A Framework for Understanding Youth Violence

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There is no doubt that the United States is a violent place to raise children. Consider these facts:

- Law enforcement agencies in the U.S. arrest nearly 3 million persons under age 18 each year, with juvenile arrests constituting approximately 20% of the total number of arrests and 27% of all serious violent victimizations [17]. The crimes for which youth are detained vary in severity from status offenses (such as truancy) to property offenses (such as shoplifting) to felonies (such as robbery and murder).
- Annual medical costs for violence in the United States were estimated at $13.5 billion a decade ago [18], and nothing suggests that costs have declined since then.
- The rate of firearm-related homicides for children in the United States is more than twice that of the country with the next highest rate (Finland), and nearly 20 times the rate for the United Kingdom (see Figure 1). In fact, the Centers for Disease Control reported that the teen homicide rate for the United States is five times greater than the rate for 25 other industrialized countries *combined* [17].
- By the time the typical American child enters middle school, he or she will have witnessed more than 8,000 murders and more than 100,000 other acts of violence on network television (as cited in [19]).

The teen homicide rate for the United States is five times greater than the rate for 25 other industrialized countries combined.

Given these alarming facts, it is disturbing to note that many Americans, especially those who frequently watch violent television programs and movies, believe that our nation is even more violent than it actually is. One explanation for this finding is that television programs tend to depict American life as especially violent. For example, whereas only 0.2% of the

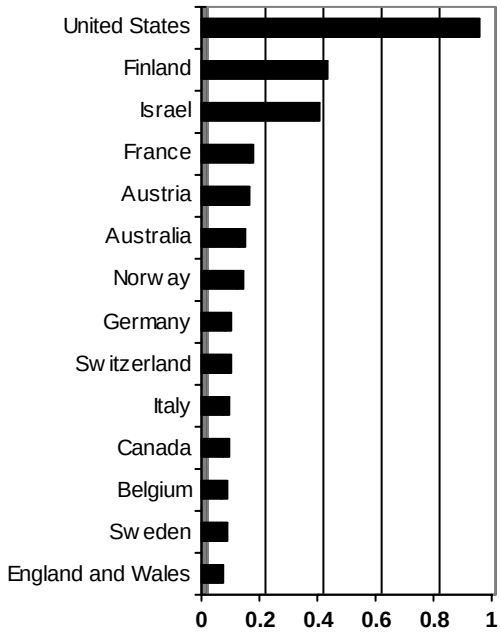


Figure 1
Firearm-Related Deaths per 100,000 Juveniles Ages 0-14
Adapted from [17]

crimes reported by the FBI are murders, approximately 50% of the crimes shown in "reality-based" TV programs are murders [19]. Frequent viewers of such programs, therefore, may develop distorted perceptions of how violent the world around them is.

Such misperceptions, in turn, can inappropriately influence policy decisions. It is important, therefore, to distinguish myth from reality when we create policies to address the problem of youth violence.

Youth Violence: Myths and Realities

Myth 1: Kids are committing more crimes today.
Reality: Juvenile crime is declining.

Overall, rates of juvenile crime and violence are declining. Arrest rates for violent juvenile crime have fallen by 19 percent since 1994 [20]. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), all of the increase in homicides by juveniles between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s was firearm related, and the sharp decline in homicides by juveniles between 1994 and 1997 was attributable entirely to a decline in homicides by firearm [21]. Similarly, between 1993 and 1997, the number of serious violent victimizations with at least one juvenile offender dropped 33%, from more than 1.2 million to 830,000 [17].

Most Americans believe that the purpose of the juvenile court system should be to treat and rehabilitate young offenders rather than punish them.

Myth 2: The epidemic of violent behavior that marked the early 1990s has passed.
Reality: Youth violence remains a serious problem in the United States.

The Office of the U.S. Surgeon General recently concluded that, although several key indicators of violence show significant reductions since the peak of the epidemic in 1993, self-reports by youth reveal that involvement in some violent behaviors remains at 1993 levels [22].

