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S U M M A R Y

VIOLENT DELINQUENTS: A REPORT TO THE FORD FOUNDATION
FROM THE VERA INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

By Paul A. Strasburg.
(Sovereign, 272 pages, \$16.95
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Introduction

This book presents the findings of a year-long study of the problem of juvenile violence, undertaken by a staff member of the Vera Institute of Justice at the request of the Ford Foundation. A single, limited study like this one cannot make a definitive statement about juvenile violence. Nevertheless, it seemed that the study had uncovered enough information of general interest to warrant release for wider examination.

Among many pressing issues of criminal justice, juvenile violence was selected for special study not because it is necessarily the most significant, but because of the controversy it has generated in recent years. That controversy threatens to engulf the entire juvenile justice system, producing demands for drastic changes that could reach well beyond the violent offender.

Juvenile courts have never fully worked out the philosophical conflict between their assigned role as guardians of children's interests and the traditional role of all courts as protectors of the social order. Three-quarters of the way through the century, the tension between those two roles has reached a point that threatens to destroy the foundation on which the juvenile justice system was built. Evidence is mounting that the courts' powers to serve the interests of children are limited. Some carry the argument further to say that court intervention into the lives of children, parens patriae notwithstanding, is more harmful than helpful. The evidence has been sufficiently persuasive to stimulate large-scale diversion of children away from juvenile court whenever possible.

The other side of the coin is equally tarnished. The juvenile justice system has been severely criticized for its seeming ineffectiveness in controlling the antisocial behavior of young people. In the face of soaring juvenile arrest rates over the past decade and longer, critics have sharpened their attack, accusing the courts of encouraging delinquent behavior with ambivalent, inconsistent treatment of young offenders.

The response of the juvenile justice system to this attack appears to be confusion. New approaches are proposed and tried with increasing frequency, often moving the system simultaneously in contradictory directions.

In this confused atmosphere, public concern has focused on violent juvenile crime as a problem that stands out clearly, even if a solution does not. As we will see, arrests for violence have been growing at a faster pace than arrests for other kinds of juvenile crime for more than a decade. The character of juvenile violence also appears, in the public eye at least, to be changing for the worse. Media attention to murders, rapes, and other heinous crimes involving juveniles has created a belief, accurate or not, that today's delinquents are more ruthless, more dangerous than their predecessors in earlier years. Many people have thus come to associate a widely perceived increase in "urban terror" with the rise of a "new breed" of delinquents, and the conviction is spreading that current practices afford inadequate protection against them.

The truth behind this impression is not easy to capture. Isolated descriptions of violent acts by juveniles, no matter how frequently they appear, tell little about the scope of the problem or whether it is increasing or not. Nor do portraits of individual offenders, no matter how detailed and evocative, provide a valid description of juvenile delinquents as a group--if, indeed, such a description is possible at all. Similarly, it is impossible to discern from a few highly publicized cases the overall approach of the courts to the question of juvenile violence.

The study on which this book is based was an effort to dig below the surface of the problem of juvenile violence in several ways. It

began with an extensive, although not exhaustive, search of the literature on juvenile violence, its causes and treatment and official responses to it. When it became apparent that the literature contained little reliable information about the current magnitude of this particular problem, a decision was made to study juvenile court records in three counties of metropolitan New York--Westchester, New York (Manhattan), and Mercer County, N.J.--to learn more about the crimes of violence committed by juveniles brought before the courts--the number of violent crimes, the number of delinquents committing them, and the seriousness of their consequences. In addition, interviews were conducted with sixty-nine judges, lawyers, prosecutors, psychiatrists, probation officers, program administrators, and researchers, and informal discussions were held with many others whose work is directly or indirectly concerned with this issue. Finally, visits were made to a number of programs that house, treat, or provide services to juveniles who are in trouble with the law.

Because the study dealt with criminal behavior of juveniles, the term "violence" is used generally to mean the illegal threat or use of force. But what acts does that encompass? Against whom or what? And how often must a person engage in such acts to warrant being identified as "violent"? It is important to be clear about these issues, but it is impossible to be precise without also being arbitrary. Therefore, in this book the term "violence" refers to acts of homicide, forcible rape (or sodomy), robbery, assault, or attempts at any of these.

