. 1991).

Arrests for weapons offenses have risen dramatically for youths of all ages since 1985 (Greenfeld 1994). A quarter of victims of nonfatal gunshot wounds -- usually ignored in policy discussions which more likely focus on fatal shootings (Annest, Mercy, Gibson, et al. 1995) -- are under twenty years of age; another quarter are between twenty and twenty-four years old. One in five firearm homicide victims is under twenty, and another fifth are between twenty and twenty-four (Zawitz 1996). Over 80 percent of homicide victims fifteen to nineteen years of age are killed with a firearm (Blumstein 1995; Fingerhut 1993). The United States has approximately 100 times more firearm-related homicides of males fifteen to twenty-four years of age than its nearest rival among developed countries (Fingerhut and Kleinman 1990).

In short, weapons seem increasingly to be part of the American youth's social world, and the change has carried increasingly deadly consequences. Most such consequences appear to have resulted from an upsurge of youth killing (mainly) other youth (Allen-Hagen and Sickmund 1993; Pooley 1991; *Scholastic Update* 1991; Witkin 1991). Much of the killing is concentrated in troubled

urban areas and much seems associated with drug trafficking (Blumstein 1995) and, in select cities, with gang-related conflict (Hutson, Anglin, Kyriacou et al. 1995).

### School Violence

The concern with juvenile violence on the streets is matched by a related alarm over violence, especially gun-related violence, in schools (Parker, Smith, Smith et al. 1991). Analyses of the 1989 National Crime Victimization Survey supplementary data (Bastion and Taylor 1991; see also Whitaker and Bastion 1991) indicate that, of approximately 22 million students aged twelve to nineteen nationwide, two percent had been victims of violent crime in or around their schools during the six months preceding the survey; this translates into more than 400,000 violent criminal episodes (generally a matter of simple assault) in and around schools in a single six-month period (U.S. Department of Justice 1991).

About one in five of the 1989 student survey respondents feared an attack at school; one in twenty avoided specific places in the school for fear of violence (see also Pearson and Toby 1991; Sheley, McGee, and Wright 1992). Rates of violence were higher in schools where drugs were perceived as readily available and where youth gangs were present and active. Among those at highest risk of violence were males, African Americans, and inner-city residents (Whitaker and Bastion 1991; see also Gottfredson and Gottfredson 1985).

Many now argue that schools no longer have distinct roles in the etiology of youth violence; rather schools have become the physical locations where larger community problems are manifested (Sheley, McGee, and Wright 1992). Such factors as community size, crime rate, economic stability, and the racial composition of neighborhoods appear related to school crime. Gottfredson and

Gottfredson (1985) found higher levels of victimization among those students reporting crime problems such as robbery, burglary, and gang wars in their neighborhoods. Hellman and Beaton (1986), in an examination of school crime, school characteristics, and community characteristics, found greater support for the effects of school characteristics (i.e., dropout rate, academic performance, school size) on crime among *middle* school students and more support for the influence of community characteristics (i.e., family structure, housing quality, crime rate in the neighborhood) on crime among *high* school students. Finally, research findings suggest that the presence of high-crime schools within high-crime communities intensifies the level of fear and apprehension experienced by many students (McDermott, 1983).

#### Youth Gangs, Drugs, and Violence

Many contemporary media discussions of youth violence have emphasized connections with drugs and gangs (*U.S. News and World Report* 1993). Emphasis on criminal activity traditionally has been a staple, though not the sole focus, of research on gangs (Thrasher 1936; Miller 1958; Short and Strodbeck 1965). The emphasis remains, though the criminal activity of interest is increasingly violent (Hutson, Anglin, Kyriacou, et al. 1995; Jankowski 1991). Violence by gang members seemingly has escalated in recent years, though it is unclear whether or not it always specifically addresses gang-related ends -- as opposed to the particular goals of individual gang members (Sheley, Zhang, Brody, et al. 1995). Nor is it entirely clear whether we are seeing an increase in the rate of gang members committing violence or simply an increase in the volume of violence as gang membership grows (Klein and Maxson 1989:218). Gang members themselves apparently are more seriously criminal than are non-gang-member offenders (Fagan 1990; Sheley and Wright 1995;

Tracy 1987). This may be attributable to any or a combination of several factors, including: the violence inherent in gangs' turf battles and constant tests of manhood, the attraction of more violent youth to gangs, higher levels of drug activity (particularly sales) thought to characterize certain gangs, and the more sophisticated weaponry assumed more recently to be in the hands of gang members.

Regarding weaponry, Klein and Maxson (1989: 219) suggest that, in the gangs' world of confrontational crime and violence, more firearms lead to more attacks which, in turn, prompt retaliation. Spergel (1990:190) notes additionally that such weaponry has moved gang violence from foot (i.e., close combat) to vehicle and produced smaller, more mobile attack teams. In this vein, Maxson, Gordon, and Klein (1985; see also Klein, Gordon, and Maxson 1986) report that Los Angeles' gang-related homicides are more likely than non-gang-related homicides to be committed with firearms (see also Spergel 1983; Spergel, Ross, Curry, et al. 1989). Hagedorn (1988:141-43) points to high rates of gun possession among the Milwaukee gang members he studied. Moore (1991:59-60) attributes rises in violence among Chicano gangs to the increasing presence of guns among gang members.

A presumed link between drug activity (use and sales) and violence has also received considerable media attention in analyses of crime and violence by youth in America (Hackett 1988; Treaster and Taylor 1992; *Washington Post* 1992; Wolff 1990). Students of the issue generally conclude that drug use and violence are linked, but that the direction of the association and its application to all forms of drug users and predation and across levels of addiction are unclear (Chaiken and Johnson 1988; Gentry 1995).

Fourteen percent of juveniles incarcerated for the crime of robbery in long-term, state-

operated facilities in 1987 had committed their crimes while under the influence of drugs; another 31 percent were under the combined influence of drugs and alcohol (Beck, Kline, and Greenfeld 1988). A third of convicted robbers held in jails in 1989 reported that they had committed their offenses to obtain money for drugs (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1991).

There is only limited evidence that ingestion of substances is a direct, pharmacological cause of aggression (Fagan 1990:241). An indirect association between drug abuse and violence, primarily through criminal attempts to support a habit, is more likely. Robbery is apparently not uncommon among serious users of hard drugs and especially among those whose addictions require daily or multiple daily attention (Johnson, Williams, Dei, et al. 1990:42). Among heroin users with high rates of predatory crime, intensity of offending seems to vary directly with intensity of drug use (Anglin and Speckart 1986; Nurco, Hanlon, Kinlock, et al. 1988).

A strong relationship between drug use and drug sales should not be assumed; drug users and drug distributors are not necessarily the same persons (Altschuler and Brounstein 1991). In this light, there seems considerable consensus that much drug-related violence today is linked to the distribution rather than the abuse of drugs (Chaiken and Chaiken 1990; Johnson, Williams, Dei, et al. 1990). Altschuler and Brounstein (1991), for example, find higher levels of violent crime among drug-selling youth than among drug-using youth (though the latter are higher in property crime).

It is generally thought that drug-selling organizations recruit physically violent workers and that the physically violent may themselves seek out such organizations (Chaiken and Chaiken 1982). As well, persons who sell drugs publicly (as opposed to private selling among friends) appear to commit predatory offenses at higher rates than do persons who commit such offenses but do not sell drugs (Chaiken and Chaiken 1990; Sheley 1994; Williams and Kornblum 1985). This is the case even for drug sellers without a use habit.

Drugs sales have also been linked to substantially higher rates of armed robbery by urban youth (Fagan and Weis 1990). Fagan (1992:118) reports that robberies and assaults increase to the extent that offenders move from non-sales to independent sales to group sales of drugs. As well, to the extent that drug dealers move into robbery-related criminality, their firearm-related activity increases (Sheley 1994). Such predation notwithstanding, however, most of the violence involved in drug trafficking seems systemic (Fagan and Chin 1990; Goldstein 1985). Violence is used to intimidate workers, competitors, and neighborhood residents. Intimidation by persons with little training in the use of firearms often produces injuries to innocent bystanders (Johnson, Williams, Dei, et al. 1990:35,38).

The relationships among gangs, drug involvement, and criminality are, of course, varied and complex (Fagan 1989, 1990; Spergel 1990: 193-99). In some cases, drug sales are incidental activities that provide some income for gang members; in other cases, drug dealing can be a gang's principal reason to exist; in still other cases, gangs are not involved in drugs at all (Horowitz 1990:39; see also Fagan 1990). Not uncommonly, gangs engaged in drug sales highly discourage drug use among members (Chin 1990; Cooper 1987; Mieczkowski 1986; Stumphauzer, Veloz, and Aiken 1981).

Gang violence and gang-related drug trafficking are believed to have risen in recent years in a number of large cities and in many middle-sized and smaller cities and suburban communities as well (Spergel, Chance, and Curry 1990). "[Recent] research suggests higher levels of violence, greater numbers and sophistication of weaponry, broader age ranges...and increasing involvement of gang members in drug distribution systems" (Maxson and Klein 1990: 71-72). The apparently large profits to be made in the drug trade provide both the reason for violence and the means and motive to procure the most sophisticated and lethal small-arms technology available.

### Research Specifically Regarding Youth and Weapons

A considerable amount of research effort is reflected in the above summary (see also Vol. 85 [1995] of the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* and Vol. 31 [1997] of the *Valparaiso University Law Review* for issues devoted to the problem of juveniles and guns), and much of it has informed estimates of the extent to which weapon-related activity characterizes American youth. Considerable study also has been aimed more directly toward assessing the distribution of weapon-related violence among youth nationally. We turn our attention now to extant research on the subject.

#### Recent National Samples

A number of studies conducted since 1980 and using national-level data (or data pertaining to large areas of the United States) provide empirically grounded information about the prevalence of weapons use and violence among high school (or high school-age) youth. A Bureau of Justice Statistics report (Rand 1990) based on analysis of 1979-87 National Crime Survey data indicates that youth sixteen to nineteen years of age are at exceptionally high risk of victimization through a handgun crime. This holds for males and females, whites and blacks, and central city, suburban, and rural residents.<sup>1</sup>

Analysis of 1985-89 National Crime Survey data finds that a weapon (gun, knife, other, or "not ascertained") was used in 25 percent of the violent crimes committed against youths twelve to fifteen years of age and in 36 percent of the violent crimes against youths sixteen to nineteen years

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1. More often than not, the rate of victimization for this category is the highest of any of the numerous categories employed in the report. When it is not, it is second only to the twenty to twenty-four age category.



old (Whitaker and Bastian, 1991). The former were least likely to face an offender with a gun and most likely to face one with some other object. The latter least likely encountered an assailant armed with a knife and most likely faced a person with some other object. Guns were used in 20 percent of the weapon-related crimes against the younger adolescents and in 33 percent of those of the older youths. For the two age categories combined, 12 percent of the violent crimes committed in school, 21 percent of those committed on school property, and 37 percent of those committed on the street involved weapons.

Turning from victimization to the carrying of weapons, we find that three percent of the males in a 1987 survey of 11,000 eighth- and tenth-grade students in twenty states reported bringing a handgun to school during the year preceding the survey; 23 percent had carried a knife to school (National School Safety Center 1989). Similarly, analysis of 1989 supplementary National Crime Survey data (Bastian and Taylor 1991) indicates that three percent of the males and one percent of the females in a nationally representative sample of 10,000 students between the ages of twelve and nineteen had carried a weapon ("a gun, knife, brass knuckles, or things that could be used as weapons -- razor blades, spiked jewelry") or other object ("capable of hurting an assailant") to school for protection at least once during a specified six-month period. In 1990, 20 percent of a nationally representative sample of 11,631 students in grades nine through twelve reported carrying a weapon at least once within the 30 days prior to being surveyed (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1991). Knives and razors (55 percent of the weapons reported) were more common than clubs (24 percent) or firearms (20 percent). Four percent of the students (21 percent of the black males) in the sample had carried guns during the previous month. Finally, a 1993 survey of 2,508 students in grades six through twelve in 96 schools nationwide found that 15 percent of the

respondents had carried a handgun in the preceding thirty days; one in ten claimed to have shot a gun at someone (Louis Harris and Associates 1993; importantly, serious questions about methodological adequacy have been raised concerning this study [Kleck 1993]).

### Selected Samples

Several studies utilizing selected samples during the past decade also provide insights into the issue of youth and weapons. In 1985, Fagan (1990) surveyed high school students and school dropouts in one select neighborhood in each of three cities (Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Diego) concerning a number of delinquent acts. He found that 18 percent of non-gang-affiliated males and 42 percent of gang-affiliated males had carried weapons (unspecified) illegally in the course of the previous year; percentages for females were 14 and 28, respectively. His findings are not dissimilar to those reported by Fagan, Piper, and Moore (1986) and based upon samples of 660 male high-school students and school dropouts from four inner-city, high-crime neighborhoods (one neighborhood each in Boston, Newark, Memphis, and Detroit). Of the high school students, 27 percent had threatened an adult with a weapon during the 12 months preceding the survey, 20 percent had carried a weapon in a fight, seven percent had used a weapon "to get something," and nine percent had shot someone. Percentages for the school dropouts were 14, 28, 14, and nine, respectively. Finally, Altschuler and Brounstein (1991) report that, of 387 ninth- and tenth-grade minority, inner-city males they surveyed in Washington D.C. in 1988, 27 percent had carried a concealed weapon in the past year, 11 percent had used a weapon to threaten another person, and five percent had "shot, stabbed, or killed someone."

Asmussen (1992) reports that of 859 tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth- grade students surveyed in a Midwestern "small, urban, public school system," six percent had carried a weapon to school

at least six times during the school year while 12 percent had done so between one and five times. Ten percent of the respondents had carried a weapon to school "during the past 30 days." Males were more than three times as likely as females to carry weapons. Knives were the most commonly carried weapon followed by handguns, clubs, and other weapons.

Regarding specifically the issue of youth and firearms, a 1987 survey of 390 high school students in Baltimore found that almost half of the males had carried a gun to school at least once (Hackett, Sandza, Gibney, et al. 1988). Sadowski, Cairns, and Earp (1989) report that five percent of 664 teenagers they surveyed in 1987 in two suburban and rural southeastern school districts indicated having owning a handgun. Sheley and Brewer (1995), via a survey of public school suburban youth in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, found that 20 percent of the male students sampled owned a revolver, 17 percent owned an automatic or semiautomatic handgun, and 28 percent had carried a gun outside their home.

A survey of fourteen- and fifteen-year-old male public school students in Rochester, New York, in approximately 1990 found six percent owning a gun for "protection" (as opposed to ownership for sporting purposes; in the investigators' opinion, protective guns primarily were handguns and sawed-off long guns). Seventy percent of the protective gun owners and 11 percent of the sport owners carried a gun on a regular basis (Lizotte, Tesoriero, Thornberry, et al. 1994). Callahan and Rivara (1992), through a survey of eleventh-grade students in Seattle, found that 11 percent of the males in their study reported owning a handgun; six percent had carried a gun to school sometime in the past. Callahan, Rivara, and Farrow (1993), via a survey of incarcerated juveniles in Kings County, Washington, found that 59 percent of their sample had owned a handgun and that 46 percent had carried a gun to school.

The most comprehensive study to date of juveniles and firearms was conducted in 1991 by the authors of the present study (Sheley and Wright 1995) using samples of 835 male inmates in six maximum security juvenile correctional facilities in California, Illinois, Louisiana, and New Jersey and 758 male students from ten inner-city public high schools located in those same states. Both groups of respondents came from families where ownership and carrying of firearms was common; ownership and carrying were also widespread among respondents' peers. Inmates had lived and students were living in social environments marked by violence and victimization. Among inmates, for example, 84 percent reported that they themselves had been threatened with a gun or shot at and half had been stabbed with a knife. Forty-five percent of the students had been threatened with a gun or shot at while on the way to or from school; one in ten had been stabbed.