Myth 3: Americans want policymakers to be "tough on kids."
Reality: Most Americans prefer prevention and rehabilitation to adult incarceration for juveniles.

A national survey of 1200 adults revealed that Americans think it is more important to be "tough on criminals" (76%) than to protect "the rights of the accused" (17%) (cited in [23]). However, Americans also believe that the main purpose of the *juvenile* court system should be to "treat and rehabilitate young offenders" (78%) rather than punish them (12%) (cited in [23]). When no other choices were given, 42% said that juveniles convicted of a violent crime should be sent to adult prison. When more choices were offered, however, people chose "secure placement" (45%) or "residential placement" (27%) over "adult prison placement" (1%) for first time violent offenders (Bostrom, 1999).

Youths transferred to adult criminal court have significantly higher rates of re-offending and a greater likelihood of committing subsequent felonies than youths who remain in the juvenile justice system.

Despite these opinions and the downward trend in juvenile crime, more children are being tried as adults and held in juvenile and adult jails and prisons [20]. For example, on one day in 1994 there were 6,700 juveniles being held in local adult jails; on the same day three years later (1997), 9,100 juveniles were being held in adult jails, representing a 35% increase [20].

However, youths transferred to adult criminal court have significantly higher rates of re-offending and a greater likelihood of committing subsequent felonies than youths who remain in the juvenile justice system [22]. Research evidence also suggests that adolescents sentenced in juvenile court have lower recidivism rates than those sentenced in criminal courts [24], and are less likely to be victimized, physically and sexually [22].

Myth 4: The reason we have such a big problem with youth violence is that some kids are just "bad seeds."
Reality: Violence is learned behavior.

People, especially children, learn how to live and how to behave mostly by imitating what they see around them. Anyone who grows up in a violent environment is more likely to become violent in his or her own life. All forms of violence, including corporal punishment and "entertainment violence," teach the lesson that violence is an appropriate way of solving problems, thereby leading to increased violence [25]. American children are exposed to more violent imagery in the media, are more likely to see guns in their homes, and are more likely to witness violence in their neighborhoods than children in other countries. As Professor Carl Taylor, author of two books on Detroit gangs, noted: "Violence is just a fact of life in urban America" [26]. It is no surprise, therefore, that American children accept and engage in violence.

Violence is learned behavior.

While it is true that some individuals have biochemical imbalances or brain disorders that prevent them from controlling their violent behaviors, most of the violent incidents committed in this country are not perpetrated by individuals with brain disorders. It is not accurate to say, therefore, that violence in our society is contained within certain individuals, or that eliminating these people will take care of the problem of violence.

Myth 5: Juvenile violence is most likely to occur at school.
Reality: Most American schools are free from serious crime.

Despite the public's perception that school violence is on the rise, several studies released since July 1998 have shown that most schools are safe and that school crime generally is declining along with other forms of youth violence. Violence in urban schools continues to be a concern, however. Still, the odds of dying a violent death in a U.S. school during 1999 were one in two million [27]. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that between 1993 and 1997:

- Reports of physical fights by students declined 14%
- Reports of students being injured in fights declined 20%
- The number of students who self-reported carrying a weapon in the previous 30 days declined 30% [27]

Myth 6: African American and Hispanic youths are more likely to become involved in violence than other racial or ethnic groups.
Reality: Several factors account for the over-representation of ethnic minorities in the juvenile justice system.

African American, Latino, and Asian American youth are treated very differently by the juvenile justice system than white youths who commit comparable crimes.