Pains were taken to include within the definition of violent offenses only those on which broad agreement could be expected, eliminating those of obvious "minor league" quality, but it is also important to recognize that, from the point of view of the people in the street, "violence" probably means much more. Acts such as arson, vandalism, subway "marauding," disorderly conduct, and others create fear in residents of cities and contribute to the overall impression that violence is accelerating rapidly. This study does not pretend to be a thorough analysis of the problem of violence as perceived by the general public. Instead, it is an attempt to understand the relatively small part of the problem that is reflected in the most serious crimes of violence against persons.

Violent acts are identified in this study principally by arrests, but the number of juvenile arrests that are never formally adjudicated is striking. Although diversion programs and high dismissal rates may be desirable, they leave many arrests without a clear resolution. Moreover, in many adjudicated cases, the record does not indicate the specific charge on which a finding is made. As a result, it is speculative to equate crimes charged with crimes committed. Therefore, though the text is not burdened with this qualification throughout, it should not be understood to imply that crimes attributed to juveniles in official records are in all cases crimes that they actually committed.

To summarize, the terms on which this study centers have many denotations and connotations in their common usage. But when those terms are used in this study, they will be restricted for the sake of clarity to the following

meanings:

Violence (or violent crime): Any act of homicide, forcible rape, assault, or robbery, or any attempt at one of these acts.

Serious violence (or serious violent crimes): Acts of homicide; forcible rape; robbery in which a weapon is used or the victim is injured; and assaults in which more than minor injury is inflicted (i.e., the victim is at least treated by a physician). Attempted homicide and rape are included. Attempted robbery is included if a weapon is used or the victim is injured. Attempted assault is not included.

Serious crimes: Any of the seven major offenses listed in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports: homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, larceny-theft, burglary, and auto theft.

Juvenile: A person under the jurisdiction of the juvenile or family court by virtue of age. (When no specific jurisdiction is referred to, a juvenile may be considered a person under the age of 18.)

Delinquent: A juvenile who has been charged by the police with an illegal act other than a status offense, whether or not the charge constitutes a formal arrest.

Violent delinquent: A juvenile charged at least once with any violent crime.

Seriously violent delinquent: A juvenile charged at least once with a serious violent crime.

Recidivist: A juvenile charged on two or more occasions with an offense, including at least one delinquent act.

Violent recidivist: A juvenile charged two or more times with any violent crime.

Seriously violent recidivist: A juvenile charged two or more times with any serious violent crime.

Chronic delinquent: A delinquent with five or more charges in his record.

The Scope of the Problem

Three common measures of the extent of juvenile violence are analyzed briefly here--arrest data, self-report studies, and cohort analyses, principally the one done by Marvin Wolfgang and associates on nearly 10,000 individuals born in Philadelphia who lived there between the ages of 10-18. The results of these measures are compared to each other and to the data collected by Vera from court records in the New York metropolitan region.

The data collected by Vera were based on a 10 per cent random sample drawn from delinquency petitions brought in 1974 in the juvenile (or family) courts of three metropolitan area counties: New York (Manhattan) and Westchester Counties in New York, and Mercer County in New Jersey. These areas were chosen to provide a diversity of environments and approaches to juvenile justice. Westchester County has a suburban character for the most part, but also includes four urban centers (Yonkers, White Plains, New Rochelle, and Mount Vernon), where the majority of juvenile arrests take place. Mercer County contains the capital of New Jersey (Trenton), an old city of about 106,000 residents, as well as a substantial suburban and a smaller rural population. Manhattan, of course, is a densely populated urban center with a sizable minority population.

All this evidence together points to the following general conclusions regarding the scope of juvenile violence today.

1. Delinquent behavior is a widespread phenomenon, however one chooses to measure it. Self-report studies show that most

if not all juveniles commit illegal acts. Thirty-five per cent of the boys in the Philadelphia cohort were detected at least once in a delinquency, and in small town and rural Oregon, the figure was 25 per cent.