Eighty-three percent of the inmate sample owned a gun at the time they were incarcerated; 65 percent owned three or more guns. Of those who had ever owned a gun, two-thirds acquired their first firearm by the age of 14. Handguns and shotguns were the most commonly owned weapons, although more than a third also possessed a military-style rifle at the time of incarceration. Among the high school students, 30 percent had owned at least one gun in their lives; 22 percent possessed a gun at the time the survey was completed. Concerning types of firearms, the preference was for well-made handguns. Three-fourths of the inmates and two-thirds of the students who owned a handgun possessed guns of large caliber, with the 9mm being the most popular caliber. Gun ownership and carrying among both inmates and students appeared motivated primarily by a sensed need for self-protection. Guns were more a response to the perceived violence and predation of the community than a matter of status among peers.

Firearms circulated widely and freely through the neighborhoods of the respondents. Seventy

percent of the inmates and 41 percent of the students felt that they could get a gun with "no trouble at all;" an additional 17 percent of the inmates and 24 percent of the students said it would be "only a little trouble." For both groups, family, friends, and street sources (mainly drug dealers and addicts) were the principal providers of guns; street prices averaged about \$100 for handguns and \$300 for military-style rifles. Gun theft was relatively common among the inmates; both groups also reported frequent use of proxy purchasers to obtain guns through retail outlets. Forty-five percent of the inmates could be described as gun dealers in that they stated they had bought, sold, or traded "lots" of guns. Dealers were more involved in crime, more likely to carry a gun, more likely to own all types of weapons, more involved in shooting incidents, and more accepting of shooting someone to get something they wanted.

Use of hard drugs was relatively common in the inmate sample and rare among the students; but very few respondents in either sample could be described as hard-core, regular drug users. Drug use was linked to gun possession and activity. As well, the large majority of the inmates (72 percent) and a notable minority of students (18 percent) had either themselves dealt drugs or worked for someone who did. Firearms were a common element in the drug business. Eighty-nine percent of the inmate dealers and 75 percent of the student dealers had carried guns. Also, firearms were a frequent medium of exchange in the drug trade at all levels.

Finally, among inmates, 68 percent were affiliated with a gang or quasi-gang; among students, the figure was 22 percent. With a few exceptions, members of organized gangs were more active gun owners, gun carriers, gun thieves, gun dealers, gun users, drug users, drug dealers, and criminals than were members of quasi-gangs, who were in turn more active than juveniles as a whole.

Of related interest, employing survey items based upon those found in the our study, Decker and Pennell (1996) conducted an investigation of access to and use of illegal firearms by 7,000 persons arrested in eleven urban areas during the first six months of 1995. The respondents included adult as well as juvenile arrestees and females as well as males. The findings pertaining to a subsample of juvenile males within this study were remarkably similar to those reported by us. One in three had owned a gun within thirty days of their arrest, and one in three also reported carrying a gun on a regular basis ("some of the time"). Acquisition of firearms seemed linked primarily to illegal markets, and guns allegedly were obtained by respondents with ease. Two-thirds of the juvenile arrestees had used a gun to commit a crime. Guns were viewed primarily as protection devices. Drug sales and gang membership increased the odds of owning guns and in involvement in firearm-related criminal activity.

### Research Problem

In the aggregate, the studies just reviewed indicate that weapon-carrying and weapon-related crime by youth in this country are very real problems. Substantial percentages of urban youth clearly are affected by weapon-related phenomena. If media accounts are to be believed, the problem no longer is confined to the big city and lower-class neighborhoods; it has spread (is said now to be spreading) to smaller cities and to middle-class neighborhoods within them (*Chicago Tribune* 1992; *Washington Post* 1992; *Newsweek* 1992; *Time* 1993; *U.S. News and World Report* 1993).

Yet, the same review of extant research leaves us with a picture lacking detail. National-level studies ask only the most general questions about weapons-related violence among youth. Some of the studies utilizing more select samples provide slightly more detail, but these in turn are hampered

by questions of generalizability, not the least of which pertains to their urban and, often, inner-city focus. The most detailed of the studies described above (Sheley and Wright 1995), for example, is based only upon a sample of the most serious (and, therefore, perhaps not the average) confined offenders and a sample of students from inner-city schools previously identified as having gun-related problems (rendering questionable the extent to which its results pertain to other types even of inner-city students). Only two studies reviewed above (Sadowski et al. 1989 and Sheley and Brewer 1995) pertain directly to suburban youth.

### Unanswered Questions

Absent, then, from extant research is generalizable *and* detailed information on weapon-related behaviors among American youth. Hence, we are unable to assess the extent to which weapons and potentially attendant crimes, fears, and victimizations characterize the average suburban youth or the average rural youth. Nor are we able seriously to address such issues as the relationship between historically hunting- and sporting-weapon cultures and more recent crime- and protection-weapon cultures. To what extent, for example, do traditional hunting cultures influence adolescents' use of firearms and other weapons (Lizotte et al. 1994)?

None of the studies reviewed above addresses directly the following important questions regarding weapon-related activity among youth: If weapons are indeed prevalent among youth, what kinds of weapons are they? To what use are they put -- protection, intimidation, crime? Assuming that the motivation is self-protection, against whom? What is the nature of the perceived threat that prompts such measures?

In what settings are weapons carried -- on school grounds, away from school? Does weapon-

carrying differ in quantity and quality across the urban and non-urban spectrum and across racial and ethnic groups, social classes, age groups, and so forth? In what ways are any of these behaviors linked to criminal, gang and drug activity among youth? In what ways are they linked to (follow from or promote) fear of violence among youth?

Nearly the same questions can be asked regarding weapon-related victimizations among youth. Does type of weapon-related victimization vary across urban and non-urban settings and across the sociodemographic categories that distinguish youth? In what ways does involvement in illegal activities by youth increase their likelihood of weapon-related victimization (Jensen and Brownfield 1986; Lauritsen, Laub, and Sampson 1992; Lauritsen, Sampson, and Laub 1991; Sheley, McGee, and Wright 1992)?

And what of guns specifically? Much attention has been focused in recent years on so-called military-style weapons, the automatic and semiautomatic handguns and rifles that have been popularized in graphic movies of the past decade. How many youth have owned such a gun? What kinds of guns are young people likely to possess or carry? Where and how do juveniles obtain their firearms? How easily and at what cost? There is a popular impression that guns of all sorts are widely and routinely available to youth, that any fifteen-year-old can obtain a gun with only a modest investment of effort and money. Can it really be that easy?<sup>2</sup> Is the link between drug

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2. Results from our earlier study of firearm acquisition by inner-city high school students indicate that for that segment of the population, acquisition is fairly simple. Students perceive guns as fairly common in their social environments. Those who obtain guns do so with apparent ease and at low cost (Sheley and Wright 1995). Whether this same pattern carries over into other sections of cities and towns -- that is, whether or not among suburban, middle class youth, for example -- has yet to be assessed on a national level.



trafficking and the possession and use of guns by students more or less strong than that between drug activity and the possession and use of other types of weapons?

The number of unanswered questions above suggests that we do not yet know nearly enough about how, where, and why juveniles obtain, carry, and use weapons and under what circumstances weapons are used against them. Without such information, we cannot design or even think intelligently about policies to prevent or at least to decrease weapon-related activity. The need for more extensive research focused specifically on youth and their weapons thus seems pressing. The primary vehicle by which to provide the answers to the above questions in a manner that avoids the sketchiness of past national-level studies and the lack of generalizability of past select-sample studies is the detailed survey of a national sample of youth from a fuller range of urban, suburban, and rural settings.

## Research Design

### Student Survey

What is singularly most absent from our store of information about youth, weapons, and violence are detailed data from the broader spectrum of American juveniles -- high-school-age youth from a range of social and geographic environments. This report describes an effort to achieve a broader sample, one that offers greater variety regarding history, cultural diversity, population size and density, urban and non-urban mix, economic situation, and class, race, and ethnic distributions. While a few national-level surveys of youth concerning such topics as delinquency and drug use have been conducted in the past, most have been broadly topical, making the issue of youth,

weapons, and violence peripheral at best. The present study constitutes the first national-level survey of youth to gather detailed behavioral and attitudinal data concerning these issues.

The juveniles in question are juniors and seniors in high schools in the United States. Reaching a national sample of youth through their schools was considered the most practical means of sampling within the financial parameters of this study. The limitation to juniors and seniors also permitted a wider range of schools to be sampled (i.e., fewer numbers of students per school) than would have been possible were samples of the full range of students in each school attempted.

Importantly, for a number of reasons, the present sample is not fully representative of American youth. First, it is limited to male respondents. This is wholly a function of the finances available for the study; indeed, the attention solely to males was suggested by NIJ reviewers of the proposal for this research. Of note, studies to date that have included female respondents report considerable under-involvement by females in weapon-related activities relative to the involvement of males (Asmussen 1992; Callahan and Rivara 1992; Sadowski, Cairnes, and Earp 1989; Sheley and Brewer 1995; Sheley and Wright 1995; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1991). In short, the research conducted for this study would have required a very large sample of female students in order to permit any but the most rudimentary descriptive analysis regarding weapon-related activity.

Second, this investigation's focus is upon high school students and, thus, it does not include youths who have dropped out of high school. Compensating somewhat for this, the most detailed knowledge we now possess about youth and violence pertains to juveniles who have dropped out of school or are only marginally in school (see, for example, see Cernkovich, Giordano, and Pugh 1985; Fagan, Piper, and Moore 1986; Sheley and Wright 1995). While we do not mean to imply that

the present study can be combined directly with those in the literature somehow to form a national sample of students and dropouts, we do believe that it can supplement prior research findings by providing comparative data concerning groups other than those about which the most is known already.

Third, and related, though the respondents were generated through use of a random sample of U.S. high schools, the students within those schools were not randomly sampled, and thus was introduced a potential self-selection bias toward youth who were more law-abiding (the sampling procedure and the bias in question are described fully below in the "Methods" section). In short, "good boys" may well have been more likely to find their way into this study than were "bad boys."<sup>3</sup>

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3. It was originally our plan to produce a random sample of students within a random sample of high schools. This was to have been accomplished through use of lists of students provided by schools which would have permitted us to correspond directly and, if necessary, repeatedly with potential respondents. The same lists presumably would have included the names of students who had dropped out of school after we received the information, thus making our sample yet more generalizable. While we did obtain such lists from a few schools, we failed to do so in the majority of cases. The political climate of the late 1990s differs considerably from that of the earlier part of the decade. Where only a few years ago, we gained easy access to students in studies with virtually an identical content, access often was effectively denied in the present effort. In some cases, principals stated that they did not have the staff needed even to generate a list to forward to us. Most, however, stated that their school boards would not permit the distribution of students' names to researchers even were those names protected during and deleted after the study. In the majority of such cases (especially in Western states), a survey of students concerning exposure to weapons and violence was deemed far too politically sensitive for the community. In many instances, principals who had pledged cooperation were ordered by their superintendents or their school boards to reverse their decision. In the end, we were left in the majority of cases involving cooperative schools with principals pledging to mail questionnaires for us to a random sample of their students. Only a handful agreed to send followup letters; the lack of followup likely cost us the opportunity to bring more troublesome boys into the sample. See "Partial 'Good-Boy' Bias" in the "Methods" section below.

In the sense that it is used here, a “good boy” sample is not entirely undesirable. The bulk of research devoted to juveniles to date has focused on “troubled youth” or on youth living in severely troubled social settings. For the most part, the question at issue has been the use of weapons, especially firearms, proactively in crime-, drug-, and gang-related situations. The shift in attention to “good boys” permits us to assess not only the extent to which weapon *use* has seeped into theoretically less problematic populations but also, and perhaps more importantly, the extent to which weapon-related victimization and fear invade the lives of “good boys.”<sup>4</sup>

#### Data Collected From School Administrators

The process of selecting a sample of students from the nation's high schools also permitted data collection from a representative sample of urban and non-urban high schools concerning characteristics of the schools, their incidence of weapon-related activity (possession, transport, and use), and the range and effectiveness of strategies the schools have utilized to prevent such activity. Little information has been gathered systematically regarding safety in schools. Less still is known about the large number of options and programs available to schools as they attempt to provide secure learning environments (National School Safety Center 1988). Overall, what has been tried has been labeled generally unsuccessful (Prothrow-Stith 1991). One of the few national-level studies of types of standard school security measures (hall monitors, visitor sign-ins) found no significant relationship between these measures and students' chances of violent victimization (Bastion and

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4. Our prior research findings (Sheley and Wright 1995) indicate that the overwhelming majority of juveniles from even the most troubled inner-city schools have little or no active involvement with gangs, drugs, crimes, or guns. However, less directly, they must arrange their lives around the potential harm that may occur through the activities of the minority of their peers who do engage in illegal activities and carry and use weapons.

Taylor 1991:13). The information used in the present study is more detailed than most and has been folded into the data from student respondents for analysis of the influence of school characteristics on weapon-related behavior.

#### Census and Descriptive School Data

In addition to the data collected directly from students and school administrators, we have added to the individual student data files census information concerning the cities and towns in which the sampled schools are located. These data include size of city or town, racial and ethnic population distributions, age, gender, and educational attainment distributions, median household and per capita income distributions, poverty rates, labor force and unemployment rates, and violent and property crime rates.

As well, the source from which we drew our sample of schools (see below) provides information concerning type of school, grades taught, enrollment, and size of community. These data have been integrated into the individual student files to which they pertain, and permit analysis of the bearing of the variables in question on weapon-related characteristics and behaviors of members of the sample.

#### Method

Data for this study derive primarily from two surveys, the first a lengthy questionnaire focused primarily on exposure to weapons (primarily firearms and knives) and violence, completed by students enrolled in a national sample of high schools and the second a questionnaire completed by administrators of the schools in question regarding school characteristics, levels of weapon-related activity in the schools, and anti-violence strategies employed by the schools.

## School Sample

*Patterson's American Education* (Educational Directories, Inc. 1994) contains a complete listing of every secondary school in the United States. Each school is identified as to type (public, private, or parochial), and the listing includes information about the grades taught at the school (K through 12, high school only, etc.), the total school enrollment, and the size of the legal community in which the school is located.

A random sample of 132 high schools was drawn from the *Patterson's* listing, with sampling probabilities proportionate to the size of the 10th and 11th grade populations enrolled in a given school. Sampling with probabilities proportionate to the size of the relevant population was necessary in order to avoid the obvious bias against students in larger high schools that would result in a simple random sample from the *Patterson's* listing.

Of the 132 schools in the original sample, 53 (40 percent) consented to participate in the project. At both bivariate and multivariate levels, the participating schools were compared with non-participants across several variables pertaining to the schools themselves: region, grades offered (six years, four years, two years, and so forth), size of enrollment, and public or private status. As well, they were compared in terms of numerous characteristics of the cities and towns in which they were located: city size, racial and ethnic population distributions, age and gender distributions, average educational attainment level, income characteristics, employment distribution, percent in poverty, and crime levels. In all instances, save one, no significant differences were apparent between the two samples. The exception pertained to the fact that participating schools tended to be located in cities with higher percentages of the population 65 years and older. Entered into a regression equation, this variable proved unrelated to participation status.

As the findings presented in Table 1 indicate, in the aggregate, schools ultimately participating in this project displayed considerable variation in all but a few categories. They were roughly evenly divided among regions of the country. The vast majority served high school students only. More than half of the schools sampled enrolled above 1,000 pupils though few exceeded 2,500. Nearly nine of every ten schools was a public institution. Seven of every ten were located in towns with populations of 10,000 and under, though most of these schools served regional or county populations.

(See Table 1)

We also observed considerable variation in the population characteristics of the cities and towns in which participating schools were located. In nearly one of every four cities and towns, more than 30 percent of the citizens were non-white, and nearly one in six cities and towns had greater than a third of its population under 25 years of age. Male-female distributions across cities and towns were roughly equal; in only 4 percent of the sites was more than 51 percent of the population male and in only 2 percent was the male population less than 45 percent of the total population. In six of ten cities and towns, at least 70 percent of the population had earned at least a high school degree. At least three of every ten households in 51 percent of sample cities and towns were headed by poor females. One in four sites had unemployment rates exceeding 8 percent. Half had median household incomes below \$25,000. Finally, one in three had violent crime rates exceeding 900 per 100,000 population.