Research reveals that African American, Latino, and Asian American youth are treated very differently by the juvenile justice system than white youths who commit comparable crimes [28; 29]. Minority youth are confined behind locked doors twice as often as white youth [29]. One study in California found that youth of color were 2.5 times more likely than white youth to be tried as adults and 8.3 times more likely to be incarcerated by adult court [28]. The study also found that after transfer to the adult system, confinement was significantly more likely to occur for youth of color than for white youth. Compared with white youth in the study, confinement was:

- 18.4 times more likely for African Americans
- 7.3 times more likely for Latinos
- 4.5 times more likely for Asian Americans

Moreover, minorities were disproportionately over-represented at all stages of interaction with the justice system. Compared to white youth, minority youth in this study were:

- 2.8 times more likely to be arrested for a violent crime
- 6.2 times more likely to be waived into adult court
- 7 times more likely to be sent to prison

Why are minority youth so over-represented in the justice system? The answer to that question is complicated. Possible explanations have

included differential police policies and practices (e.g., targeting patrols in certain low-income neighborhoods, policies requiring immediate release to biological parents, group arrest procedures); location of offenses (minority youth using or selling drugs on street corners, white youth using or selling drugs in homes); different behavior by minority youth (e.g., whether minority youth commit more crimes than white youth); differential reactions of victims to offenses committed by white and minority youth (e.g., whether white victims of crimes disproportionately perceive the offenders to be minority youth); and racial bias within the justice system [29]. Research suggests that racial disparities are most pronounced at the beginning stages of involvement with the juvenile justice system, with differences tending to accumulate as youth are processed through the system [29]. Two-thirds of the studies of disproportionate minority confinement reviewed by one team of researchers showed negative "race effects" at one stage or another of the juvenile justice process [29].

The linchpin for lasting violence reduction is strengthening the structure of the community.

Myth 7: There is little that communities can do to overcome the problem of youth violence.

Reality: The linchpin for lasting violence reduction is strengthening the structure of the community.

Research shows that the more time community members spend in public spaces, such as their own front porches or neighborhood sidewalks, the less violent crime there is in the community [30]. Violent street crime drops when ordinary citizens "take back their streets" even in simple, non-confrontational ways. For example, the more connections there are between people in a community (i.e., the tighter the network), the less violence there is. Other successful strategies include improving access to jobs and education and encouraging people to feel that they have a stake in the community [30].

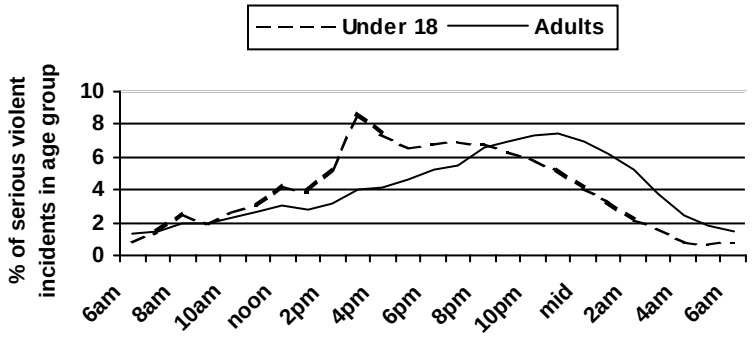
What is the Pattern of Juvenile Crime?

Violent crimes by juveniles peak in the afternoon between 3:00 pm and 4:00 pm.

Juveniles commit crimes at different times and under different conditions than adults do [17]. As Figure 2 shows, violent crimes by juveniles peak in the afternoon between 3:00 pm and 4:00 pm, the hour at the end of the school day, whereas adult serious crimes peak shortly before midnight. Violent crimes perpetrated by juvenile gangs show the same pattern as for non-gang juvenile crimes, with peak violence occurring when school lets out [31]. Interestingly, a comparison of the crime patterns for school and non-school days finds that the 3:00 pm peak occurs only on school days. The time pattern of juvenile violent crimes on non-school days is similar to that for adults.

Juveniles also are distinguished from adults in that they are much more likely to commit serious violent crimes while in the company of others. Table 1 provides the percent of serious violence involving multiple offenders for juveniles and adults according to type of victimization.