2. Violent acts by juveniles are much less frequent. Only 10 per cent of all juvenile arrests in 1975 were for serious violent crimes. In the Philadelphia cohort, only 4.6 per cent of delinquent acts were of a serious violent nature, and an additional 5.3 per cent were simple assaults. In the 1974 sample studied by the Vera Institute, 11 per cent of all offenses examined (up to six per offender) were of a serious violent nature, and an additional 12 per cent were assaults and robberies of a relatively nonserious nature.
3. Although other forms of delinquent behavior are much more frequent than violence, a surprisingly high proportion of arrested delinquents engage in violent acts at least once. In the Philadelphia study, 31 per cent of all delinquents (or 11 per cent of all boys) were charged with an injury offense at least once. With robbery included, the proportion charged with violent offenses might have reached 35 per cent of all delinquents. In the Vera sample, 44 per cent of delinquents brought to court had been charged at least once with a violent crime, although only 29 per cent had been charged with serious violence.

4. Repeated violence is not a common phenomenon, however.
Only 7 per cent of the Philadelphia delinquents (or 2.3 per cent of all boys) were charged twice or more with injury offenses. In the Vera sample, 6 per cent had been charged more than once with a serious violent crime. When projected to all youths arrested in 1974 in the three jurisdictions studied, this figure suggests that only 3-5 per cent had shown a pattern of two or more violent offenses.
5. The most common violent crime committed by juveniles is simple assault, but the most common serious violent crime is robbery, followed by serious assault. On this point, arrest data and the Vera sample agree, but this rank ordering was reversed in the Philadelphia study. Self-report studies indicate that assaults are much more common than robberies, but these data include many "assaults" (more aptly, fights) in which an arrest would not be considered appropriate. Murder and sex attacks are a small fraction of crimes committed by juveniles: 0.6 per cent in the Philadelphia cohort, 0.7 in 1975 arrest data, and 1.2 per cent in the Vera court sample.
6. Juvenile violence does appear to be increasing. Arrest rates are clearly on the rise, and have been for more than a decade. The greatest increase has occurred in robbery and assault. A comparison between the Philadelphia cohort and the Vera sample

also suggests that the violent acts of today's delinquents have more serious consequences than those of a decade or more ago. Data in one self-report study contradict these findings, however, indicating no increase in either the frequency or the seriousness of delinquent acts, including robbery and assault, between 1967 and 1972. The explanation for this discrepancy offered by the author of the study, Martin Gold, traces it to changes in reporting procedures that are not related to changes in the behavior of youth. This may well be true in general, but it is probably less true for the most violent kinds of delinquency.

7. The most serious problem of juvenile violence is still found in the large urban centers, though suburban rates have increased faster than urban rates in recent years. Arrest data show this, and it is dramatically apparent in the Vera study. In Manhattan, 42.3 per cent of the children brought to court had been arrested on a serious violent charge at least once, 12.3 per cent on two or more occasions, and 2.8 per cent on three or more occasions. Projected to the entire population before the Manhattan Family Court, these figures imply that there are several hundred repeatedly violent children to contend with in that borough each year. Although the dimensions

of this problem fall short of the extreme estimates of alarmists, they are impressive enough. And although New York may be sui generis in many respects, there is reason to believe that, in this respect at least, it is representative of other large metropolitan centers.

Characteristics of Violent Delinquents

The main sources of data from which this description is drawn (arrest reports, cohort studies, and the court records studies by Vera) all relate to juveniles apprehended by the police. Self-report data are also available, but they are more limited and do not always agree with arrest-based data. The resulting picture, therefore, portrays mainly delinquents who get caught. It may be that delinquents who never get caught are different from those described here. However, given that police are more likely to arrest juveniles who are more frequently and more seriously delinquent, according to self-report studies discussed in the previous chapter, the description provided by arrest-based data is likely to be most reliable with regard to the most violent offenders.

This brief review of literature dealing with the characteristics of violent delinquents, although by no means complete, highlights how little is really known. For the most part, the focus has been on descriptive statistics dealing with the characteristics commonly addressed in the literature. Even at this relatively rudimentary level, clear consensus supported by consistent data is hard to find.