### Student Sample

The total number of surveys completed by students in this study was 734. Data were

collected during the spring of 1996. As noted earlier (see Footnote 4), our attempts to procure from school administrators lists of their male tenth- and eleventh- grade students on which to base our sampling bore little fruit. We received lists from only eight of the 53 cooperating principals. We chose a sample of 10 percent from each of these lists and sought participation directly from the students involved. Each received a letter describing the study and guaranteeing confidentiality, a copy of the survey, a postage-paid return envelope, and a ticket which, when completed and returned with the survey, granted the respondent eligibility to win one of ten cash prizes of \$100.00 to be awarded through a drawing.<sup>5</sup> The initial request to participate, plus two followup letters to those who did not respond positively to the original request, produced a response rate of 33 percent (within a range of 27 to 50 percent) and 45 completed surveys.

The remaining cooperative principals chose instead to select from their rosters, via a prescribed method, the necessary 10-percent sample. They then forwarded to their students, by mail, the packet described above. The administrators thus were able to protect the anonymity of their students. The cost to the present project, however, was the loss of the personalized appeal to the student; letters forwarded by the principals contained a "Dear [school name] High Student" greeting.

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5. The data collection design for this study was based upon the Total Design Method (TDM) developed and refined by Dillman (1978; 1983). TDM consists of compulsive attentiveness to every detail of the mailout-mailback survey. Two elements are especially critical: the look and "feel" of the initial mailing and an aggressive followup schedule. TDM questionnaires are professionally printed on heavy bond paper and bound with a professionally designed, official-looking and eye-catching cover. They are accompanied by a cover letter on official letterhead that contains a full inside address, states the purpose of the survey, and requests the respondent's cooperation. Cover letters are always hand-signed in blue ballpoint ink. Business reply envelopes are provided; stamps (not metered postage) are used on the outgoing packets in order to avoid the appearance of junk mail or third class mass mailing.



Lost as well was any practical ability to issue followup letters to the students. In a few cases, administrators were able to work with us to develop a numbering system by which they could identify and mail a second packet to students who had not responded previously. The majority, however, simply did not have the resources to devote to the followup effort.

The school-distributed method produced an additional 689 respondents, reflecting an average response rate of 46 percent, within a range of 15 percent to 99 percent. Surprisingly, then, the response rate for the less personalized, school-distributed method exceeded that for the personalized direct appeal to the student. Personalization itself likely was not the telling factor. Rather, differences among the schools more likely explained the difference in response rates. We do not assume that the eight schools whose administrators supplied student lists to us were representative of the schools who participated in the study. They tended to be smaller and, by definition, without the political constraints that influenced the decisions of the remaining 45 participating schools. Whether or not these elements translated to a different type of student cannot be known definitively but clearly can be entertained hypothetically.

Partial "Good-Boy" Bias. As noted earlier, the possibility that response rates would reflect a "good-boy" bias was a concern from the start of this project. It was assumed that "good boys," those less likely to engage in illegal activities, would be more likely to agree to participate in the study than would "bad boys," those more likely to engage in illegal activities. Our assumption was also that we would bring more of the "bad boys" (including school dropouts whose names were listed before they withdrew from school) into the sample as we conducted repeated, direct appeals to youths who failed to respond positively to the first request to complete the survey. Our inability to acquire student lists from the vast majority of school administrators, and the average

administrator's inability to facilitate personalized, repeated mailings of the survey to their pupils, made the "good-boy" bias more likely.

While there was little to be done to address the problem of school dropouts, we were able to fashion a test of the extent to which the type of student who responded to a single appeal to complete a mailed survey differed from the average student in his class. From among participating schools, we chose three sites at which to administer surveys directly and personally to students. At each site, a ten percent sample of junior and senior males was chosen from the school roster. Students were called individually or in small groups into a testing room. The same explanation for the study was given to them as to the students who had been sent the survey by mail. The same opportunity to win \$100 was offered to them. Response rates for the three schools were 91, 92, and 99 percent, respectively. In all, 106 students (not included in the sample for the present study) completed the survey.

The results derived from the on-site survey were compared with those derived from the questionnaires mailed to students (N = 64) from the same school sites. The comparison suggested differences in some areas, always pointing to more problematic behavior or characteristics on the part of the on-site sample. On-site respondents differed from mailed-survey respondents, statistically significantly, in school performance, in shooting and beating victimizations off of school grounds, in use of knives to threaten others, in ownership of automatic or semiautomatic handguns, and in carrying guns outside the home. They did *not* differ in victimizations on school property, in victimizations involving knives, in arrest history, in self-reported theft, burglary, armed robbery, assault with a gun or knife, drug use or sales, and gang membership, and in ownership of regular rifles, automatic or semiautomatic rifles, shotguns and sawed-off shotguns, and revolvers.

In sum, differences are sufficiently obvious to indicate that the two samples are not entirely alike. The differences do not pertain to trivial behaviors and characteristics. Yet, the list of behaviors and characteristics (equally non-trivial in nature) for which there are no differences is larger and appears, in the aggregate, to indicate that the two samples are more alike than not. We thus observe a partial "good boy" bias by virtue of the absence of school dropouts from our sample and at least some differences between on-site and mailed-survey samples. In terms of national level samples in investigations of weapons and violence among youth, we would argue that, warts and all, the present sample comes closer to providing a look at the "average" American teenager than do any prior, related studies.

#### Administrator Sample

In addition to asking participating school administrators to facilitate the distribution of the mailed survey to their students, we asked them to complete a survey concerning aspects of their school and its characteristics (including levels of and measures against violence). Of the 53 administrators participating in the study, 48 (90 percent) completed the survey about their school. School and city and town profiles of those who completed the surveys were compared with the profiles of those who did not. Though their numbers were sufficiently small to preclude evaluation of statistically significant differences, the five administrators who did not complete the survey were somewhat more likely to come from smaller schools in the South and West and to be located in cities or towns with higher than average male populations and higher than average violent crime rates.

#### Survey Instrumentation

The student survey (see Appendix I) included items, primarily forced-choice, concerning demographic characteristics of the respondent, family living situations, educational situations and

aspirations, drug, criminal, and gang activities, crime- and violence-related characteristics of family and friends, respondent's social and recreational activities, exposure to violence generally, personal victimization history, and possession of and activities related to firearms and knives. Most of these items were patterned after those used in our prior studies of the same topic (Sheley and Brewer 1995; Sheley and Wright 1995).

The survey of administrators (see Appendix II) was also forced-choice in design. In addition to providing basic demographic data about their schools, respondents were asked to rate the seriousness of violence, drugs, and guns and other weapons in their institutions. They were asked to provide weapon-related information about the average male junior in their schools as well as to estimate the number of incidents involving various types of weapons on school grounds during the past three years. Finally, the administrators were asked to identify which from an extensive list of "violence reduction measures" were in place at their schools.

#### Missing Data, Response Consistency, and Validity

Throughout this report, the number of cases varies slightly across items. Most student respondents completed over 95 percent of the items in the survey. All administrators who responded completed the entire administrator's survey. Thus, the number of missing cases for any given item is fairly low. Even in the extreme, when two items with the greatest number of missing cases are cross tabulated, only four percent (30 cases) are lost from the analysis. We find no particular pattern underlying the missing cases, and their numbers are sufficiently small that comparison of their profile with that derived from available cases regarding variables of interest (possession of weapons, for example) produces no statistically significant differences.

The reliability and validity of self-report data such as those utilized here can, of course, be questioned. Yet, self-reported criminality data probably suffer less from problems of reliability and validity than most observers would guess (Horney and Marshall 1992). Using polygraph tests, for example, Clark and Tiffit (1966) found most responses by juveniles to self-report items truthful (see also Akers, Massey, Clarke, et al. 1983). Researchers have found that few respondents who report no offenses have police records (Elliott and Voss 1974; Hardt and Peterson-Hardt 1977; Hirschi 1969). Others have established that self-report data generally are free of dishonesty by questioning the respondents' peers and teachers about the veracity of their statements. Farrington (1973) noted that 75 percent of the self-reported delinquency in one study was re-reported in a second study two years later. Indeed, systematic reviews of the literature generally have accorded self-reported criminality data fairly high marks (O'Brien 1985). As Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis (1981:114) have commented: "Reliability measures are impressive and the majority of studies produce validity coefficients in the moderate to strong range."

To the extent that problems have arisen, they have indicated that more seriously criminal respondents are more subject to memory lapses and telescoping of their reports. Data from African-American respondents also may be less reliable and valid than those from white respondents (Huizinga and Elliott 1986), and females and males may respond unevenly to prevalence questions (Sampson 1985).

Importantly, a major advantage of a mail survey such as the one employed for this study is the heightened anonymity it affords respondents in comparison to phone and face-to-face surveys. In general, the social-science literature indicates that response effects (response artifacts) are less problematic in self-administered than in researcher-administered questionnaires. Sudman and

Bradburn (1974:66), for example, summarize as follows: "If the topic is threatening, more complete reporting may be obtained from self-administered rather than personal interviews. Self-administered [questionnaires] may also be used for highly threatening questions dealing with possibly illegal behavior.... Where a socially desirable answer is possible on attitudinal questions, there is a greater tendency to conform [that is, give socially desirable answers] on personal interviews than on self-administered questionnaires."

Our attempt to establish level of reliability in this study was based on the strategy employed in our earlier research on youth and firearms (Sheley and Wright 1995; see also Decker and Pennell 1996). It is centered on responses to pairs of items, the responses to which were checked for logical consistency. For example, respondents who claimed in response to an item not to have carried a gun during the past twelve months should not have responded affirmatively to a similar item regarding gun carrying during the same time period. Fifteen such items were examined. Percentage of inconsistent answers ranged from one to 10; average percentage of inconsistency was 1.8. The item that produced inconsistent responses from 10 percent of the subjects (the next highest percentage was 3) pertained to the carrying of knives for other than sport or hunting, possibly suggesting response inconsistency but also possibly indicating more ambiguity concerning reasons for transporting knives.

To determine how systematic were the inconsistencies, we scored each respondent on number of inconsistent answers (with possible scores ranging from zero to 15). Only two percent of the respondents scored above two; only four persons scored above four. Reliability, at least in terms of response consistency, does not appear to have been problematic for the present sample.

Validity was more difficult to assess, since we had no official records against which to compare our anonymously self-reported data. Generally, however, studies like the one in question rely upon *construct validation*, primarily in the form of degree and direction of correlation regarding measures concerning apparently similar attitudes and behaviors (also a measure of reliability) and correlations between variables known to be related through prior research findings or otherwise theoretically likely to display an association. For example, respondents who attributed respect from peers to ownership of a gun also felt that friends would look down on them if they did not carry a gun (Pearson's  $r = .696$ ).

Attention concerning validity in this study focused upon items related to dangerousness of the respondent's social environment. Observed relationships suggested a reasonably high level of validity. Perception of one's neighborhood as violent was correlated with one's characterization of mugging and gunfire (themselves related [ $r = .361$ ]) as very serious problems in the neighborhood ( $r = .313$  and  $.399$ , respectively). The rating of one's neighborhood as extremely violent was related to a corresponding fear of violence in the neighborhood ( $r = .541$ ). Fear of violence in school also was related to fear of violence in the neighborhood ( $r = .458$ ). The respondent's sighting of other youths carrying knives in his neighborhood was linked to the observation of knife carrying at his school ( $r = .575$ ). Finally, attendance at social events at which shots were fired was related to the respondent's sense that it was very likely that he would be shot by the time he was twenty-five years of age ( $r = .331$ ). In sum, validity seems generally established for the purposes of this study.

### Respondent Sociodemographic Characteristics

Table 2 presents descriptive data on the social and demographic characteristics of our respondents. One percent of the respondents were fifteen years of age, 32 percent were sixteen, nearly half (46 percent) were seventeen, and 20 percent eighteen or above. Seven of every ten respondents were white. Sixteen percent were Hispanic, seven percent black, and three percent Asian. Only four percent of the sample fell outside these categories. Eight of every ten respondents lived in a single family house. Six of every ten lived with both parents; 16 percent lived with only their mother. The head of the household for half (52 percent) of the sample had at least some college education; one in five respondents came from households in which the head had not completed high school. Fourteen percent of the sample lived in households in which someone received some form of government assistance during the twelve months preceding completion of the survey. One in three respondents (34 percent) attended religious services weekly; one in five (18 percent) never attended services; the remaining 47 percent were arrayed across several categories of religious service attendance.

(See Table 2)

Table 3 offers an academic profile of the juniors and seniors in our sample. Most (64 percent) were earning primarily As and Bs in school. Three in ten were earning Cs, and only one in twenty was averaging below a C. Absences from school rarely exceeded more than a few times per month. One third of the respondents had been expelled or suspended from school at least once. Only six percent were not certain of completing high school, and only 10 percent had no plans to attend college after graduation.



(See Table 3)

### Respondents' Criminal Activity

In line with a sense of criminality as potentially peer-related, a number of items in our survey pertained to illegal activity committed by people close to the respondents. As the findings in Table 4 indicate, one in ten (11 percent) survey subjects noted that a member of his immediate family had been convicted of a felony. Similarly, 24 percent of the sample had close friends who had served time in a correctional facility. "Some" (as opposed to "none," "most," or "all") of the males in the families of 17 percent of the respondents regularly carried guns outside the home (including in the car), but not for sport or hunting; an additional three percent noted that "most" or "all" of their male family members carried guns regularly. Seven percent had close friends who had shot someone. At least some of the friends of 14 percent of the respondents regularly carried guns outside the home (including in the car), but not for sport or hunting.<sup>6</sup>

(See Table 4)

Respondents were not, in the aggregate, highly involved in criminal activity. According to the figures presented in Table 5, 25 percent had been arrested or picked up during their lifetime; 21 percent reported being arrested or picked up by the police "during the past 12 months."<sup>7</sup> Average

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6. The item pertaining to family members who carried guns regularly included the admonition that responses should not include reference to relatives in law enforcement.

7. Interpretation of the "apprehension" finding is difficult given that it derives from a single item in the survey. We deliberately left the item in question relatively vague ("arrested or picked up") because many juveniles are brought into custody without formal arrest, and because we were more interested in contact with the police. Yet, the vagueness of the item we utilized leaves us unable directly to address what seems to be an inflated

age of first arrest or apprehension was 14.6 years. Table 5 also presents findings pertinent to respondents' involvement, "during the past 12 months," in serious theft, armed robbery, burglary, "hard" drug activity (use and sales), and gangs.<sup>8</sup> Only the item involving theft elicited affirmative responses from more than 10 percent of the sample; 14 percent reported committing this crime during the year preceding the survey. Eight percent reported committing burglary. Two percent had committed armed robbery, three percent "hard" drug sales, and five percent "hard" drug use.<sup>9</sup> Eight percent of the sample claimed to be members of a gang.

(See Table 5)

Beyond reviewing the basic crime-involvement data, we are able to examine level of involvement in criminality. Students responded to each criminality item (excluding gang membership) by indicating frequency of involvement during the past year: "never," "just once," "a

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figure if the finding is treated literally. It is unlikely that one in four respondents, especially members of a "good boy" sample, had been apprehended in a manner that resulted in transport to a police station. Rather, we suspect that many of our respondents were referring, in their responses to this item, to traffic stops and field interrogations by the police. Our hypothesis gains credence in that 1996 data for a national sample of male high school seniors indicate that 14 percent had been "arrested and taken to a police station" during the "last 12 months," but that 38 percent had received a traffic ticket or warning for a moving violation during the same period (Maguire and Pastore 1997:243,248).

8. The item indicating theft was worded "Stolen something worth more than \$50"; armed robbery, "Used weapon to stick up a store or a person"; burglary, "Broke into a home, store, or car to steal something"; drug use, "Used a hard drug like crack, cocaine, or heroin"; and drug sale, "Sold hard drugs such as crack, cocaine, or heroin." Gang membership was indicated by the response ("yes" or "no") to the item, "Do you consider yourself a member of a gang?"

9. 1996 data for a national sample of male high school seniors indicate that 4.9 percent had used cocaine during the past 12 months; one percent reported using heroin during the past 12 months (Maguire and Pastore 1997:259).

few times," or "many times." Thus, each respondent could be assigned a score of zero (never) to three (many times) for each item. For any given item, no more than seven percent of the sample received a score exceeding one. Seven percent of the sample reported having committed theft more than once (but not "many times"). Five percent reported committing burglary more than once. Only one percent of the sample had committed armed robbery and two percent sale or use of hard drugs more than once.