Figure 2
Time Patterns of Serious Violent Crime for Juveniles and Adults
Adapted from [17]



What are the Categories of Juvenile Crime?

Offenses are defined and handled differently for youth and adults. Juveniles may be penalized for acts known as *status offenses* for which adults could not even be arrested. Youth who commit crimes other than status offenses may be considered "delinquents."

Status Offenses

Generally speaking, status offenses are non-criminal offenses for which a child can be arrested, but an adult cannot [32]. In Michigan, status offenses include running away from home, truancy, and being repeatedly disobedient to parent or guardian such that court services are deemed necessary. Michigan law allows that status offenders be detained in secure juvenile facilities only if they have willfully violated a court order and there are no less restrictive facilities available [14].

Status offenses are significant because they signal greater potential trouble in the future. Truancy is the status offense that most powerfully predicts serious future trouble for a child [32]. Therefore, the manner in which a system handles truancy cases could be pivotal to determining future incidence of juvenile crime.

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Some states are decriminalizing status offenses. For them, these offenses are no longer law violations, so status offenders are considered dependents and referred to child protective services rather than juvenile courts. South Carolina, for example, is implementing community-based intervention and rehabilitation programs to battle truancy and other status offenses, with some indicators of significant success [32].

Delinquency

Delinquency involves an act committed by a juvenile that also would be a crime if committed by an adult. Delinquents may be adjudicated as juveniles within the juvenile justice system, or they may be waived to criminal court for processing as adults.

The Problem of Chronic Delinquency

Most youth "outgrow" delinquent behavior [33]. Although most youth who are detained will not be arrested again, for those who are, each successive arrest will increase the risk of future scrapes with the law. Chronic offenders—those who have been arrested five times—will have better than

Table 1
Percent of Serious Violence Involving Multiple Offenders: Juveniles versus Adults

	Juvenile	*Adult*
Serious violence	52%	21%
Rape	23%	4%
Robbery	60%	29%
Aggravated assault	49%	19%

Adapted from [17]

a 90% chance of being arrested again. These 6% of boys account for more than 50% of all arrests [34].

The best predictor of an individual's future deviant or antisocial behavior is the amount and severity of similar behaviors in the past.

Several researchers have charted the progression from early aggressive behavior to violent crime, finding that childhood conduct problems tend to lead to delinquency, which, in turn, leads to adult criminal behavior [35]. The best predictor of an individual's future deviant or antisocial behavior is the amount and severity of similar behaviors in the past [36]. In addition, early onset of violence and delinquency is associated with more serious and chronic violence. For example, Farrington [36] found that approximately 50% of boys adjudicated delinquent for a violent offense between ages 10 and 16 were convicted of a violent crime by age 24, compared with only 8% of juveniles not adjudicated delinquent for a violent crime between ages 10 and 16. Similarly, Lipsey and Derzon [37] found that a juvenile offense at ages 6-11 was one of the strongest predictors of subsequent violence; for the 12-14 age group, the two strongest predictors were the lack of social ties and involvement with antisocial peers.

Many other factors also are associated with higher rates of delinquency including early childbearing, birth complications, parent's criminal record or mental health problems, poor parental supervision, erratic child-rearing behavior, child abuse and neglect, drug use, and academic failure [38]. These factors do not operate in isolation, of course; rather, they interact with one another. For this reason, interventions that have been shown to reduce such factors as drug use or teen pregnancy or to increase educational achievement or parenting skill probably also will reduce juvenile crime. Armed with this knowledge, researchers have developed and evaluated a number of programs that are based on known predictors of youth violence.

Predictors of Youth Violence

Predictors of Youth Violence, a report published in April 2000 by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), summarized the findings of OJJDP's two-year study group of 22 renowned youth violence researchers [38]. The study group identified five categories designated as "malleable predictors of violence"—that is, factors that might be influenced by prevention or intervention strategies. These categories included: (a) individual factors, (b) family factors, (c) school factors, (d) peer-related factors, and (e) community and neighborhood factors. Table 2 lists predictors in each category.