We are therefore driven back to a few basic, frequently observed facts as the building blocks from which to begin construction of an explanation for juvenile violence. These may be summarized as follows:

1. Violent acts appear, for the most part, to be occasional occurrences within a random pattern of delinquent behavior, rather than a "specialty" of juveniles. The number of delinquents who are chronically violent is quite small. Recidivists are responsible for the large majority of violent offenses by juveniles, but it is not possible to predict violence simply on the basis of prior offense records. On the other hand, the best among many unreliable predictors of future violence is a prior record of violence.
2. When committing a violent act, a delinquent is more likely to do so in company with at least one other juvenile than alone.
3. Boys are more delinquent than girls, but female delinquents are a likely to commit a violent act as male delinquents. Female violence tends to have somewhat less serious consequences, however.
4. Older juveniles tend to be more seriously violent than younger juveniles, but there is growing evidence, including data in the Vera study, that the younger age groups (13 to 15) are catching up.
5. The great majority of violent delinquents are not psychotic or otherwise seriously disturbed emotionally, although many are neurotic and characterized by poor impulse controls. Psychopathic or sociopathic delinquents are relatively few in number, but are responsible for considerable violence and damage. Rage, low self-esteem, lack of empathy, and limited frustration tolerance are typical of violent youths. Environmental factors play an important role both in developing these traits and in facilitating their expression through violence.

6. Many if not most delinquents have learning problems, but the causes of those problems and their relationship to delinquency and violence are not easy to establish. Specific learning disabilities may be an important factor, although existing research is inadequate to prove a causal connection.
7. A two-parent family seems to offer some protection against delinquent behavior, but the presence of both parents has little to do with whether a delinquent becomes violent. Other factors, probably including the quality instead of the quantity of familial relationships, seem to be more influential in this regard.
8. Minority youths (and especially black youths) tend to be more delinquent and more violent than youths, but it is hard to separate membership in a minority group from location. Within community boundaries, differences in socioeconomic status appear to be weakly correlated with juvenile violence, although children from poor communities (particularly from ghettos in large metropolitan centers) are more likely to become delinquent and violent than children living in more affluent communities. Whether a child comes from a welfare family or not appears to bear little relationship to his or her chances of becoming violent.

In this list of characteristics, the most useful in separating violent from nonviolent delinquents appears to be location.

Official Responses to Juvenile Violence

In the past decade, many arrested children have been steered away from the judicial and correctional systems through diversion programs. Diversion generally favors less serious offenders. Delinquents who are not diverted but are referred for court processing "drop out" of judicial proceedings for one reason or another at rates ranging from 35 to over 80 percent, with the highest rates occurring in large cities. It appears from data in the Vera study that this drop-out process works more to the advantage of the less serious delinquent than the hard-core delinquent, as one might expect it should. As a result, at the final stage of court processing (disposition), judges must contend with a relatively serious group of delinquents, particularly in large urban centers like Manhattan.

In terms of the degree of control mandated in dispositions, the courts in the Vera study appeared to respond proportionally: the harsher and more restrictive dispositions were meted out to delinquents who had the longest records, who had committed violent crimes, and whose crimes were most serious in their consequences. Beyond this level of analysis, however, it is apparent that treatment and correctional responses for violent delinquents are often anything but proportional especially to the needs of the individual delinquent, the standard by which the juvenile justice system is supposed to operate.

Violent or seriously disturbed delinquents, the ones most in need of rehabilitative treatment as well as control, are frequently denied access to effective help. They are subjected to long delays in pro-

cessing and multiple rejections by voluntary treatment programs as well as public mental health facilities. In the end, the great majority given residential placement are sent to training schools, where they may be brought under temporary control but almost certainly will receive no constructive assistance. From the point of view of public safety, the number of delinquents who require isolation in securely locked institutions is probably much smaller (perhaps by as much as 50 to 95 per cent) than the number currently being placed in such settings. Many of these would be much better served by treatment in open, community-based programs.

Part of this problem stems from the scarcity of good treatment facilities for adolescents. Another part, however, can be traced to outright discrimination against this kind of delinquent on the part of voluntary and public agencies. Still another part of the problem is lack of effective control over the referral and treatment process by the public agencies that bear ultimate responsibility for dealing with violent (and other) delinquents. The result is ineffective and perhaps damaging treatment, discontinuously applied.

Treatment of Violent Delinquents

The evidence mustered in the debate over the effectiveness of correctional treatment of violent offenders, by both the partisans and the opponents of treatment, is flawed. In the first place, there is little of it on either side because, as indicated in the previous chapter, delinquents with violent histories or other characteristics that may be interpreted as indicators of potential violence are routinely denied access to the treatment-oriented programs that provide the basis of our knowledge regarding the success or failure of treatment. Data are thus scarce with regard to demonstrably violent individuals, except perhaps sex offenders, for whom special facilities are sometimes available. Moreover, much of the evidence that is said to prove the failure of treatment comes from programs that involve adult offenders. By and large, the results of programs for juvenile offenders tend to be more ambiguous.