Summing the scores across items, with scores ranging from zero ("never" for all offense types) to fifteen ("many times" for all offense types), we found only three percent of the respondents earning scores in excess of two.

### Weapons in the Hands of Respondents

#### Possession

In our attempt to gain a sense of the extent to which youths in our sample owned or otherwise possessed firearms, we provided each respondent with a list of firearms and asked him to check which he had owned or possessed at the time of the survey. Types of firearms included "regular" rifles, automatic or semiautomatic rifles, "regular" shotguns, sawed-off shotguns, revolvers, and automatic or semiautomatic handguns.<sup>10</sup>

Table 6 presents data concerning these firearms. Twenty-nine percent of the respondents owned or possessed at least one type of gun; eight percent owned or possessed three or more types.

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10. No distinction was made between automatic and semiautomatic weapons because prior research has indicated that juveniles often fail to make such distinctions (Sheley and Wright 1995:39). Authorities in the area (police, gun experts, criminologists) all suggest, however, that few juveniles possess truly automatic weapons. Rather, theirs more likely are semiautomatic.

Regular rifles (19 percent) and shotguns (18 percent) were the most frequently possessed firearms. Automatic or semiautomatic rifles were possessed by eight percent of the students, revolvers by seven percent, and automatic or semiautomatic handguns by four percent. Few students reported owning a sawed-off shotgun (two percent).

(See Table 6)

### Carrying Weapons

Obviously, one need not own a weapon to carry one, and transport is the more serious problem. It is easy to imagine high school students who carry weapons, especially guns, that are borrowed from friends or relatives. In our prior study of inner-city juveniles, higher percentages carried than owned or possessed firearms (Sheley and Wright, 1995). For the present sample, however, gun-carrying behavior was rarer than was ownership or possession. As the findings in Table 7 indicate, only six percent (N = 44) of our respondents reported carrying a gun during the past 12 months outside the home (including in the car) -- four percent "now and then" and two percent "most" or "all" of the time. Among carriers, the majority (59 percent) more likely did so in the car than directly on the person (41 percent).<sup>11</sup>

(See Table 7)

When a gun was carried outside the home by a respondent, it most likely was an automatic or semiautomatic handgun (50 percent) or a revolver (30 percent). Shotguns, regular and sawed-off,

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11. Cell-size difficulties prohibited a clear test of statistical significance, but the findings suggest that those from rural areas are more likely to report carrying a gun on the person while those from large urban areas are more likely to report carrying a gun in the car.

were each carried by seven percent of those who reported carrying firearms. Regular rifles and automatic or semiautomatic rifles (each three percent) were less often the type of weapon carried outside the home.

As is indicated in Table 7, knives too were carried by respondents, at considerably higher rates. Seventeen percent reported carrying a knife "as a weapon" outside the home (and not for hunting or sport) -- 12 percent "now and then," five percent "most" or "all" of the time. Though not presented in tabular form, the findings also suggest that weapon-related gun-carrying and knife-carrying were associated ( $r = .303$ ). Of those who carried either weapon during the past year (20 percent of the sample), 72 percent reported carrying only a knife, eight percent only a gun, and 20 percent both a gun and a knife.

#### Ease of Access to Firearms

Our findings do little to dispel the notion that juveniles can obtain firearms relatively easily, though the difficulty factor with the current sample exceeded that associated with prior reformatory and inner-city samples (Sheley and Wright 1995). We asked present respondents how difficult it would be to obtain a handgun if they decided that one was needed and they did not already have one. Half (50 percent) reported that getting a gun would be little or no trouble; half rated the task as a lot of trouble if not impossible.<sup>12</sup>

Those who had carried a handgun outside the home during the last twelve months ( $N = 33$ ) were asked where they obtained the handgun they carried most recently. Forty-eight percent had

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12. Eighty-seven percent of the reform school inmates and 65 percent of the inner-city student respondents in our prior study indicated that obtaining a firearm, at most, would be a little trouble. Relatively few respondents in either sample considered the task highly troublesome or nearly impossible (Sheley and Wright 1995:46).

been given or loaned the gun by a family member or friend; an additional four percent reported sneaking the gun from home. Only two percent of the respondents had traded something for the gun; four percent had stolen it; and seven percent had used other, unspecified means of acquisition. The remaining 35 percent stated that they had bought the gun.

Those who paid cash for the most recent handgun they carried reported spending between \$25.00 and \$350.00; the average purchase price was \$112.00. The most common source of the purchase was a family member or friend (53 percent). Eighteen percent purchased the handgun from a street seller (not involved with drugs), and six percent bought it from a drug-related source. Eleven percent described the source as a gunshop, pawnshop, or department store. The final 12 percent purchased it from unspecified sources.

A few respondents (three percent) claimed to have asked someone to purchase for them a gun (type neither specified nor restricted to handguns) to be used as a weapon (not for hunting or sports) during the past twelve months. Slightly more (five percent) had asked someone to buy a gun for them illegally (off the street, for example) during the same time period. Respondents were not asked to indicate whether or not their requests were honored.

It seems, then, that firearms were thought by our respondents to be readily available, though few in our sample had put the assumption to the test. Those who had seemed, in the main, to have leaned heavily on home and friends as sources. Indeed, the percentage of handgun carriers who had been given the weapon by family or friends, had purchased the gun from these same sources, or had snuck the firearm from home was 71.

### Urban/Suburban/Rural Differences

A major goal of this project was to gain a sense of differences across population sites in juveniles' weapon-related behaviors and experiences. We are able to explore the issue through the use of both census data for the city or town in which the respondent resided and through school administrators' descriptions of their schools as located in urban, suburban, or rural sites.<sup>13</sup>

As the findings presented in Table 8 indicate, gun possession among respondents was related to size of the city or town in which they resided. At one end of the spectrum (town populations of fewer than 2,500) more than half of the respondents (54 percent) possessed some type of firearm; at the other (city populations exceeding 100,000), only 15 percent did so. The same statistically significant pattern pertained to ownership of three or more types of guns. The association held, also in statistically significant fashion, for both forms of rifles and for regular shotguns. The patterns for handguns were similar but the differences were not statistically significant. The relationship was not apparent regarding sawed-off shotguns.

(See Table 8)

Gun carrying, as well, was related to size of city or town of residence. Eighteen percent of those in towns with no more than 2,500 residents reported carrying guns outside the home, including in the car but excluding hunting and target-shooting uses. Roughly half of these carried the weapon

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13. Neither of these measures wholly captures the respondent's general social environment. The city-size measure tells us little about the immediate (neighborhood) environment of the subject, and the school neighborhood measure has meaning only to the extent that it reflects the neighborhood in which the respondent lives. We employ other measures below to assess the respondent's perception of the safety of the neighborhood in which he lives.

"most" or "all" of the time. The level of gun-carrying in other areas was considerably lower -- between seven and two percent, with the majority carrying "only now and then." <sup>14</sup>

Finally, though differences were apparent between the extreme rural and large-city categories of size of city or town in which the respondent resided, knife-carrying "as a weapon" -- outside the home, excluding hunting and woodwork uses -- was not related in statistically significant fashion to the city-size variable.

Utilizing administrators' descriptions of the neighborhood in which their school was located (rural, suburban, urban), we encountered much the same results as pertained to size of city or town of residence. As the findings presented in Table 9 indicate, gun possession in general, possession of three or more types of guns, and possession of any given type of firearm except sawed-off shotguns and automatic or semiautomatic handguns were related to type of neighborhood in which the respondent's school was located. Rural neighborhoods saw greater levels of possession, suburban neighborhoods somewhat less, and urban neighborhoods the least.

(See Table 9)

Both gun- and knife-carrying were also related to school neighborhood though in less direct fashion. While rural neighborhoods saw the greatest levels of both types of carrying, urban

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14. Though cell-size deficiencies negate the possibility of more definitive analyses, it is noteworthy that, among respondents who reported carrying a gun outside the home during the past year, those from rural areas (indicated by size of town of residence and by school administrator's description of school neighborhood) tended toward rifles as the most frequently carried gun while those from larger cities tended toward revolvers and automatic or semiautomatic handguns.



neighborhoods produced more gun- carrying than did suburban, and urban and suburban neighborhoods were alike in levels of knife-carrying.

In sum, firearm possession and gun and knife carrying seemed more prominent among youth residing in more rural areas (see also Bryant and Shoemaker 1988 and Nelson, Grant-Worley, Powell, et al. 1996). The immediate inclination is to assume that these behaviors are somehow a function of a more recreational weapons environment. We explore this possibility more directly in the coming section.

### Motivations for Possession and Carrying of Weapons

Though the issue of motivation for possession and carrying of weapons by American youths has been addressed in recent years (Sheley and Wright 1995), it is far from settled. Part of the uncertainty rests with the use of different sample populations across studies, part with how directly motivational variables have been measured, and part with the failure of studies to date to address directly the matter of recreational or sports uses of weapons. We explore the recreational-weapons issue first since, of necessity, it pertains to interpretation of findings regarding levels of weapon ownership found in the majority of studies of this topic. That is, studies of more general gun possession by youths may be exaggerating the threat implied in high levels of possession if such levels pertain to recreational uses of firearms such as hunting and target shooting. We follow discussion of recreational issues with examination of criminality, status enhancement, and the perceived need for protection as motivations for gun- and knife-carrying.

### Recreational Weapons Culture

Sorting recreational gun activity from other types of activity in studies of firearm possession and use has been a thorny issue for researchers (Lizotte and Bordua 1980; Lizotte, Bordua, and

White 1981; Lizotte, Tesoriero, Thornberry, et al. 1994). As noted above, we attempted to address the matter of the recreational weapons culture by asking respondents not to report instances of recreation-related weapons carrying when responding to our survey items. Every survey item that pertained to the carrying of weapons directed the respondent, in underlined prose, not to "count the times" the weapon in question was used for hunting or target shooting (guns) or hunting or woodwork (knives). Nonetheless, we found not only higher levels of weapon possession among more rural populations but also higher levels of carrying guns and knives ("as a weapon") among the same population. Either the respondents in rural areas disregarded ("read through") the directive not to report recreational carrying, or some other reason for transport accounts for the finding.

To gain a sense of weapon-related recreational activity among our respondents, we asked them to indicate the frequency (0 through 8 or more times), during the past twelve months, with which they had gone hunting or gone to a range for target shooting. The items were moderately correlated ( $r = .452$ ) and were summed with scores ranging from 0 to 16. Sixty-one percent of the respondents received a score of zero; 12 percent received scores of one through two; 10 percent scores of three through six; nine percent scores of seven through eleven; and eight percent scores of twelve through sixteen.<sup>15</sup>

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15. We also asked whether or not respondents had gone to a safe place for target shooting during the past year. When this item was included among aggregated indicators of a recreational-weapons culture, the relationship to size of city of residence and to type of school neighborhood became less prominent. As well, recreational items displayed relationships with gang and certain criminality items. This suggested that individuals in non-recreational-weapons settings were test-firing their guns in places and ways that are not usually associated with sporting use.

Recreational activity score, as expected, was related statistically significantly, though only modestly, to size of city or town in which the respondent lived ( $r = -.171$ ) and to the rural, suburban, or urban quality of the neighborhood in which the respondent's school was located ( $r = -.240$ ). Also as expected, the score was related to region of the country in which the respondent resided. Higher scores appeared for the respondents from the North Central, South Central, and Mountain states; lower scores characterized respondents from the New England/Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and Pacific Coast states.

Recreational use of firearms among the present sample was associated at statistically significant levels with possession of every type of firearm of interest in this study, from regular rifles to automatic or semiautomatic handguns and with carrying firearms and knives "as weapons" outside the home. The universality of such relationships would suggest that illegitimate weapon uses also might characterize the juveniles who were involved in recreational gun use. However, recreational activity score was unrelated to each of the criminality measures employed in this study, to measures of status enhancement involving weapons, and to indicators of high levels of exposure to dangerous or protection-suggestive environments.

To gain a sense of the potential for distortion in reports of problematic weapon-related activity when recreational firearm users are included in research samples, we removed from our sample those respondents who registered a score above zero for the recreation activity score (39 percent of the sample). As indicated in Table 10, levels of firearm possession for the remainder of the respondents were considerably lower than those indicated for the entire sample. Possession of any type of gun dropped from 29 to 13 percent and of three or more types of gun from eight to two percent. Regular rifles and regular shotguns were now possessed by only eight and four percent of

the respondents, respectively (as opposed to previous reports of 19 and 18 percent). Percentage owning automatic or semiautomatic rifles fell from eight to two, and percentage with revolvers dropped from seven to three.

(See Table 10)

Importantly, possession of sawed-off shotguns and automatic or semiautomatic handguns fell only one percent each, from two percent to one and from four percent to three percent, respectively (see Table 10). The amount of gun-carrying outside the home was the essentially the same among the reduced sample as among the entire sample, though the likelihood that the gun in question would be carried on the person now exceeded the likelihood that it would be carried in the car. As well, the type of gun carried grew significantly more likely to be an automatic or semiautomatic handgun. No change occurred regarding the percentage of respondents who carried knives as weapons.

It seems, then, that even when our survey respondents were asked not to refer to recreational-  
weapons use in reporting their gun-related activities, many tended to ignore the request, a finding also reported by Nelson and colleagues (1996) following a survey of Oregon adults.<sup>16</sup> The findings obtained after recreational gun users were eliminated from the sample suggests that, to the extent that surveyors sample populations in high recreational gun-use areas (likely more rural in nature), they run the risk of inflating the estimate of more threatening, illegitimate weapon-related activity. The

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16. A reviewer of a previous draft of this report suggested that the notion of carrying a gun "as a weapon" in more rural areas may not reflect the same sense of necessary protection from other people as would characterize gun carrying by more urban residents. Instead, a "weapon" might be thought more generally necessary as much in anticipation of problems with animals as with humans. As well, "being prepared" through carrying a "weapon" likely has a different cultural history and symbolic meaning among rural populations than among urban populations. Among the former, the referent is more general. Among the latter, the referent is decidedly more specific.

likelihood of doing so regarding less rural areas seems significantly lower. Indeed, once recreational gun-users were no longer in our sample, most of the statistically significant relationships between respondent's city-size, urban-rural school neighborhood, and various weapon possession and carrying variables no longer pertained.

### Weapons and Criminal Activity

Conventional wisdom suggests that guns in the hands of juveniles equate to crime by juveniles. Yet, as we have noted, there are other potential uses of guns besides use for crime, and the level of criminality within the present sample appears low. In this section, we explore the extent to which gun- and knife-possession and carrying were related to criminal behavior among the youths in our study.

Five indicators of criminal activity during the past year (arrest, theft, burglary, robbery, drug use, and drug sales) and one indicator of potential involvement in crime (gang membership) were examined for relationships to the various gun possession and gun- and knife-carrying variables of interest in this study. The findings displayed in Table 11 suggest that, though both gun-related activities and crime- and gang-related activities characterized only a minority of our respondents, the two forms of activity were indeed related. While possession of regular and automatic or semiautomatic rifles and possession of regular shotguns displayed no relationship to criminal and gang activity, auto- or semiautomatic handguns very clearly did; possession of sawed-off shotguns and revolvers did so as well, though to a somewhat lesser extent. The carrying of guns and knives as weapons was strongly linked to criminality and gang membership. Gun possession in general was related to some, but not to all, of these behaviors; possession of three or more types of guns was not.

(See Table 11)

Importantly, the findings pertaining to weapons and criminality and gang membership are not new. They have appeared in a number of studies summarized at the outset of this report (albeit generated in those studies by highly select samples such as incarcerated adolescents, youths from a single city, or juveniles from the inner-city). The results in no sense link weapons possession or transport causally to criminality. Yet, they suggest that involvement by juveniles in criminal activity increases the likelihood of involvement in weapon-related activity.