Table 2
Predictors of Youth Violence by Category

Individual	*Family*	*School*	*Peer*	*Community/ Neighborhood*
Pregnancy and delivery complications	Parental criminality	Academic failure	Delinquent siblings	Poverty
Lead poisoning	Child maltreatment	Low bonding to school	Delinquent peers	Community disorganization
Poor prenatal care/ nutrition	Poor family management ractices	Truancy	Gang membership	Availability of drugs and firearms
Low resting heart rate	Low levels of parental involvement	Dropping out	Bullying	Neighborhood adults involved in crime
Depression	Poor family bonding	Frequent school transitions		Exposure to violence
Hyperactivity	Family conflict	Expulsion		Exposure to prejudice
Concentration problems	Parental acceptance of substance use and violence			
Risk taking	Parent-child separation			
Early initiation of violence				
Acceptance of deviant behavior				

In this section, we discuss factors that contribute to youth violence in each of these five categories, as well as a sixth category, media predictors.

Individual Predictors

Individual factors that contribute to youth violence can be ameliorated in several ways. For example, proper prenatal care, childbirth education classes and other programs to educate parents about child development, and early treatment for mental health problems all can reduce the risk of later delinquent behavior [39].

Proper prenatal care, childbirth education classes and other programs to educate parents about child development, and early treatment for mental health problems all can reduce the risk of later delinquent behavior.

In addition, high quality early childhood programs appear to reduce later violent behavior through multiple pathways. One way is by assisting children to understand what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behavior at an early age, before negative behavior patterns are established. Developmentally appropriate child care programs also can help children learn prosocial skills and develop the capacity to regulate their emotions, including the development of self-control. Children in these programs also gain cognitive skills and are less likely to experience school failure [39], which is a strong predictor of later violent behavior. High quality early childhood programs also can encourage parents to develop effective disciplinary strategies and to care for their children effectively throughout childhood and adolescence [40].

Family Predictors

When asked to select from a list of possible causes of violence, a majority of Americans surveyed indicated that the biggest cause was “parents not teaching children good values” [23]. Indeed, family management practices such as failure to set clear expectations for children’s behavior, an authoritarian or neglectful parenting style, parental disagreement about childrearing, poor monitoring and supervision, and severe and inconsistent discipline consistently predict later delinquency and substance abuse [41-43]. Wells and Rankin [44] found that boys with very strict parents reported the most violence, while boys with very permissive parents reported the second highest level of violence. Also, boys whose parents punished them inconsistently were more likely to commit an offense against other persons than boys whose parents punished them more consistently.

Strong parental involvement can function as a protective factor against violence.

On the other hand, strong parental involvement can function as a protective factor against violence. Farrington [42] reported that sons whose fathers engaged in leisure activities with them were less likely to exhibit violent behavior as teenagers and adults and were less likely to be convicted for a violent offense.

School Predictors

Expelled youth often have limited access to alternative programs and therefore face a high risk of never completing their education [1]. Students expelled from school or at risk of expulsion are unlikely to possess key developmental assets, including constructive use of time, positive peer influence, high expectations, achievement motivation, school engagement, bonding to school, and positive view of personal future [45]. The fewer developmental assets youth possess, the more likely they are to be involved in high risk behaviors such as violence, substance abuse, and other antisocial behaviors.

In contrast, bonding to school serves as a protective factor against crime [46]. Expelled students with large amounts of unstructured time on their hands often feel angry and disconnected from their communities [10], thus increasing the risk that they will experience higher rates of depression and behavior problems [1]. Youth who go unsupervised are twice as likely to abuse substances, and arrests for violent crimes and other misdemeanors peak during daytime hours when youth experience inadequate supervision [1].