Research on treatment of violence is flawed in other ways as well. Experiments with treatment have usually relied on that rather broad and slippery outcome measure, recidivism, and thus gloss over subtle but important changes that may occur in offender behavior. As a result, we know little about the effects of various kinds of treatment on subsequent violent behavior, apart from other kinds of criminal activity. To make matters worse, most of the studies that have been done have employed inadequate research methods. Few have been designed and executed with sufficient rigor to make their conclusions reliable and generalizable.

In spite of the scantiness and unreliability of the data on treatment, several broad and tentative conclusions can be formulated.

1. There is not yet a specific treatment for violence. Instead, there are interventions aimed at reducing antisocial behavior generally, of which violence is only one form. There is some evidence that some forms of treatment are more effective than others with certain personality types frequently associated with violent behavior, but this evidence remains highly tentative.
2. Rarely (if ever) will a single method of treatment succeed in changing the violent behavior of a delinquent. Effective treatment usually involves several kinds of interventions and supports, which should not be surprising in view of the multiple problems that characterize most violent offenders. Consequently, a range of treatment options, together with good diagnostic, planning, and management capabilities, is necessary for success in any significant degree.
3. Among the forms of treatment usually applied to delinquents, group techniques appear to hold more promise than individual treatment methods on the basis of both cost and effectiveness in reaching large numbers. Milieu therapy is an especially interesting approach for delinquents with histories of serious, repetitive violence or self-destructive behavior. Each treatment method, however, may benefit some delinquents at various stages of their rehabilitation, which again points to the need for a thorough and continuous assessment of each individual.
4. Treatment cannot be expected to bring about complete "cures" within a short period. Incremental progress toward constructive

reintegration into society is a more reasonable goal, and one that may require social and therapeutic supports long after the delinquent's legal debt to society has been repaid.

Perhaps the most important reason not to abandon treatment is that, particularly with regard to violent juveniles, it is unacceptable public policy to do nothing. Release to the community with no treatment or control may invite further violence and certainly invites a backlash of public opinion. Simply locking violent delinquents in prisons, on the other hand, contradicts what we know about the destructive effects of that approach and offends our hopes that they can change. What kind of treatment to offer, how much to insist that participation in treatment be voluntary, how to integrate rehabilitative objectives with punishment objectives: these are exceedingly difficult questions. But they should be confronted directly through carefully controlled research and experimentation that pay scrupulous attention to human rights. They are too important to ignore just because they are difficult.

Some Thoughts on Strategies for Preventing Juvenile Violence

This study concentrates on known juvenile offenders--delinquents caught by the police and charged with violent (and other) crimes. This choice of focus was dictated largely by expediency: more is known about arrested delinquents than about those who get away, and they are, of course, much easier to reach with treatment, services, or sanctions. There is, however, a wholly reasonable opinion, widespread in professional circles and in the public, that dealing with arrested delinquents merely scratches the surface of the problem; the rather low reporting and clearance rates for offenses, and self-report studies indicating high levels of undetected delinquency support this opinion.

The National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals declared in 1973 that "the greatest potential for reducing the incidence of crime in America lies in activities directed at preventing the occurrence of crime." Although the commission may well be right, the "potential" in crime prevention is extraordinarily difficult to realize. The Commission's own recommendations were based largely on what it called "programs and activities directed toward removing the desire or need for an individual to commit crime," herculean tasks such as improving the delivery of public services, increasing educational and employment opportunities for disadvantaged and minority youths, shoring up the integrity of politicians and government officials, and reducing corruption and organized crime.

It is not the purpose of this study to dwell on such generalities, undeniably important as they are. Its concern is instead with the search for measures to prevent juvenile violence in the short to middle run that can be undertaken within an experimental framework. Unfortunately, the catalog of programs that have been tried is thin, the list of successes shorter still, and reasonable ideas for future experimentation scarce. Four categories of preventive approaches appear to emerge, however.