### Weapons as Status Symbols

A perceived need for "respect" is thought by many observers to motivate juveniles to possess and carry weapons, especially firearms. In this view, the gun is a symbolic totem that indicates "toughness" or "machismo," the primary function of which is to impress one's peers. To explore this notion in the present study, we asked our respondents to agree or disagree, on a scale of 1 (strongest agreement) to 10 (strongest disagreement) with the following statements: "In my crowd, if you don't have a gun, you don't get respect"; "My friends would look down on me if I did not carry a gun"; and "My friends would look down on me if I did not carry a knife." No more than five percent of the sample agreed with any one of these statements to any degree (scale score 1 through 6). Table 12 presents findings pertaining to these items and those related to weapon possession and transport.

(See Table 12)

With few exceptions, firearm-related activities were not associated with the need for respect from one's peers among our respondents, as it pertained to gun-possession and carrying. The exceptions, however, are important. Possession of automatic or semiautomatic handguns and carrying a gun outside the home were related to the "status" items. To at least some degree, then,

status enhancement was linked to the kind of firearm possession and transport activity that seems most troublesome in the framing of the issue of youth and weapons as a serious social problem. That is, the need for affirmation of or increase in self-esteem may prompt individuals to arm themselves. The fact of such arming (especially in the sense of public transport of guns), it would seem, would increase the likelihood of use of a gun in problematic situations. This theme is pursued more fully in the next section.

Interestingly, the need for respect as it pertained to knife-carrying was a persistent predictor of the possession and carrying of guns as well as of knife-carrying in twelve months preceding our survey. Additionally, respondents who saw firearms as necessary to status enhancement were more likely than were those who did not to carry knives as weapons. Together with the general lack of association between the status enhancement items that pertained to firearms and the possession and carrying of guns, this finding suggests perhaps that the respondents' belief that guns were necessary to status enhancement did not result in their actual possession and transport because the risks involved in and the consequences deriving from such activity were thought much more serious than were those related to the carrying of knives. In short, the respondents who linked status and firearms conceptually may have been stating that "they would if they could" carry guns to earn respect.<sup>17</sup>

### Weapons as Protection

A number of studies have pointed to self-protection in a dangerous environment as the primary factor motivating the weapon-related activity of juveniles (Callahan and Rivara 1992;

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17. The link between status enhancement and firearm-related activity has not been clear in prior research. Sheley and Wright (1995) found no evidence of an association among incarcerated juvenile offenders but did note some indication of a link among inner-city students. Similarly, Decker and Pennell (1996) report greater belief in the necessity of firearm possession to enhance status among arrestees who were involved in activities with higher levels of gun-related behaviors (gang membership and drug sales).

Callahan, Rivara, and Farrow 1993; Decker and Pennell 1996; Fagan, Piper, and Moore 1986; Sheley and Wright 1995). We employed a number of indicators of the dangerous environment in the present study. While weapon-carrying and criminal activity were not common among our respondents, as the summary findings presented in Table 13 indicate, a social environment that contained weapons was somewhat more frequently reported.

(See Table 13)

Referencing a "violence" scale with a range of one (not violent) to ten (extremely violent), 18 percent of the students in this study assigned a rating of five or above to their neighborhoods. Seventeen percent of our respondents reported being afraid, "sometimes" or "often" (as opposed to "never" or "rarely"), of violence in their neighborhoods. One in four (25 percent) reported that they "sometimes" or "often" personally observed other kids carrying knives as weapons in the respondent's neighborhood. Fifteen percent of the sample had at least some friends ("kids you spend a lot of time with") who regularly carried guns outside the home. Thirteen percent had attended parties or social gatherings during the past twelve months at which shots had been fired; respondents were asked to disregard events that were hunting- or sport-gun related.

More directly indicating a dangerous environment, one in twenty respondents (five percent) reported having a member of his immediate family attacked by someone with a gun; one in ten (nine percent) had friends who had been attacked by someone with a gun. Three percent of the respondents themselves reported having been threatened with a gun and five percent having been threatened with a knife during the past twelve months. Against this backdrop, then, it is not surprising that seven percent of our sample felt that it was "somewhat" or "very" likely that they would have been shot



by the time they had reached their twenty-fifth birthday; the same percentage designated being stabbed by age twenty-five as "somewhat" or "very" likely.

The findings displayed in Table 14 suggest relationships between many measures of dangerous environment and possession of firearms generally, possession of specific types of firearms, and the carrying of both firearms and knives. The most obvious patterns of association pertain to having been threatened with a knife (significantly statistically related to nine of the ten weapon possession and carrying items), having observed youths in the neighborhood carrying knives (significantly related to eight items), expressing a reasonable likelihood of being shot by age twenty-five (related to eight items), and having been threatened with a gun (related to seven items).

(See Table 14)

As striking, reading down columns rather than across rows of Table 14, we find that carrying a gun outside the home was related to each of the dangerous environment items, and both the possession of an automatic or semiautomatic handgun and carrying a knife as a weapon were related to ten of eleven items. Possession of a sawed-off shotgun was linked to affirmative responses to eight dangerous-environment items. Possession of both forms of rifle and of regular shotguns was less obviously linked to the dangerous environment in which the respondent found himself.<sup>18</sup>

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18. Note the negative relationships in Table 14 pertaining to fear of neighborhood violence and possession of guns generally and regular rifles and shotguns specifically. We may be observing here the phenomenon by which recreational users of guns derive a sense of safety through gun possession. The negative sign does not hold for possession of automatic or semiautomatic handguns or the carrying of weapons outside the home. In short, it would seem that we may be observing two populations. One sees the neighborhood as harboring predators but feels safe because he possesses shoulder arms (likely in the home). The other sees the neighborhood as dangerous because he is either engaged in problematic activities or traverses areas in which such activities occur; he more likely carries a handgun outside the home.

The sense that a fairly clear link holds between dangerous environment and weapon possession is buttressed by the responses of those who had carried guns and knives during the past year to a query as to the reasons for carrying. As indicated in the findings reported in Table 15, the perceived need for protection dominated the motivations associated with transport of both forms of weapon -- 43 percent for guns, 72 percent for knives. Holding a gun for someone was the only other seemingly common reason for carrying a weapon, specifically a gun (35 percent). Crime and status enhancement were, relatively speaking, of lesser importance in the carrying decision.

(See Table 15)

#### Multivariate Considerations

The obvious question regarding the issue of dangerous environment and the possession and carrying of weapons among our respondents is whether those seeking protection were also those involved in illegal activity. Assumedly, persons whose routine activities place them in dangerous situations find themselves in greater need of protection. In this vein, we reported earlier that statistically significant relationships obtained between our indicators of criminality and most weapon-related items (see Table 11). Finally, our check of zero-order associations between the criminality items and dangerous-environment indicators found statistical significance across the board; each of the criminality indicators was related to each of the dangerous-environment indicators. This finding points to the need for multivariate analysis.

The findings reported in Table 16 shed more systematic light on the matter of motivations for firearm possession and carrying as well as for the carrying of knives. The logistic regression model whose results are reported in the table was constructed following the testing of a number of

models that utilized demographic and school- and family-related variables examined in this study. Lack of association between many of these and the dependent variables produced an increasingly parsimonious model. As well, significant intercorrelations among indicators of the same variable resulted in the paring of multiple indicators to single indicators of given variables.

(See Table 16)

Importantly, the dependent variables at issue in this analysis were chosen to provide a sense of recreational-type firearm possession (regular shotgun) and other possible types of possession (any gun possessed, three or more types of guns possessed, possession of a revolver) and weapon carrying. The percentage of respondents who possessed automatic or semiautomatic handguns (four percent) was too limited to permit interpretation of the regression results; it was not included in the analysis. Indeed, the percentages of respondents who possessed a revolver (seven percent) and carried a gun outside the home (six percent) were sufficiently limited to prompt caution in interpreting the regression results. Results concerning them are presented in Table 16 merely as “suggestive” regarding what most commentators consider the most troubling of youth-firearm activities: possession and carrying of handguns. More systematic exploration of this issue, with much larger or more directed samples, clearly is called for.

Earlier testing of models of the influence of background variables upon weapon-related activity found few statistically significant relationships. The few variables that displayed more consistent links are included in the model in Table 16: region, size of school, size of city or town in which the respondent resided, race or ethnic identity and age of the respondent, and respondent's self-reported school grade and absence records. The remaining variables in the model pertain to motivations for weapon-related activity. Recreational activity score is employed to signify

involvement in sports-related use of weapons. Level of respect associated with knife-carrying taps status enhancement through weapon-carrying; earlier tests indicated that this item performed better than, and was highly associated with, items pertaining to respect and firearms. Involvement in drug sales indicates involvement in criminal activity; it was highly associated with and performed as well as any of the other criminality indicators and the gang-membership item. Fear of neighborhood violence is utilized to indicate dangerous environment. A second indicator of dangerous environment, extent to which the respondent's friends routinely carry guns, also is included in the model.<sup>19</sup>

The results suggest that only three independent variables consistently were at work, for the present sample, across all or most forms of weapon-related activity: school absences, recreational use of firearms, and friends' gun-carrying. If we assume that recreational gun users do not engage in problematic firearm-related behaviors (as our earlier results suggest), we find that, once we net out the effects of this and other variables, distance from positive social institutions (school absences) and the perceived need for protection in the dangerous environment consistently influenced decisions to possess and carry weapons.

When we examine the influences on each type of weapon activity separately, we find somewhat varying patterns. Possession of "any type of gun" and possession of a regular shotgun,

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19. This indicator obviously conceptually could refer to involvement in criminal activity and to "peer pressure" to carry weapons. However, it should be noted that, in the present model and at the zero-order level, it operates independent of the criminality indicator (drug sales). As well, peer pressure does not operate in a vacuum. It is tied to other activities (such as criminality) and to the need for status enhancement. In the present model and in bivariate results, friends carrying guns operates independent of, and in the opposite direction of, the indicator of the need for status enhancement.

for example, were more likely to occur among respondents living in the South Central part of the country; possession of a revolver and of three or more types of guns were not tied to a particular region. While possession of a revolver and possession of three or more types of guns were tied to recreational activity, they also were linked to dangerous environment; this was not the case for gun possession generally and for possession of a shotgun. Finally, independent of the effects of all other variables, including recreational orientation, the carrying of a gun outside the home was associated with criminality (drug sales) and dangerous environment (fear of neighborhood violence and friends carrying guns routinely) but not with the need for status enhancement.

The actual carrying of a gun or a knife was influenced by a number of variables. Gun-carrying was associated with all of the motivational variables, except status enhancement, and with absences from school. In short, net of the effects of recreational interests upon gun-carrying, guns were carried for most of the "wrong" reasons examined in this study. Holding constant the effects of recreational activity, knives were carried for status enhancement and as a response to a dangerous environment, but not for criminal activity.

### School Responses to the Problem of Weapons

#### Violence as a Problem

Working with high-school administrators in conducting the present study afforded the opportunity to learn more about weapon-related problems in our sample of schools and what administrators were doing to confront the problems. While one in five administrators (19 percent) considered violence either a "somewhat" or a "very serious" problem in their schools (as opposed to "not serious at all" or "not too serious" a problem), many fewer saw guns (two percent) and other weapons (eight percent) as at least somewhat serious. Indeed, no administrator considered it even

somewhat likely that students in his or her school routinely would carry a gun onto school grounds, and only two percent considered it even somewhat likely that some of their students routinely would carry guns while off campus.

Administrators also tended to estimate as relatively low the danger of physical threat to their students. Only 10 percent felt it at least somewhat likely that a student would be physically threatened at school; 10 percent also considered the possibility that their students would be physically threatened while out of school as at least somewhat likely.

Actual Incidents. Low estimates notwithstanding, the same group of administrators overall reported actual experiences with the problem of weapons. Only 42 percent reported *not* recalling any incidents involving guns on school grounds during the past three years. Twenty percent recalled three or more such incidents. Forty-six percent recalled at least three incidents involving knives on school grounds during the past three years; only 17 percent remembered none. Finally, 45 percent of the respondents reported that at least one of their students had been shot, on or off school grounds, during the past three years; indeed, one in four of the administrators (28 percent) reported at least two such shootings.

Not surprisingly, the associations among the majority of the problem, threat, and incident variables just described were statistically significant. A sense of violence as a campus problem also suggested a view of guns ( $r = .622$ ) and other weapons ( $r = .436$ ) on campus as problematic. To the extent that administrators viewed violence on campus as problematic, so also did they offer higher estimates of the likelihood that their students would carry guns onto campus ( $r = .351$ ) and off campus ( $r = .346$ ). The likelihood of threats of physical violence to students on campus as well as off campus was related to the sense of campus itself as violent ( $r = .413$  and  $.332$ , respectively).

Finally, recollections of gun- and knife-related incidents on school grounds during the past three years were themselves related statistically significantly ( $r = .395$ ). Both were linked to recollections of shootings of students, on or off campus, during the same period ( $r = .579$  and  $.315$ , respectively).

Given the high level of public attention to guns and violence in the urban youth culture, we had expected to find most of the above variables related to size of city or town in which the respondent resided and the urban, suburban, or rural character of the school's neighborhood. However, administrator's perception of the school having a problem with violence, guns, or other weapons was unrelated to either variable. Estimates of the likelihood of gun carrying out of school and of threat in or out of school also were unrelated to either variable. Administrator's perception that students were likely to carry guns onto campus was significantly statistically, though negatively, related to the degree of urban character of the school's neighborhood. Only number of gun incidents on school grounds and shootings of students in or out of school were significantly statistically associated positively with city size ( $r = .322$  and  $.438$ , respectively) and with urban character of school neighborhood ( $r = .282$  and  $.244$ , respectively).

Most of the problem, threat, and incident variables were significantly associated with the administrator's perception of drugs as a problem at his or her school; sense of a drug problem was highly related to sense of a violence problem, for example ( $r = .624$ ). The administrator's estimate of the percentage of the student body from families receiving public assistance also was related significantly to many of the problem, threat, and incident variables -- to number of gun incidents on campus, for example ( $r = .260$ ). Estimate of the percentage of students who drop out of school was related to half of the variables in question -- to likelihood of threat to a student off campus, for example ( $r = .350$ ).

## Measures to Limit Violence on Campus

Administrators were asked to identify which measures, from a long list, that their schools had implemented to reduce violence. Table 17 displays the percentage of administrators responding affirmatively to each measure. Those that were more common devices included revised disciplinary codes, locker searches, non-police monitors, conflict resolution programs, revised dress codes, multicultural training, designating schools as gun-free and drug-free zones, and suspensions for weapons violations. Relatively few schools (under 10 percent) were employing ID checks at school entrances, the use of metal detectors at school entrances, and video monitoring of hallways and classrooms (though 31 percent used such monitors on school busses). Police patrols in hallways and on school grounds found slightly more favor (15 percent and 27 percent, respectively) as did extra police patrols around school property (21 percent). Photo ID systems for students and staff had been introduced into 33 percent of the schools.

(See Table 17)

None of the violence-limiting measures discussed above was related significantly statistically to size of city or town of residence of the respondent. Only three (suspension for weapons violations [negative association], a dress code, and a photo ID system for staff and students) were related to degree of urban character of the neighborhood in which the school was located. Only three (conflict resolution programs, photo IDs, and video monitoring of busses [negative association]), were significantly related to perception of drugs as a problem for the school.

Percentage of students who drop out of school was the predictor of the greatest number of violence-limiting measures utilized by schools. It was associated significantly statistically with the use of police on campus and in school hallways, the deployment of extra police patrols around



school property, the use of non-police monitors at the school, the use of photo IDs for staff and students, and the establishment of the school as a gun-free zone. Finally, the administrator's estimate of the percentage of students from families receiving government assistance was linked to the use of police patrols in hallways and the use of video monitoring in classrooms and busses.

In sum, differing pictures of school safety emerge dependent upon whether we focus upon administrators' estimates of degree of danger on campus or upon their recollections of weapon-related incidents on campus or involving their pupils more generally. The latter suggest the more serious situation. While it may be that the incidents to which administrators referred were of low seriousness, it is also important to note that nearly half of the administrators (45 percent) recalled that at least one student from among their pupils had been shot during the past three years (again, such shootings did not necessarily occur on school grounds).<sup>20</sup> Neither estimates of level of danger nor recollections of actual weapons-related incidents were related to the urban, suburban, or rural quality (city or neighborhood) of the school. However, they were related to administrators' estimates of level of campus drug problem and to school dropout rate.