Peer Predictors

Adolescents whose peers disapprove of delinquent behavior are less likely to report having committed delinquent acts [33]. On the other hand, being a gang member contributes more to delinquency than does having delinquent peers [47]. Disrupting early patterns of antisocial behavior and negative peer support, therefore, is a promising strategy for the prevention of violence and serious delinquency [37].

The most severe, violent hate crimes were nearly always preceded by years of bullying.

Bullying is another peer-related predictor of youth violence. *Bruised Inside: What Our Children Say About Youth Violence, What Causes It, and What We Need to Do About It* [48] reported that the way peers treat each other is the second major cause of youth violence. According to the report, the links between bullying and violence were clear to the students surveyed. When Maine Attorney General Andrew Ketterer's Civil Rights Division found that half of all hate crimes reported to that office were committed by juveniles, the Division studied these incidents and found that the most severe, violent hate crimes were nearly always preceded by years of bullying (cited in [48]).

Community and Neighborhood Predictors

Children who know many adult criminals are more likely to engage in violent behavior by age 18.

Low attachment to the neighborhood, including feelings of isolation, may be associated with later delinquency. Community disorganization (defined as the presence of crime, drug-selling, gangs, and poor housing) is an even better predictor of violence than low attachment to a neighborhood [49]. Children who know many adult criminals are more likely to engage in violent behavior by age 18. Exposure to violence in and out of the home also increases a child's risk for involvement in violent behavior later in life [50], as does exposure to discrimination.

Media Predictors

Movies, television, and internet use all provide important sources of children's exposuse to violence. Bushman and Huesmann [19] reviewed the evidence relating TV violence to aggressive and violent behavior and drew the following conclusions:

- TV violence has a short-term stimulating effect on aggressive behavior for viewers of all ages.
- TV violence has a long-term socializing effect that makes lifelong aggressive behavior more likely for children who watch a lot of it while growing up.
- These effects occur not just for already aggressive children; they occur for all children who ingest a steady diet of TV violence.

Similar effects have been found for youth who watch violent movies, listen to violent music, or engage in violent or aggressive computer games or internet use [19].

80% of movies rated "R" for violence that the Commission reviewed were targeted to children under age 17.

Despite this knowledge, media industries continue to market violent products to children in the United States [51]. In September, 2000 the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) released its report, *Marketing Violent Entertainment to Children: A Review of Self-Regulation and Industry Practices in the Motion Picture, Music Recording and Electronic Game Industries.* Among its findings, the Commission reported that:

- 80% of movies rated "R" for violence that the Commission reviewed were targeted to children under age 17.
- 27% of the music recordings with explicit content labels the Commission reviewed included marketing plans expressly identifying teenagers as part of the target audience.
- 70% of electronic games with a "Mature" rating for violence reviewed by the Commission targeted children under 17. Most of the plans that targeted an under-17 audience set age 12 as the younger end of the spectrum, but a few plans for violent "Mature"-rated games targeted children as young as six [51].

Children who watch media violence imitate the aggressive scripts they see, become more condoning of violence, start to believe the world is a more hostile place, and become emotionally desensitized to violence [19]. The violence they see justifies to them their own violent acts, the energy associated with the violence they see arouses them, and the violence they see cues aggressive ideas for them [19]. Of course, media violence is not *the* cause of aggression and violence, nor is it necessarily the most important cause. However, accumulating evidence has revealed that media violence is *one* factor that contributes significantly to aggression and violence in the United States [19].

Research findings in each of these six predictor categories provide promising directions for preventing the problem of youth violence.

Why Prevention?

Why is Prevention a Good Approach to Reducing Youth Violence?

1. **Prevention is effective.** As this report documents, certain primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention efforts all have track records for success.

2. **Prevention can be cost-effective** in the long run. Greenwood's article (pages 21-27 of this report) provides an approach for analyzing cost-benefit ratios. Chamberlain's article (pages 29-37 of this report) describes a prevention approach that has been estimated to save $17 in criminal justice costs for every dollar spent on prevention.