1. Preventive "treatment" to lower the potential delinquent's propensity to offend. Preventive treatment differs from rehabilitative treatment in its object: it is not necessarily aimed at high-risk delinquents deemed to need "rehabilitation" in order to turn them away from further offending. Instead, preventive treatment would be directed toward all those for whom the intervention is considered to be appropriate and potentially helpful, regardless of their prior criminal records. Hence preventive programs in general would involve larger numbers of juveniles at somewhat lower average risk of committing violent acts than would a rehabilitative program. Together, these two factors may weaken the justification for such programs in terms of their impact on crime reduction. They cost more and may have smaller payoff. A decision about the desirability of extending a program to a lower-risk individual would have to be made in each case by balancing the marginal cost of doing so against the potential benefit from reducing his or her delinquency potential--always easier said than done.

One kind of program that might meet this test with delinquency prevention as the sole or major objective is alternative schooling for children with learning and behavior problems. The marginal cost of these programs may be relatively small. Preliminary research shows, on the other hand, that making the school experience less painful and frustrating, even if not more directly productive, may reduce delinquent behavior considerably.

Another field that merits further scrutiny in this context is family assistance. The importance of the family in stimulating or inhibiting the development of delinquent tendencies has been confirmed by psychiatric theory and observation, by a vast number of correlational studies, and by the testimony of offenders themselves, to mention some of the more significant sources. It is probable that some of the many social service programs already in existence could be restructured, at acceptably low marginal costs to permit evaluation of their worth in reducing violence. Testable hypotheses regarding the influence of family structure and interaction on subsequent violent behavior of children certainly exist.

2. "Incapacitation" or "removal" to isolate the potential offender from potential victims. Incarceration, the most straightforward technique of incapacitation, makes it impossible for the offender to prey on noncriminal society, although he or she may well continue to prey on fellow inmates." Renewed interest in the benefits afforded society by incapacitating offenders has been generated by several studies that claim to show that policies producing higher rates of incapacitation following conviction would yield a substantial reduction in the number of offenses. But one analysis of this issue with regard to juveniles instead of adults reached the opposite con-

clusion. Using arrest and incarceration data from the Philadelphia cohort study, it found that a policy that produced a doubling in the number of juvenile offenders incarcerated would result in a reduction in crimes of injury, theft, damage to property, and sexual assault of only 1 to 4 per cent.

The figures on which these conclusions were based are now quite dated, however. Additional studies using such estimating techniques and based on new data would update and possibly add to our knowledge on this point. Experimentation would not be a feasible approach, of course, given constraints imposed by the equal protection clause of the Constitution.

3. "Deterrence", which increases the incentive not to offend. Increased deterrence has traditionally been thought of in terms of raising the probability of detection and apprehension, raising the probability of conviction once apprehended, and raising the probability or severity of punishment once convicted.

Given what has been learned about rates at which delinquents are arrested, about the efficiency of court processing and about the frequency with which efficacious punishments are applied, there would appear to be plenty of room for improvement on all these fronts. More research on this issue will almost certainly be forthcoming. Whether it will be able to surmount the theoretical and practical problems that have confronted past studies remains to be seen.

One aspect of deterrence tends to be overlooked --that the risk and cost of punishment are relative to the benefit to be gained from success in the crime. Wilson says, for example, "What the government can do is to change the risks of robbery and the rewards of alternative sources of income for those who, at the margin, are neither hopelessly addicted to thievery nor morally vaccinated against it," and adds that "simultaneously decreasing teenage unemployment and increasing the risks of youthful crime may be the most rational response society can make to property crime."

4. "Target hardening" to reduce the opportunity to commit crimes. Most preventive strategies are offender-centered. Target hardening, however, which seeks to make it physically impossible, or more difficult, to carry out a crime, is victim-centered. It has had its most notable successes in the prevention of property crimes, through the development of devices such as locks for automobile steering columns, improved burglar alarms, electronic sensors to identify shop-lifted items, and the like. Some innovations have also had an impact on violent street crime, however. Improved street lighting is an example. Improved building design allowing surveillance of public areas is another. A campaign to disseminate public information on techniques for preventing rape attacks, like that recently sponsored by women's movement organizations, may also have a positive impact on the incidence of this crime as well.