Most schools had instituted some form of institutional response to the problem of violence. In the main, these were not extreme and, during the past decade, have become fairly common in schools nationally; they included such devices as conflict resolution and multicultural programs, revised disciplinary and dress codes, and suspensions for weapons violations. Many fewer schools had turned to law enforcement for institutionalized assistance with the problem of violence. Again,

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20. It may be that the time referent, "three years," somehow softens the effect of the incidents in question. That is, an administrator who recalls a student having been shot three years ago may not indicate the sense of "problem" indicated by the administrator who recalls a more recent shooting victim.

choice of violence-limiting mechanism was not related to the urban, suburban, or rural quality (city or neighborhood) of the school, though it was related to perception of drugs as a problem for the school and, especially, to dropout rate.

### Conclusions

The findings reviewed in this report, while not derived from a strictly random sample of high school males, likely come closer to capturing the weapons "experience" of the average American juvenile than have most other studies to date. Prior research has focused upon incarcerated delinquents and inner-city youths or upon samples from select sites. Ours is the first to question a broader sample of youths about weapons-related experiences in any serious depth. We did not succeed fully in the sense that our sampling method produced a "good boy" bias to some extent (though we noted above that ours was hardly a sample of saints). We believe, however, that, relative to the average incarcerated delinquent, most juveniles are "good boys." Further, most research indicates that the ratio of "good" to "bad" boys rises as we move away from inner-city populations.

### Summary of Findings

Through analysis of our survey results, we found, first, that levels of gun possession and carrying among our respondents were relatively low, at least compared to levels reported by more select samples. As we moved away from examining the issue of firearms that are more suited to hunting and sporting uses (rifles and shotguns), we found that fewer than one in ten respondents possessed a revolver, only one in twenty-five an automatic or semiautomatic handgun, and only one in fifty a sawed-off shotgun. Six percent of the respondents had carried a gun outside the home within the past twelve months, a considerably lower percentage than has been reported by more

select samples. The most commonly carried guns were revolvers and automatic or semiautomatic handguns. Finally, nearly two in ten respondents had carried a knife outside the home during the past twelve months. Importantly, few respondents carried weapons frequently (though, in some instances, a few carriers of weapons admittedly can cause tremendous havoc).

Second, we found that, while rifles and shotguns were more likely to be possessed by respondents from smaller communities, with the exception of the more common possession of revolvers by students in schools in rural settings, handgun possession was statistically no more likely to occur in smaller than in larger communities. Gun-carrying was more likely to occur in smaller than in larger communities. Knife-carrying was unrelated to specific community size though respondents from schools in rural settings were more likely than those from suburban and urban neighborhoods to carry knives.

Third, we discovered that, despite appeals to respondents to refrain from references to weapons used for sporting purposes, many recreationally oriented respondents answered affirmatively when asked about possession and carrying of weapons. This was not a reflection of a relationship between recreational weapon orientation and involvement in less legitimate weapon-related activities; no relationship was found. Recreational weapon-related activities appeared more likely to characterize respondents from more rural communities, suggesting that estimates of problematic weapon-related activities that rely on rural populations may be exaggerated.

Fourth, though carrying of guns and knives and involvement in criminal, drug, and gang activities were relatively infrequent in the present sample, links between these activities were as apparent in this as in any previous study. To the extent that respondents engaged in legally problematic behavior, their chances of engaging in weapon-related activities increased.

Fifth, the relationship between the pursuit of status enhancement through weapon possession and the actual possession of firearms was not strong overall, but it did pertain specifically to the possession of automatic or semiautomatic handguns and to the carrying of guns and knives. Importantly, however, once the effects of other variables were held constant, the status enhancement variable was related only to the carrying of knives.

Sixth, as it has in numerous other studies, the degree to which the respondent's social environment might be labeled dangerous had a direct and consistent influence on the likelihood that he would engage in weapon-related activities. This was true even of respondents who did not engage in unlawful behaviors such as crime and drug sales. We infer from these findings that much weapon possession and carrying among youth such as those in our sample is motivated by fear for personal safety.

Finally, our attempt to gain a sense of school violence through administrators' eyes produced two pictures. The first, constructed from estimates of the amount of violence and weapon-related problems in the schools, suggested a problem of fairly small proportions. Most administrators considered the possibility of physical threat to their students as relatively unlikely. The second picture was drawn from administrators' recollections of incidents involving guns, knives, and other weapons on their campuses during the past three years as well as the recollection of how many of their students had been shot, on or off campus, during the same period. While no consensus exists regarding the number of such incidents necessary to constitute a "problem," importantly, six in ten administrators could recall weapon-related incidents at their schools and nearly half reported that at least one of their students had been the victim of a shooting.

Schools' responses to the problem of violence, whether ex post facto or anticipatory, took fairly patterned forms. The average school both policed itself and attempted to educate its student body about violence. A much smaller percentage invited police onto or around school grounds to confront the problem of weapons and violence. Of significance, neither the amount of violence nor the institutional response to it was related to whether the community in which the school was located was large or small.

### Policy Implications

Our findings indicate the need for policy aimed at reducing the likelihood that youths such as those sampled in the present study will become involved in weapon possession and carrying -- this, rather than the more common call for policy to confront a problem already well developed. What we found were many more schools and students with little or no experience with weapons and violence than those with considerable such experience. Even considering those respondents who subscribed to a recreation-based use of weapons, the majority of students whom we surveyed did not possess weapons, and the vast majority did not carry them outside the home. Overall, the great majority of administrators did not consider their schools unsafe.

By the same token, one in five of our respondents feared violence in their neighborhoods, one in six had friends who routinely carried guns, nearly one in ten had been threatened with a gun during the past twelve months, and about one in twenty considered it at least somewhat possible that he would be shot by the time he reached twenty-five years of age. Administrators in more than half of our sampled schools recalled recent weapon-related incidents on their campuses, and nearly half recalled the shooting of at least one student. Eight in ten schools had revised their disciplinary codes

and six of ten their dress codes to counter violence. One in four schools had police patrols on school grounds.

In short, weapon-related violence is not unknown to most schools and students like those we sampled. Further, to the extent that it is known, it is influenced by the same variables that have influenced it in more troubled environments: crime, drug sales, gangs, and the perceived need for protection in a hostile world. We have argued elsewhere (Sheley and Wright 1995) that while communities must do what they can to remove guns from the hands of juveniles, they likely will not accomplish this goal until they have removed the structural and cultural conditions that now promote gun-related activity in the youth population. If we are correct in this assessment, and correct as well that most of our current research sites have not yet "crossed the line" into truly unsafe situations, then the key to warding off problems lies in discouraging the conditions that have produced them in other settings, that is, in discouraging the development of a youth culture that defines gun-possession as necessary to one's survival. Once such a culture exists, criminal justice attempts to disrupt gun sales and acquisition markets may succeed partially, but will not rid communities of the problem because demand for weapons will remain. Indeed, a more organized supply likely will develop to meet demand.

Our findings suggest that most schools have put into place the fundamental elements of persuasion against a culture of violence -- some combination of deterrence (locker searches, for example) and ideology (teaching conflict avoidance skills, for example). The education system is asked to assume remediation of yet another social problem. However, there may be a danger in assigning control of violence solely or even primarily to the school curriculum. Communities may gain schools that serve as safe havens and permit education to occur, quite reasonable goals. Yet,

schools rarely are the source of violence so much as the place where disputes arising in the neighborhood are acted upon. To the extent that schools succeed in pushing violence off campus, it likely will be displaced into the surrounding community.

The issue for communities, then, is how to dissuade youths from resolving disputes through violent means and thereby convincing them that weapons are not necessary to the conduct of everyday living. Conflict resolution and multicultural sensitivity training in schools clearly are helpful, but they do not address the conditions that produce disputes in the neighborhood in the first place. Nor do they touch deeply, if at all, youths only marginally committed to education, those with high school absence records and, certainly, youths who have dropped out of school. Our findings have suggested that schools with high rates of absenteeism appear to encounter greater weapon-related problems on campus. This, it seems to us, is more a community problem than a school problem. Communities with such problems understandably must turn to the criminal justice system for help.<sup>21</sup> Communities without such problems, or with lesser versions of them, should be exploring policy initiatives that identify and address the antecedents of weapon-related activities among juveniles.

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21. Importantly, intervention methods by which to reduce firearm-related violence among youth now are being tested in Boston. They target reductions without necessarily addressing larger community structural issues. The results have been encouraging though considerably more research must be conducted in this area (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga 1996; Kennedy 1997).

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*Table 1. Characteristics of Sample Schools*

|                                | %<br>(N=53) |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Region</b>                  |             |
| New England                    | 4           |
| Mid-Atlantic                   | 10          |
| East North Central             | 11          |
| West North Central             | 11          |
| South Atlantic                 | 11          |
| East South Central             | 10          |
| West South Central             | 11          |
| Mountain                       | 15          |
| Pacific Coast                  | 17          |
| <b>School Type</b>             |             |
| Elementary through High School | 4           |
| Middle through High School     | 6           |
| High School only               | 90          |
| <b>School Size</b>             |             |
| 101-500                        | 15          |
| 501-1,000                      | 28          |
| 1,001-2,500                    | 53          |
| 2,501-5,000                    | 4           |
| <b>Public-Private</b>          |             |
| Public                         | 87          |
| Private, not Catholic          | 7           |
| Catholic                       | 6           |
| <b>City Size</b>               |             |
| Under 2,501                    | 9           |
| 2,501-5,000                    | 25          |
| 5,001-10,000                   | 36          |
| 10,001-25,000                  | 9           |
| 25,001-100,000                 | 11          |
| 100,001-250,000                | 2           |
| Over 250,000                   | 8           |



*Table 2. Respondent Characteristics*

|  | %  | (N)   |
|--|----|-------|
| <b>Age</b>   |    | (727) |
| 15   | 1  |       |
| 16   | 32 |       |
| 17   | 47 |       |
| 18   | 18 |       |
| 19-21  | 2  |       |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>  |    | (729) |
| White  | 70 |       |
| Black  | 7  |       |
| Hispanic   | 16 |       |
| Asian  | 3  |       |
| Other  | 4  |       |
| <b>Type of housing</b>   |    | (721) |
| Single-family house  | 81 |       |
| Other  | 19 |       |
| <b>Family living situation</b>                                   |    | (731) |
| Both parents   | 61 |       |
| Parent and step-parent   | 15 |       |
| Mother only  | 16 |       |
| Other  | 8  |       |
| <b>Adult head of household education</b>                         |    | (723) |
| Less than High School  | 19 |       |
| High School Degree   | 29 |       |
| College or more  | 52 |       |
| <b>Government assistance</b>                                     |    | (731) |
| No   | 86 |       |
| Yes  | 14 |       |
| <b>Attend services of a church<br/>or religious organization</b> |    | (731) |
| Every week   | 34 |       |
| Once a month   | 15 |       |
| Several times a year   | 12 |       |
| Once a year  | 11 |       |
| Less than once a year  | 10 |       |
| Never  | 18 |       |

*Table 3. Respondent Academic Profile*

|   | %  | (N)   |
|---|----|-------|
| Grades                                  |    | (730) |
| Mostly A's                              | 22 |       |
| Mostly B's                              | 42 |       |
| Mostly C's                              | 31 |       |
| Mostly D's or F's                       | 5  |       |
| Absences                                |    | (733) |
| Never                                   | 17 |       |
| Once a month or less                    | 51 |       |
| A few times a month                     | 24 |       |
| Once a week                             | 3  |       |
| More than once a week                   | 5  |       |
| Suspensions and expulsions              |    | (731) |
| Never                                   | 67 |       |
| Once                                    | 20 |       |
| More than once                          | 13 |       |
| Anticipate finishing high school        |    | (733) |
| No                                      | 1  |       |
| Probably                                | 5  |       |
| Certainly                               | 94 |       |
| Plan to go to college after high school |    | (731) |
| No                                      | 10 |       |
| Yes, but not right away                 | 29 |       |
| Yes, right away                         | 61 |       |

*Table 4. Illegal Activity Among Family and Friends*

|   | %  | (N)   |
|---|----|-------|
| Family member convicted of a felony                 | 11 | (733) |
| Close friend served time in a correctional facility | 24 | (730) |
| Males in family carry guns                          |    | (707) |
| Some  | 17 |       |
| Most or all   | 3  |       |
| Close friend has shot someone                       | 7  | (729) |
| Friends carry guns                                  |    | (705) |
| Some  | 13 |       |
| Most or all   | 1  |       |

*Table 5. Criminal and Gang Activity*

|   | %    | (N)   |
|---|------|-------|
| Arrested or picked up by police during lifetime           | 25   | (732) |
| Arrested or picked up by police during the past 12 months | 21   | (726) |
| Average age of first arrest or apprehension               | 14.6 | (182) |
| Crimes committed during past 12 months                    |      |       |
| Theft   | 14   | (727) |
| Armed robbery   | 2    | (726) |
| Burglary  | 8    | (726) |
| Drug use  | 5    | (726) |
| Drug sale   | 3    | (725) |
| Gang membership   | 8    | (726) |

*Table 6. Firearm Possession<sup>a</sup>*

|                                     | %<br>(N=730) |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Any type of gun                     | 29           |
| Regular rifle                       | 19           |
| Automatic or semiautomatic rifle    | 8            |
| Regular shotgun                     | 18           |
| Sawed-off shotgun                   | 2            |
| Revolver                            | 7            |
| Automatic or semi-automatic handgun | 4            |
| Owens 3 or more types of guns       | 8            |

<sup>a</sup> Multiple responses permitted.

*Table 3. Respondent Academic Profile*

|   | %  | (N)   |
|---|----|-------|
| Grades                                  |    | (730) |
| Mostly A's                              | 22 |       |
| Mostly B's                              | 42 |       |
| Mostly C's                              | 31 |       |
| Mostly D's or F's                       | 5  |       |
| Absences                                |    | (733) |
| Never                                   | 17 |       |
| Once a month or less                    | 51 |       |
| A few times a month                     | 24 |       |
| Once a week                             | 3  |       |
| More than once a week                   | 5  |       |
| Suspensions and expulsions              |    | (731) |
| Never                                   | 67 |       |
| Once                                    | 20 |       |
| More than once                          | 13 |       |
| Anticipate finishing high school        |    | (733) |
| No                                      | 1  |       |
| Probably                                | 5  |       |
| Certainly                               | 94 |       |
| Plan to go to college after high school |    | (731) |
| No                                      | 10 |       |
| Yes, but not right away                 | 29 |       |
| Yes, right away                         | 61 |       |

*Table 4. Illegal Activity Among Family and Friends*

|   | %  | (N)   |
|---|----|-------|
| Family member convicted of a felony                 | 11 | (733) |
| Close friend served time in a correctional facility | 24 | (730) |
| Males in family carry guns                          |    | (707) |
| Some  | 17 |       |
| Most or all   | 3  |       |
| Close friend has shot someone                       | 7  | (729) |
| Friends carry guns                                  |    | (705) |
| Some  | 13 |       |
| Most or all   | 1  |       |

*Table 7. Carrying Weapons*

|   | %  | (N)   |
|---|----|-------|
| Carried gun outside home within past 12 months  |    | (731) |
| Never   | 94 |       |
| Only now and then   | 4  |       |
| Most or all of the time   | 2  |       |
| Carrying vs keeping guns in a car (for those who reported carrying a gun within the past 12 months)   |    | (39)  |
| More likely to carry gun  | 41 |       |
| More likely to keep gun in car  | 59 |       |
| Most common type of firearm carried (for those who reported carrying a gun within the past 12 months) |    | (30)  |
| A regular rifle   | 3  |       |
| An automatic or semiautomatic rifle   | 3  |       |
| A regular shotgun   | 7  |       |
| A sawed-off shotgun   | 7  |       |
| A revolver  | 30 |       |
| An automatic or semi-automatic handgun  | 50 |       |
| Carried knife as a weapon outside home within past 12 months  |    | (726) |
| Never   | 83 |       |
| Only now and then   | 12 |       |
| Most of the time  | 2  |       |
| All the time  | 3  |       |

**Table 9. Weapon Possession/Carrying by School Neighborhood**

| Weapon Possession/Carrying                                    | School Neighborhood |                   |                |
|---|---------------------|-------------------|----------------|
|   | Rural<br>% (N)      | Suburban<br>% (N) | Urban<br>% (N) |
| Firearm possession*   | (174)               | (261)             | (231)          |
| Any type of gun*  | 44                  | 29                | 17             |
| Regular rifle*  | 30                  | 17                | 10             |
| Automatic or semiautomatic rifle*                             | 10                  | 9                 | 4              |
| Regular shotgun*  | 31                  | 18                | 8              |
| Sawed-off shotgun   | 2                   | 2                 | 3              |
| Revolver*   | 11                  | 5                 | 5              |
| Automatic or semi-automatic handgun                           | 6                   | 3                 | 4              |
| Owens 3 or more types of guns*                                | 13                  | 8                 | 1              |
| Carried gun outside home during past 12 months*               | (174)               | (261)             | (232)          |
| Never   | 90                  | 97                | 94             |
| Only now and then   | 7                   | 2                 | 5              |
| Most or all of the time                                       | 3                   | 1                 | 1              |
| Carried knife as a weapon outside home during past 12 months* | (172)               | (261)             | (231)          |
| Never   | 74                  | 85                | 86             |
| Only now and then   | 16                  | 10                | 11             |
| Most of the time  | 4                   | 3                 | 1              |
| All the time  | 6                   | 2                 | 2              |

\* Multiple responses permitted.