3. **Prevention is empowering** to individuals and communities. Prevention models often lend themselves to community-based implementation, which empowers individuals and communities to join hands in reducing violent behavior in their own neighborhoods [18].

Prevention is effective, cost-effective, and empowering.

How is Prevention Defined?

Primary prevention involves efforts to prevent crime and violence from occurring in the first place by delivering services to all individuals, whether they are "at risk" or not. Primary prevention efforts seek to improve the quality of life for all youth, regardless of their presumed propensity for violence. In recent years, approaches emphasizing primary prevention have become increasingly well regarded as methods for preventing youth violence [18]. *Secondary prevention* targets youth who are considered to be "at-risk" for criminal activity based upon risk factors identified by research (as described in the previous section). *Tertiary prevention* focuses on youth who already have committed violent crimes in an effort to prevent them from re-offending.

Common Characteristics of Effective Prevention Programs

Research suggests that programs that are effective in preventing or reducing chronic delinquency have several characteristics in common. They are:

- Theoretically grounded
- Evidence based
- Multi-faceted
- Specifically targeted
- Often costly, but frequently pay for themselves, sometimes many times over

Policy Considerations

Any program must be adapted to the specific characteristics and resources of the community in which it is to be applied.

Any program, no matter how carefully conceived, must be adapted to the specific characteristics and resources of the community in which it is to be applied. What is feasible, cost-effective, and sustainable in one location or with one target population may not be possible for another. For these reasons, policymakers considering adoption of any prevention or intervention model to reduce the problem of youth violence must address these policy concerns:

- **Promise:** Does the program work? What are the benefits we can expect to reap from implementing the program? Will the program "sell" in our community?
- **Efficacy:** Is there research evidence to demonstrate the program's success with the population we intend to target in our community?
- **Feasibility:** Is the program feasible for our community? Do we have the economic, human, and social resources to implement the program?
- **Safety:** Will our community stay at least as safe as it is now or become even safer if we implement this program?
- **Cost/Benefit:** Can we afford to implement this program? Can we afford *not* to implement this program? Are the benefits likely to be achieved worth more than the economic and human costs of implementing the program?
- **Sustainability:** Does our community have the resources and commitments necessary to keep the program running for as long as needed?

Policy Options

Several approaches successfully address the questions posed above. In this section, we outline some of these strategies. First, we describe OJJDP's comprehensive strategy for serious, chronic, and violent juvenile offenders. Second, we offer policy options for reducing youth violence, organized according to the six predictor categories described above.

OJJDP's Comprehensive Strategy for Juvenile Offenders

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has developed a comprehensive strategy for dealing with chronic, serious, and violent juvenile offenders which features the concept of *restorative justice* (described below). In 1993 OJJDP launched the Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) Project. Its aim is to provide training and technical assistance regarding the program, as well as written materials informing policy and practice related to restorative justice and the balanced approach [16].

OJJDP's online *Guide for Implementing the Balanced and Restorative Justice Model Report* contains promising programs for accomplishing each of its goals, as well as case examples from Minnesota, Florida, and Pennsylvania – states which, like Michigan, have moved toward the balanced and restorative justice model of juvenile justice. Information about OJJDP's BARJ Project can be obtained at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/implementing/index.html

The aim of retributive justice is to establish guilt and administer punishment.

Restorative versus Retributive Justice

Traditionally, the justice system has operated according to the *retributive* model of justice, which defines crime as a violation of the law and identifies the state as the victim. The aim of retributive justice is to establish guilt and administer punishment [52].

In contrast, the *restorative* model of justice defines crime not principally as a violation of the law, but as harm to people and communities. It emphasizes the importance of a victim's needs and obligates the offender to repair the harm that has been done to the victim and the community [52].

The restorative model of justice emphasizes the importance of a victim's needs and obligates the offender to repair the harm that has been done to the victim and the community.