Robbery, because of its less complicated motives and the greater ease in identifying potential targets, is probably the violent crime most amenable to target hardening. Development strategies would begin with

an analysis of the victims. Who gets robbed by juveniles? Although data in the Vera study offer no statistical verification, it is commonly and probably justifiably assumed that most victims of juvenile robbers are either other juveniles or elderly people--two relatively vulnerable groups.

Hardening the elderly target might be done in a number of ways: providing escort services to groups of elderly people during shopping trips and other excursions; installing better entryway protection, door locks, intercom, and alarm systems, or hiring elevator operators in buildings with large elderly populations; and mailing social security and welfare checks directly to bank accounts.

Target hardening with regard to juvenile victims seems more problematic. Unlike the elderly, juveniles generally do not have set routines that can be anticipated and controlled. In addition, they tend to expose themselves to the company of other juveniles and thus to higher risk. Even so, it might be possible to interpose protective measures in situations where numbers of juvenile victims are likely to be exposed to juvenile victimizers; schools are one good example, and the growing demand for more school guards is a typical response.

Many of these ideas have already been tried, though apparently not in a systematic way, and not with reduction of juvenile offenses as a goal; they and other strategies should be tried under experimental, controlled conditions. But we are limited in our ability to identify feasible strategies by our ignorance of the specific factors that nurture violent inclinations and trigger violent episodes, and our ignorance of the factors that determine who the target of violence will be. Unfortunately, no easy solutions to the problem of violence will be found in crime prevention any more than they are to be found in punishment and treatment of arrested offenders.

Concluding Reflections and Recommendations

Though sometimes confounded by inadequate or contradictory data, the evidence gathered in this study supports on the whole a conclusion that juvenile violence is a serious and growing problem. The juvenile arrest rate for violent crimes has increased much faster than the adult rate, particularly for robbery and aggravated assault. By 1975, the arrest rate of 15-17-year-olds for violent crimes had surpassed the rate for people 18 or older. Data in the Vera survey suggest, however, that most robberies and assaults by juveniles are of a less serious nature (i.e., they involve neither weapons nor serious injuries to the victim). In addition, the Philadelphia cohort study showed that arrests for violent crimes increase as juveniles get older, whereas arrests for property and other index offenses either decrease or are unaffected by age. Thus the best predictor of adult violence may be juvenile violence.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that violence still represents only a small part of the illegal activities of the young. Approximately 10 per cent of juvenile arrests for serious offenses in 1975 (less than 4 per cent of all juvenile arrests) involved charges of robbery, aggravated assault, rape, or homicide. But even when minor offenses labeled as violent (those not involving weapons or serious injury) are screened out of the violent subgroup in the Vera sample, however, 29 per cent remained who had been charged at least once with a serious violent crime. Projected to all juveniles arrested in the target area that year, this figure suggests that between 15 and 20 per

cent had at least one serious violent offense on their records--still a rather high figure. To identify delinquents whose behavior is measurably and significantly more violent than that of the majority, an observed pattern of violence (at least two detected offenses) is a preferable standard. In Vera's cross-sectional sample, only 14 per cent of delinquents brought to court had been charged twice or more often with violence, and only 6 per cent had been charged twice or more often with serious violence. Again projecting from the sample, roughly 3 to 5 per cent of arrested juveniles, or about 0.06 per cent of the total juvenile population, had shown the beginning of a pattern of serious violence. Through their violence, these children will inflict a degree of damage on society far out of proportion to their relatively small numbers unless somehow stopped. Consequently, they deserve high priority in public policy toward delinquency.

One troubling conclusion of this inquiry concerns the failure of the juvenile justice system to intervene effectively, once a juvenile has been adjudicated of a violent crime, to bring an end to his or her violence. The correctional responses most frequently applied to violent delinquents, probation or training school, appear to have little or no constructive impact on subsequent criminal behavior. At the same time, treatment-oriented programs have, for the most part, been closed to juveniles with violent offenses in their records. Court processing certainly needs to be made more efficient, but there is no evidence that doing so would have a major impact on juvenile violence; in fact, there is considerable opinion that processing more children through to probation or corrections might only do more harm. With regard to treatment, no methodology yet devised has convincingly proven its power to stop or even reduce criminal behavior in adults or juveniles. On the other hand, few have been given a sufficient

(or sufficiently researched) effort, particularly with violent juveniles, to say for certain that they do not work for this group.