\*\*  $p < .05$

**Table 10. Firearm Possession for Entire Sample and for Restricted Sample Without Recreational Gun Users\***

|                                     | Entire<br>Sample<br>%<br>(N=730) | Restricted<br>Sample<br>%<br>(N=433) |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Any type of gun                     | 29                               | 13                                   |
| Regular rifle                       | 19                               | 8                                    |
| Automatic or semiautomatic rifle    | 8                                | 2                                    |
| Regular shotgun                     | 18                               | 4                                    |
| Sawed-off shotgun                   | 2                                | 1                                    |
| Revolver                            | 7                                | 3                                    |
| Automatic or semi-automatic handgun | 4                                | 3                                    |
| Owens 3 or more types of guns       | 8                                | 2                                    |

\* Multiple responses permitted.

Table 11. *Weapon Activity by Criminal and Gang Activity*

| Weapon Possession/Carrying  | Criminal Activity/Gang Membership (%) |                            |                                    |                                   |                                  |                                    |   |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
|   | Arrest<br>(N=723)<br>no/yes           | Theft<br>(N=724)<br>no/yes | Bur-<br>glary<br>(N=723)<br>no/yes | Rob-<br>bery<br>(N=723)<br>no/yes | Drug<br>Use<br>(N=723)<br>no/yes | Drug<br>Sales<br>(N=722)<br>no/yes | Gang Mem-<br>bership<br>(N=723)<br>no/yes |
| Any type of gun   | 28/34                                 | 28/37                      | 29/36                              | 28/73*                            | 28/46*                           | 28/50*                             | 28/47*                                    |
| Regular rifle   | 18/19                                 | 18/21                      | 19/14                              | 18/27                             | 18/27                            | 19/13                              | 19/18                                     |
| Automatic or semi-<br>automatic rifle                             | 8/7                                   | 7/11                       | 8/4                                | 8/18                              | 8/9                              | 8/8                                | 7/12                                      |
| Regular shotgun   | 17/23                                 | 17/25                      | 18/18                              | 18/18                             | 18/30                            | 18/17                              | 18/25                                     |
| Sawed-off shotgun   | 2/3                                   | 1/6*                       | 2/9*                               | 2/18*                             | 2/6                              | 2/13*                              | 2/5                                       |
| Revolver  | 7/8                                   | 6/14*                      | 7/9                                | 7/18                              | 6/15                             | 6/21*                              | 6/18*                                     |
| Automatic or semi-<br>automatic handgun                           | 3/9*                                  | 3/13*                      | 4/13*                              | 4/46*                             | 4/12*                            | 4/21*                              | 3/15                                      |
| Owns 3 or more types of guns                                      | 8/9                                   | 7/13                       | 8/7                                | 8/18                              | 8/15                             | 8/8                                | 8/12                                      |
| Carried gun outside home<br>within past 12 months                 | 4/11*                                 | 3/21*                      | 4/27*                              | 5/64*                             | 5/27*                            | 4/54*                              | 3/32*                                     |
| Carried knife as a weapon out-<br>side home within past 12 months | 13/34*                                | 13/44*                     | 14/56*                             | 17/80*                            | 17/38*                           | 16/57*                             | 15/33*                                    |

\*  $p < .05$

Table 12. *Weapon Activity by Status Interest in Weapons*

| Weapon Possession/Carrying                                   | Weapons as Status Symbols (%)  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
|  | In my crowd, if you don't have a gun, you don't get respect<br>(N=723)<br>agree/disagree | My friends would look down on me if I did not carry a gun<br>(N=720)<br>agree/disagree | My friends would look down on me if I did not carry a knife<br>(N=723)<br>agree/disagree |
| Any type of gun  | 42/29  | 41/29  | 48/28*   |
| Regular rifle  | 19/19  | 10/19  | 19/19  |
| Automatic or semi-automatic rifle                            | 6/8  | 10/8   | 19/7*  |
| Regular shotgun  | 22/18  | 21/18  | 30/18  |
| Sawed-off shotgun  | 3/2  | 7/2  | 7/2*   |
| Revolver   | 6/7  | 10/6   | 15/6   |
| Automatic or semi-automatic handgun                          | 14/4*  | 14/4*  | 15/4*  |
| Owens 3 or more types of guns                                | 5/8  | 7/8  | 15/8   |
| Carried gun outside home within past 12 months               | 19/5*  | 23/5*  | 22/5*  |
| Carried knife as a weapon outside home within past 12 months | 32/17*   | 37/17*   | 48/16*   |

\*  $p < .05$



*Table 13. Indicators of Dangerous Social Environment*

|   | %  | (N)   |
|---|----|-------|
| Rating of neighborhood violence   |    | (724) |
| Not violent   | 82 |       |
| Violent   | 18 |       |
| Afraid of neighborhood violence   |    | (730) |
| Never   | 52 |       |
| Rarely  | 31 |       |
| Sometimes or often  | 17 |       |
| Observed other kids carrying knives as weapons in neighborhood                  |    | (727) |
| Never   | 50 |       |
| Rarely  | 25 |       |
| Sometimes   | 18 |       |
| Often   | 7  |       |
| Friends regularly carry guns  |    | (705) |
| None  | 86 |       |
| Some  | 13 |       |
| Most or all   | 1  |       |
| Attended parties/social gatherings where shots were fired during past 12 months |    | (733) |
| Never   | 87 |       |
| Rarely  | 8  |       |
| Sometimes or often  | 5  |       |
| Family member attacked by someone with a gun during past 12 months (% yes)      | 5  | (733) |
| Friends attacked by someone with a gun during past 12 months                    |    | (723) |
| None  | 77 |       |
| One   | 14 |       |
| More than one   | 9  |       |
| Threatened with a gun while off school grounds during past 12 months            |    | (733) |
| Never   | 92 |       |
| Just once   | 5  |       |
| More than once  | 3  |       |
| Threatened with a knife while off school grounds during past 12 months          |    | (728) |
| Never   | 87 |       |
| Just once   | 8  |       |
| More than once  | 5  |       |
| Likelihood of being shot with a gun by age 25                                   |    | (732) |
| Very unlikely   | 73 |       |
| Not too likely  | 20 |       |
| Somewhat or very likely   | 7  |       |
| Likelihood of being stabbed with a knife by age 25                              |    | (732) |
| Very unlikely   | 74 |       |
| Not too likely  | 19 |       |
| Somewhat or very likely   | 7  |       |

Table 14. *Dangerous Social Environment by Weapon Possession and Carrying (Pearson Correlation Coefficients Reported)*

| Indicators of Dangerous Social Environment  | Firearm Possession |               |                                   |                 |                   |          |                                     | Weapon Carrying  |        |        |
|---|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|------------------|--------|--------|
|   | Any type of gun    | Regular rifle | Automatic or semi-automatic rifle | Regular shotgun | Sawed-off shotgun | Revolver | Automatic or semi-automatic handgun | 3+ types of guns | Gun    | Knife  |
| Rating of neighborhood violence (N=718)   | -.009              | -.055         | .015                              | -.012           | .062 *            | .040     | .160 *                              | .029             | .302 * | .248 * |
| Fear of neighborhood violence (N=723)   | -.076 *            | -.084 *       | -.037                             | -.064 *         | -.012             | .006     | .085 *                              | -.045            | .112 * | .096 * |
| Observed other kids carrying knives as weapons in neighborhood (N=724)                  | .098 *             | .031          | .037                              | .077 *          | .077 *            | .130 *   | .204 *                              | .113 *           | .262 * | .497 * |
| Friends regularly carry guns (N=699)  | .126 *             | .038          | .065 *                            | .072 *          | .167 *            | .218 *   | .267 *                              | .141 *           | .544 * | .321 * |
| Attended parties/social gatherings where shots were fired during past 12 months (N=726) | .055               | -.018         | -.037                             | -.007           | .087 *            | .053     | .169 *                              | .004             | .341 * | .209 * |
| Family member attacked by someone with a gun during past 12 months (N=726)              | .020               | -.037         | .036                              | -.017           | .108 *            | .047     | .085 *                              | .008             | .259 * | .178 * |
| Friend attacked by someone with a gun during past 12 months (N=717)                     | -.003              | -.053         | .051                              | -.002           | .147 *            | .123 *   | .131 *                              | .049             | .328 * | .220 * |
| Threatened with a gun while off school grounds during past 12 months (N=726)            | .063 *             | .008          | .048                              | .012            | .172 *            | .101 *   | .207 *                              | .104 *           | .424 * | .236 * |
| Threatened with a knife while off school grounds during past 12 months (N=721)          | .112 *             | .065 *        | .132 *                            | .068 *          | .162 *            | .007     | .138 *                              | .127 *           | .294 * | .441 * |
| Likelihood of being shot with a gun by age 25 (N=725)                                   | .090 *             | .081 *        | .052                              | .063 *          | .008              | .076 *   | .170 *                              | .065 *           | .214 * | .284 * |
| Likelihood of being stabbed with a knife by age 25 (N=725)                              | .046               | .029          | .018                              | .042            | .030              | .098 *   | .184 *                              | .057             | .228 * | .323 * |

\*  $p < .05$

Table 15. Reasons for Carrying Weapons<sup>a</sup>

| Reasons                       | Gun<br>%<br>(N=40) | Knife<br>%<br>(N=127) |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| I needed protection           | 43                 | 72                    |
| I was holding it for someone  | 35                 | 10                    |
| I used the weapon in a crime  | 10                 | 4                     |
| To scare someone              | 18                 | 12                    |
| To get back at someone        | 18                 | 5                     |
| Most of my friends carry them | 10                 | 13                    |
| It made me feel important     | 10                 | 6                     |
| Other                         | 15                 | 10                    |

<sup>a</sup> For those who reported carrying weapon within the past 12 months. Multiple responses permitted.

Table 16. Logistic Regression of Firearm-Related Activities on Motivational and Selected Background Variables (Beta Coefficients Reported)

|  | Possession                    |                               |                     |                                | Carrying       |                  |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
|  | Any type<br>of gun<br>(N=683) | Regular<br>shotgun<br>(N=683) | Revolver<br>(N=683) | 3+ types<br>of guns<br>(N=683) | Gun<br>(N=685) | Knife<br>(N=683) |
| Region <sup>a</sup>                                |                               |                               |                     |                                |                |                  |
| North Central                                      | .125                          | -.280                         | 1.173               | .240                           | .100           | -.681            |
| South Atlantic                                     | .003                          | -1.009                        | 1.648               | .068                           | -.630          | -.438            |
| South Central                                      | .935*                         | .973*                         | 2.141               | .895                           | .394           | -.253            |
| Mountain   | .411                          | -.824                         | 1.930               | .562                           | -8.032         | -.279            |
| Pacific  | -.088                         | -1.032                        | 1.828               | -.362                          | -1.625         | -.462            |
| City Size  | -.155                         | -.193                         | .001                | .086                           | -.363          | -.206            |
| School Size  | -.276                         | -.321                         | -.128               | -.569                          | .033           | .033             |
| Race/Ethnicity <sup>b</sup>                        |                               |                               |                     |                                |                |                  |
| Black  | -.990                         | -1.236                        | .046                | -.460                          | -.400          | -.346            |
| Hispanic   | -1.126*                       | -.661                         | -.866               | .297                           | 2.332*         | -.642            |
| Other  | .078                          | .010                          | -7.290              | .031                           | 1.212          | .409             |
| Age  | -.203                         | -.129                         | .193                | .337                           | -.264          | -.256            |
| Grades   | .122                          | .245                          | .148                | .223                           | .186           | .333*            |
| Absences   | .315*                         | .270                          | .448*               | .052                           | .669*          | .376*            |
| Recreational use of firearms                       | .257*                         | .309*                         | .184*               | .273*                          | .137*          | .040             |
| Level of respect associated<br>with knife carrying | -.021                         | -.016                         | .086                | .087                           | .153           | -.124            |
| Involvement in drug sales                          | .499                          | -.329                         | .557                | .330                           | 1.340*         | .081             |
| Fear of neighborhood violence                      | .116                          | .224                          | .212                | -.006                          | .756*          | .365*            |
| Friends carry guns routinely                       | .546                          | .439                          | 1.168*              | 1.224*                         | 1.789*         | 1.446*           |
| Constant   | .810                          | -.135                         | -12.635*            | -11.804*                       | -7.165         | .697             |
| Model $\chi^2$ (df=18)                             | 231.601*                      | 253.562*                      | 91.336*             | 136.577*                       | 127.788*       | 111.805*         |

\* $p < .05$     <sup>a</sup>New England/Mid Atlantic omitted.    <sup>b</sup>White omitted.

*Table 17. School Efforts to Reduce Violence*

| Measures   | % Yes | (N) |
|--|-------|-----|
| Mandatory "see-through" book bags and back packs | 0     | 48  |
| Revised student conduct and discipline codes     | 81    | 48  |
| Student ID checks at school entrance             | 6     | 48  |
| Metal detectors at entrances                     | 2     | 48  |
| Locker searches                                  | 55    | 47  |
| Police patrols in school hallways                | 15    | 48  |
| Police patrols on school grounds                 | 27    | 48  |
| Extra police patrols around school property      | 21    | 47  |
| Non-police monitors in school, on grounds        | 40    | 47  |
| Automatic suspension for weapons violations      | 96    | 48  |
| Conflict resolution, mediation programs          | 71    | 48  |
| Revise dress code                                | 63    | 48  |
| Multicultural sensitivity training               | 60    | 47  |
| Photo ID system for students, staff              | 33    | 48  |
| Establish school as a gun-free zone              | 66    | 47  |
| Establish school as a drug free zone             | 74    | 46  |
| Video monitoring of hallways                     | 10    | 48  |
| Video monitoring of classrooms                   | 2     | 48  |
| Video monitoring on school buses                 | 31    | 48  |

# TULANE UNIVERSITY

## NATIONAL YOUTH STUDY



A Survey Conducted by the Department of Sociology  
of Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana

Joseph F. Sheley, Ph.D.

and

James D. Wright, Ph.D.

Principal Investigators

1995

Tulane

No. \_\_\_\_\_

## NATIONAL YOUTH STUDY

Tulane University  
New Orleans, LA

We read all the time about the activities and problems of young people. But no one takes the time to ask young people directly about these issues. We want to know from you how you think and feel about a number of topics. Please complete this questionnaire as accurately as you can. Every response is very important. It takes people about 25 minutes on average to complete the questions.

**DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE.** We are using identification numbers rather than names to file the information you send us. You will never be identified as having participated in this study.

When you are done, please place the questionnaire in the return envelope and mail it to us. If you are concerned that someone else may see it, we suggest that you take it directly to a mailbox and drop it in yourself.

Finally, if you want us to enter your name among those in a drawing for one of ten prizes of \$100, please fill out the card on the last page of the questionnaire and place it separately in the return envelope.

Thanks for your help.