Table 3 provides features that contrast the retributive and restorative models.

According to OJJDP, a balanced approach is one that balances the following three goals [16]:

- *Accountability* emphasizes the best interests of the *victim(s)* by recognizing that the offender has an obligation both to the victim and to the community.
- *Competency development* emphasizes the best interests of the *youth* by aiming to release offenders from the juvenile justice system who are more capable than they were when they entered.
- *Community safety* protects the best interests of the *community* by recognizing that the juvenile justice system has a responsibility to protect the public from juveniles in the system.

The BARJ model is linked with rehabilitation—and therefore violence prevention—through its second goal, *competency development.* Evidence increasingly shows that the sanctions involved in a restorative justice model, such as community service, have a great rehabilitative value [54]. Research evidence also suggests that states using rehabilitative models of juvenile justice have lower recidivism rates than those using more punitive models [55].

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Additional Policy Options for Reducing Youth Violence

A host of other policy options also are available. In this section, we outline a sampling of options for each of the predictor categories for youth violence.

Table 3
Retributive versus Restorative Justice Models

Retributive Justice Model	*Restorative Justice Model*
Crime defined by violation of rules	Crime defined by harm to people and relationships
State as victim	People and relationships as victims
State and offender seen as primary parties	Victim and offender seen as primary parties
Debt paid by taking punishment	Debt paid by making right
Focus on offender; victim ignored	Victims' needs central
Offender's ties to community weakened	Offender's integration into community increased
Victim-offender relationships ignored	Victim-offender relationships central
Ignores social, economic, and moral context of behavior	Total context relevant
Assumes win-lose outcomes	Makes possible win-win outcomes

Adapted from [53]

Individual Strategies

- Affordable, available prenatal care
- Childbirth education classes
- Programs to educate expectant parents about the dangers of poor prenatal care, malnutrition, and lead poisoning
- High-quality child care
- Programs that focus on healthy development
- Early treatment for hyperactivity, ADHD, and other disorders

Family Strategies

- Home visits by health and mental health professionals
- Parenting programs that focus on development of good family management practices, including positive discipline techniques and non-aggressive means for resolving conflict
- Parenting activities that encourage family bonding and parental involvement with children
- Programs that reduce domestic violence and substance abuse

School Strategies

- Programs that encourage youth involvement in school activities
- Graduation incentives
- Methods for reducing school transitions
- High-quality, affordable, available alternative education programs
- Programs that reduce the number of student expulsions
- High-quality after-school programs

Peer Strategies

- Programs that identify problems with bullying and reduce its effects
- Activities that reduce interaction with deviant peers

Community and Neighborhood Strategies

- Programs that reduce poverty
- Programs that build community capacity and increase community organization
- Programs that reduce the availability of drugs and firearms
- Programs that reduce exposure to prejudice and violence
- Improving access to jobs and education
- Increasing citizens' involvement in the community

Media Strategies

- Increased regulation of violence on TV, in music, in computer games, and on the internet
- Incentives and/or sanctions that encourage producers to limit violence on television and the internet, as well as in music, videos, and computer games
- Incentives and/or sanctions that discourage advertisers from advertising their products on programs that feature violence
- More active enforcement of the federal Children's Television Act (CTA) of 1990.*
- Incentives to increase educational programming for children and youth

*The Children's Television Act of 1990 was passed by Congress to improve educational broadcast programming for children. The Federal Communications Commission was charged with the task of creating the specific rules necessary to enforce the act, resulting in the Children's TV Rules of 1996, a new set of standards designed to strengthen and implement the Children's Television Act [56].

Concluding Comments

Youth violence is a multi-faceted problem of long-standing duration. As such, it has no simple cure. However, when community members join hands to implement a variety of strategies that have been carefully evaluated and proven effective, progress is possible. This report focuses on examples of programmatically and fiscally sound strategies that hold promise for reducing youth violence.

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