Thus, the arguments for further research and experimentation outweigh arguments for doing nothing. What follows is a brief outline of the directions in which this offender-centered research and experimentation should proceed (cf. recommendations on "Target Hardening" above for victim centered efforts).

1. Data collection and basic research. Long-run strategies must be based on data that clearly distinguish violent juvenile offenders from all others. Cohort studies like the Philadelphia one lend themselves to such distinctions; they should be carried out simultaneously in several jurisdictions differing in size, social character, and court and correctional procedures, and they should emphasize analysis of violence. Delinquent careers should be traced and analysed over time to distinguish those who cross over the line between violent and nonviolent behavior from those who do not, and whether there are distinct types of violent delinquents in terms of both offense patterns and personal characteristics.

Several studies have shown that the deeper a delinquent moves into the court or correctional processes, the more delinquent his or her subsequent behavior is likely to be. We need to understand better whether court and correctional processing make serious offenders out of nonserious offenders or merely responds to preexisting characteristics, and why it is that, in either case, the system fails to reduce subsequent delinquent behavior.

The only longitudinal comparison of self reported information on delinquent behavior has sharply contradicted police arrest data regarding changes in delinquent activity. The reasons for the discrepancy in the two data sources have not been adequately explained. Additional studies of this kind aimed at these issues should be encouraged.

An issue that has barely been touched in this study, but that is obviously crucial to the development of preventive and rehabilitative strategies, is the cause of violent and delinquent behavior. There is a great need for theories of causality with more explanatory and predictive power, theories capable of bridging the gaps that now exist between biological, psychological, and sociological explanations, and thus in turn providing the basis for more efficient experimentation.

2. Experimental intervention programs. Innovations in corrections and treatment programs are becoming commonplace. Yet we still know surprisingly little about their effects on violent behavior, for all the reasons that have been mentioned throughout this study. Because there already are indications that it may be easier to achieve a reduction in delinquent behavior with serious juvenile offenders than with nonserious juvenile offenders, more experimentation with treatment for the serious delinquent seems warranted.

A prime candidate for further evaluation is milieu therapy, because unlike some forms of psychiatric intervention, it can be provided to relatively large numbers of delinquents in relatively secure settings at relatively low cost. Thus it may be a practical alternative to incarceration--if it works.

Other ideas of some promise are the Downey Side program in Massachusetts, which arranges group foster care for wards of the state with no functioning families, and Outward Bound, a program of high-stress physical challenges in a wilderness setting, adaptations for inner city youth substituting demanding, stressful work for the challenges of wilderness survival are now in progress in New York City.

3. Continuous case management. Perhaps the most important requirement of all for effective rehabilitation of violent delinquents is continuity. Violent delinquents may be shunted from detention to diagnostic centers, to the streets, to training schools, and back to the streets again, with little purpose except to comply with administrative exigencies and the preferences of the agencies involved. Often there is no one person or group of persons managing the process, which further increases the risk that decisions will bear scant relation to the needs of the child. Even more damaging, relationships are broken and responsibility diluted.

What is needed to end this highly destructive process is a single locus of accountability on whom both society and the child can rely. This could be provided in a program of "Continuous Case Management (CCMP)", in which juveniles who commit serious violent acts, especially those with histories of repeated delinquency and assaultive behavior, would be identified and assigned to a single counselor who would constantly monitor the delinquent's movement through the complex juvenile justice system. The workings of CCMP, and the arguments for and against its use as the basis for experimental comparison in several jurisdictions, are too complex and detailed to fit the scope of a summary; they are treated in the text of Violent Delinquents in pp. 196-211.

Conclusion

Juvenile violence is as confounding as it is disturbing. In spite of years of effort to find solutions to the problem, it appears to be getting no better, and possibly it is getting worse. The more we learn, the more complex we realize the problem to be, and the line that divides the violent juvenile from the nonviolent one remains obscure.

It is also certain that we cannot continue to turn our backs on those juveniles who present the highest risk of violence and still expect to make any real progress. The risk is only compounded when they are excluded from programs that might make some difference. Even if we have not succeeded in makin model citizens out of most violent offenders in the past, that is no reason to reject approaches that might at least make them less destructive offenders in the future. Even small gains would be well worth the effort.