1. Let's start with a few questions about yourself.

1. First, how old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ years

2. Circle which of the following best describes the racial or ethnic group you belong to:

White ..... 1  
Black or African American ..... 2  
Hispanic ..... 3  
Asian or Asian American ..... 4  
American Indian ..... 5  
Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Please circle the type of home you live in:

single-family house... 1    duplex... 2    apartment... 3

trailer... 4    public housing development... 5

group home, detention center... 6    other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

4. Please look at the following list of neighborhood problems and circle how much each is a problem for **YOUR OWN NEIGHBORHOOD**:

|                              | How much of a problem: |                  |                  |
|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                              | Very Serious           | Somewhat Serious | Not Very Serious |
| a. drug addicts              | 3                      | 2                | 1                |
| b. drug sellers              | 3                      | 2                | 1                |
| c. abandoned houses or shops | 3                      | 2                | 1                |
| d. gunfire                   | 3                      | 2                | 1                |
| e. burglaries                | 3                      | 2                | 1                |
| f. litter and trash          | 3                      | 2                | 1                |
| g. abandoned cars            | 3                      | 2                | 1                |
| h. muggings                  | 3                      | 2                | 1                |
| i. winos, drunks             | 3                      | 2                | 1                |
| j. graffiti                  | 3                      | 2                | 1                |

5. Are you personally ever afraid of violence in your neighborhood?

never... 1    rarely... 2    sometimes... 3    often... 4

6. Are you personally ever afraid of violence in your school?

never... 1    rarely... 2    sometimes... 3    often... 4

II. Here is a list of some things that many people have done at one time or another. We would like to know about how old you were the first time you did each of the following things. If you can't remember exactly, just make your best guess. If you have never done any of these things, just circle the word "never" at the right of the page.

7. How old were you the first time you

- A. Stole something worth more than \$50. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- B. Were arrested or picked up by the police. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- C. Used a hard drug like crack, cocaine, or heroin. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- D. Owned your own handgun. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- E. Showed a gun to someone and threatened to shoot them. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- F. Showed a knife or sharp object to someone and threatened to stab them. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- G. Actually shot at someone with a gun. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- H. Actually stabbed someone with a knife or sharp object. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- I. Sold hard drugs such as crack, cocaine, or heroin. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- J. Used a weapon to stick up a store or a person. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- K. Broke into a home, store, or car to steal something. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- L. Carried a gun on you as a weapon but not for hunting or sport. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- M. Carried a knife on you as a weapon but not for hunting or sport. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- N. Hit or tried to injure someone with a bat, board, brick, rock or other such object. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never
- O. Served time in a jail or juvenile detention facility. . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ years old    Never

III. A few questions about your living situation and your family:

8. What adults are you living with now? CIRCLE AS MANY AS APPLY

- |   |   |                            |   |
|---|---|----------------------------|---|
| mother . . . . .                            | 1 | father . . . . .           | 2 |
| stepfather . . . . .                        | 3 | stepmother . . . . .       | 4 |
| adult brother or sister . . . . .           | 5 | grandparent(s) . . . . .   | 6 |
| other adult relative . . . . .              | 7 | foster parent(s) . . . . . | 8 |
| adult supervision in a group home . . . . . | 9 |                            |   |
| other (please specify): _____               |   |                            |   |

9. Please circle the number of years of education received by the adult you consider the head of your household:

- |    |    |    |    |               |     |                   |   |                |
|----|----|----|----|---------------|-----|-------------------|---|----------------|
| 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5             | 6   | 7                 | 8 | (grade school) |
| 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | (high school) |     |                   |   |                |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17            | 18+ | (college or more) |   |                |

10. On a scale of 1 (awful) to 10 (great), how would you rate your relationship with your parents or the adults you live with?

- |         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |            |
|---------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
| (awful) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 (great) |
|---------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------|

11. Has anyone in the home you live in received welfare, AFDC, food stamps or other forms of government assistance in the past 12 months?

- |              |   |               |   |
|--------------|---|---------------|---|
| no . . . . . | 1 | yes . . . . . | 2 |
|--------------|---|---------------|---|

IV. Please tell us something about your school situation:

12. What grades do you usually get in school? Please circle one:

- |                  |   |                  |   |                  |   |
|------------------|---|------------------|---|------------------|---|
| mostly A's . . . | 1 | mostly B's . . . | 2 | mostly C's . . . | 3 |
|                  |   | mostly D's . . . | 4 | mostly F's . . . | 5 |

13. On a scale of 1 (awful) to 10 (great), how would you rate your relationship with most of your teachers?

- |         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |            |
|---------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
| (awful) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 (great) |
|---------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------|

14. During the past year in school, about how often were you absent from classes?

- never ..... 1
- once a month or less ..... 2
- a few times a month ..... 3
- once a week ..... 4
- more than once a week ..... 5

15. Have you ever been suspended or expelled from school?

- no, never ..... 1
- yes, just once ..... 2
- yes, more than once ..... 3

16. About how many nights each week during the school year are you out past 10:00 PM, including weekends and worknights?

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17. If you are out past 10:00, do your parents or the adult who is responsible for you know where you are?

- almost never ..... 1
- occasionally ..... 2
- fairly often ..... 3
- almost always ..... 4

18. Do you think you will finish high school?

- no ..... 1
- probably ..... 2
- certainly ..... 3

19. Do you plan to go to college after high school?

- no ..... 1
- yes, but not right away ..... 2
- yes, right away ..... 3

V. Now, a few items about things that we sometimes read about today?

20. During the past 12 months, have you seen someone being seriously wounded or killed by a gun, knife, or other weapon (in real life, not on TV)?

- no, never ..... 1
- yes, just once ..... 2
- yes, a few times ..... 3
- yes, many times ..... 4

21. In the past 12 months, have you been to parties or social gatherings (not including hunting or sport-gun events) where people — not police or security — were carrying guns?

- never ..... 1
- rarely ..... 2
- sometimes ..... 3
- often ..... 4

22. In the past 12 months, have you been to parties or social gatherings (not including hunting or other sport-gun events) where shots were fired?

- never ..... 1
- rarely ..... 2
- sometimes ..... 3
- often ..... 4

23. Here is a list of statements about events that have happened to some people. Please indicate how likely you think each could happen to you.

|   | VERY LIKELY | SOMEWHAT LIKELY | NOT TOO LIKELY | VERY UNLIKELY |
|---|-------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| By the time I am 25, I will have been shot with a gun.....      | 4           | 3               | 2              | 1             |
| By the time I am 25, I will have been stabbed with a knife..... | 4           | 3               | 2              | 1             |
| By the time I am 25, I will no longer be alive.....             | 4           | 3               | 2              | 1             |

24. Think about the males in your family — your father, brothers, uncles, cousins, and so on. How many of them would you say own a gun? How many regularly carry a gun outside the home (including in their car) but not for hunting or sport shooting? (DON'T COUNT RELATIVES IN LAW ENFORCEMENT.)

| HOW MANY OWN GUNS?   | HOW MANY REGULARLY CARRY GUNS? |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| all of them ..... 4  | all of them ..... 4            |
| most of them ..... 3 | most of them ..... 3           |
| some of them ..... 2 | some of them ..... 2           |
| none of them ..... 1 | none of them ..... 1           |

25. During the past 12 months, have any members of your immediate family (parents, brothers, sisters) been attacked by someone with a gun? (AGAIN, DON'T COUNT RELATIVES IN LAW ENFORCEMENT.)

- no ..... 1
- yes ..... 2

26. Have any members of your immediate family (parents, brothers, sisters) ever been convicted of a felony (such as a car theft, burglary, robbery)?

- no ..... 0
- yes ..... 1



VI. There is a lot of political debate going on today about guns:

27. In the past 12 months, have you asked someone to buy a gun, for you to have as a weapon, from a legal dealer such a sporting goods store? (Don't count hunting or sport guns.)

no, never. . . . 1                      yes, once. . . . 2                      more than once. . . . 3

28. In the past 12 months, have you asked someone to buy a gun for you illegally, off the street, for example? (Don't count hunting or sport guns.)

no, never. . . . 1                      yes, once. . . . 2                      more than once. . . . 3

29. During the past 12 months, have you carried a gun onto school grounds?

no, never. . . . 1                      once or twice. . . . 2                      many times. . . . 3

30. Let's suppose that you decided you needed a handgun for some reason and you didn't already have one. How much trouble do you think it would be for you to get the gun you wanted? Circle one answer:

it would be almost impossible . . . . . 1  
 it would be a lot of trouble but it could be done. . . . . 2  
 it would be only a little trouble . . . . . 3  
 it would be no trouble at all. . . . . 4

31. Do you yourself own or possess any of the following kinds of guns? If so, please circle all that apply:

no, I do not own or possess a gun . . . . . 1  
 a regular rifle. . . . . 2  
 an automatic or semiautomatic rifle. . . . . 3  
 a regular shotgun. . . . . 4  
 a sawed-off shotgun . . . . . 5  
 a revolver (regular handgun) . . . . . 6  
 an automatic or semi-automatic handgun . . . . . 7

other: \_\_\_\_\_

32. Within the past 12 months, about how often would you say you've carried a gun with you when you were outside your home — including in your car? **Don't count the times you've carried a gun for hunting or target shooting.** CIRCLE ONE ANSWER:

never. . . . . 1                                      only now and then . . . . . 2  
 most of the time . . . . . 3                                      all the time . . . . . 4

a) If you have carried a gun outside your home, including in your car, in the past 12 months, what was the reason? Again, **don't count the times you carried a gun for hunting or target shooting.**

CIRCLE AS MANY REASONS AS YOU THINK IMPORTANT:

I didn't carry a gun . . . . . 0  
 I needed protection . . . . . 1  
 I was holding it for someone . . . . . 2  
 I used the gun in a crime . . . . . 3  
 to scare someone . . . . . 4  
 to get back at someone . . . . . 5  
 most of my friends carry guns. . . . . 6  
 it made me feel important . . . . . 7  
 other: \_\_\_\_\_

b) If you have carried a gun outside your home, including in your car, in the past 12 months, what kind of gun was it most likely to be? Again, **don't count the times you carried a gun for hunting or target shooting.**

I didn't carry a gun . . . . . 0  
 a regular rifle. . . . . 1  
 an automatic or semiautomatic rifle. . . . . 2  
 a regular shotgun. . . . . 3  
 a sawed-off shotgun . . . . . 4  
 a revolver (regular handgun) . . . . . 5  
 an automatic or semi-automatic handgun. . . . . 6  
 other: \_\_\_\_\_

c) If you have carried a gun outside your home in the past 12 months, were you more likely to carry it on you or to keep it in a car but not on you.

- I didn't carry a gun ..... 0
- more likely on me ..... 1
- more likely in a car but not actually on me ..... 2

33. In the past 12 months, have you personally seen other kids carrying guns in your neighborhood?

- never ..... 1
- rarely ..... 2
- sometimes ..... 3
- often ..... 4

34. In the past 12 months have any of your friends been attacked by someone with a gun?

- no, none ... 1
- yes, one ... 2
- yes, a few ... 3
- yes, many ... 4

35. Think back over the past 12 months. How often have you done any of the following:

Circle Number of Times

- a) gone hunting ..... 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8+
- b) gone to a range for target shooting ..... 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8+
- c) gone to a safe spot for target shooting ... 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8+

36. If you have carried a handgun outside your home during the past 12 months, think about the most recent time you did so. Don't count times you carried a handgun for hunting or target shooting.

a) Where did you get that handgun?

- I didn't carry a handgun ..... 0
- it was given or loaned to me by a family member ..... 1  
(brother? cousin? ... please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
- I snuck it from home without telling my folks ..... 2
- it was given or loaned to me by a friend ..... 3
- I paid cash for it ..... 4  
(if so, how much? \$ \_\_\_\_\_)
- I traded something for it ..... 5
- I stole it from a home, car, or business ..... 6
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

b) If you paid cash for this handgun, from whom did you buy it?

- I didn't pay cash for the handgun ..... 0
- a family member ..... 1  
(brother? cousin? ... please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
- a friend ..... 2
- a drug addict ..... 3
- a drug dealer ..... 4
- someone not involved in drugs, but who sells guns "on the street" ..... 5
- a pawnshop or gunshop ..... 6
- I asked someone to buy it for me ..... 7
- a department or sporting goods store ..... 8
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

VII. We read a lot today about young people and gangs.

37. Do you consider yourself a member of a gang?

- no ..... 1 -----> Go to Question 38
- yes ..... 2

a) If yes, would you call this an organized gang or just a bunch of people you hang out with?

- organized gang ..... 1
- just a bunch of people ..... 2

b) How large is your gang or group? \_\_\_\_\_ members

c) Does your gang or group have:

- |  |    |     |
|--|----|-----|
| a name   | No | Yes |
| an official leader   | No | Yes |
| a stash of guns for members' use   | No | Yes |
| special jackets, insignias, shoes, or other items that only members can wear | No | Yes |
| its own territory or turf  | No | Yes |

d) How old were you when you first joined a gang? \_\_\_\_\_ years old

VIII. We also read a lot about activities young people sometimes engage in:

38. Again, here is a list of some things that many people have done at one time or another. Please look over the list and circle about how often you personally have done these things during the past 12 months.

|  | NEVER | JUST ONCE | A FEW TIMES | MANY TIMES |
|--|-------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| A. Stolen something worth more than \$50. ....   | 1     | 2         | 3           | 4          |
| B. Been arrested or picked up by the police .....  | 1     | 2         | 3           | 4          |
| C. Used a hard drug like crack, cocaine, or heroin .....                                     | 1     | 2         | 3           | 4          |
| D. Shown a gun to someone and threatened to shoot them .....                                 | 1     | 2         | 3           | 4          |
| E. Shown a knife or sharp object to someone and threatened to stab them .....                | 1     | 2         | 3           | 4          |
| F. Actually shot at someone with a gun .....   | 1     | 2         | 3           | 4          |
| G. Actually stabbed someone with a knife or sharp object .....                               | 1     | 2         | 3           | 4          |
| H. Sold hard drugs such as crack, cocaine, or heroin .....                                   | 1     | 2         | 3           | 4          |
| I. Used a weapon to stick up a store or a person .....                                       | 1     | 2         | 3           | 4          |
| J. Broke into a home, store, or car to steal something .....                                 | 1     | 2         | 3           | 4          |
| K. Hit or tried to injure someone with a bat, board, brick, rock, or other such object ..... | 1     | 2         | 3           | 4          |
| L. Carried a gun on you, but not for hunting or sport .....                                  | 1     | 2         | 3           | 4          |
| M. Carried a knife on you as a weapon but not for hunting or sport .....                     | 1     | 2         | 3           | 4          |

IX. Now please answer a few questions about your friends and some of your activities:

39. Do you participate in athletics, band, drama, or any other school organizations or clubs?

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| none .....  | 1 |
| a few ..... | 2 |
| many .....  | 3 |

40. Think now about the kids you spend a lot of time with. About how many of these people would you say own a gun? How many make a habit of carrying a gun outside the home (including in their cars) but not for hunting or sport shooting?

| HOW MANY OWN GUNS? | HOW MANY REGULARLY CARRY GUNS? |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| all of them .....  | all of them .....              |
| most of them ..... | most of them .....             |
| some of them ..... | some of them .....             |
| none of them ..... | none of them .....             |

41. Have any of the friends you spend a lot of time with ever served time in a prison, reformatory, or jail?

|          |   |           |   |
|----------|---|-----------|---|
| no ..... | 0 | yes ..... | 1 |
|----------|---|-----------|---|

42. Have any of the friends you spend a lot of time with ever shot anyone?

|          |   |           |   |
|----------|---|-----------|---|
| no ..... | 0 | yes ..... | 1 |
|----------|---|-----------|---|

43. Have any of the friends you spend a lot of time with ever been shot?

|          |   |           |   |
|----------|---|-----------|---|
| no ..... | 0 | yes ..... | 1 |
|----------|---|-----------|---|

44. About how often do you attend the services of a church or religious organization:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| every week .....            | 1 |
| once or twice a month ..... | 2 |
| several times a year .....  | 3 |
| once or twice a year .....  | 4 |
| less than once a year ..... | 5 |
| never .....                 | 6 |