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## YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION AMONG WHITE YOUTH

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A great deal of attention in the mass media and in academic research has been placed on the role of ethnicity in violence, particularly youth violence, in the United States. Almost exclusively, however, this focus has been directed toward minorities and youth of color as the ethnic and perhaps even cultural "source" of the ethnically linked violence of greatest concern to law enforcement, schools, government, families, communities, scholars, and the media. Given the hegemonic position of "Whites" in terms of economic and social power, the focus on "others" and related social categories such as "immigrants" and "non-Whites" is not surprising or unexpected.

The impression that even an informed citizen might take away from all of the focus on ethnicities other than White and youth violence is that the linkage between ethnicity, culture, and violence is primarily a problem of youth of color.

Several persistent facts, however, continue to prove that the media and community attention is, in no small part, because of the dominance of Whites socially, economically, and politically, and the resulting ability to shift the frame of the discourse about ethnicity and youth violence away from Whites and toward others with less social and political power. Although ethnic minority youth may be disproportionately represented in arrest data,

a preponderance of youth violence is still committed by White youth. Indeed, of those youth arrested for acts of violence in 1997 (the most recent data available) 53% were White, so that in terms of sheer numbers alone, it would be a mistake to ignore Whites in any consideration of ethnicity and youth violence (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999).

Of course, much of the violence committed by White youth shares a common etiology with violence committed by all youth. Otherwise stated, risk for violence is related to a number of genetic, biological, psychological, social, situational, and community factors independent of one's ethnicity or race. In some cases, White youth may be less at risk than youth of color because they simply are less likely to be exposed to social and situational constraints that foster violent behavior. As Guerra and Williams (chap. 1, this volume) point out, numerous studies of the effects of community disadvantage on violence rates have shown that disadvantage has largely the same pattern of effects in ethnic minority and White communities. In general, when levels of disadvantage are held constant, the effect of ethnicity on violence disappears. As these authors point out, however, ethnic minority youth in the United States simply are more likely to live under conditions of extreme and concentrated disadvantage associated with higher rates of violence. Given their majority status in the United States, White violence overall (as opposed to rates per population) may largely reflect sheer numbers in the population.

Still, there is a unique subset of violence committed by White youth that can be considered ethnic in origin. That is, the reality of being "White" creates certain perceptions and beliefs that result in violent outcomes. For this reason, we draw a distinction between youth violence that is ethnic and that which is somewhat incidental to ethnicity, although the degree to which this is a distinction in fact versus an analytical distinction is subject to argument. Instead of trying to deal with this argument here, we focus on six types of youth violence that are prominent in research and in the public's eye and reflect violence among White youth that is related to their ethnicity: White supremacists, White survivalists, skinheads, hate crimes, White youth gangs, and school shooters.

In many cases, these types of violence are intimately connected with social "movements" led by adults, but youth are regularly involved as recruits and followers of these ideologies. Furthermore, although it is the case that several of these categories include more than youth who are involved in ethnic violence, these types of White ethnic groups provide ideologies and contexts for White ethnic youth violence in all six categories, in that they stem from a common genesis of hate and outrage at perceived injustices. Indeed, in 2003 there were more than 750 active hate groups operating across the United States (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2005a).

In addition, many accounts of White supremacists, skinheads, and survivalists, and to some extent, hate crimes, suggest that a religious thread runs through many of these movements and helps to justify the violence and other negative actions taken against people of color. In its extreme form, this so-called Christian Identity movement has strong links with the descendants of White groups from northern Europe and Great Britain, and this movement serves in some cases to reinforce the notion that violence against people of color is consistent with religious belief and practice. This is not to suggest that Christian Identity is a cause of White ethnic violence, but that in some cases, and among some groups of supremacists or survivalists, ideological justification for such acts can be found in the Christian Identity belief system (Kaplan, 2000).

#### THE RELATIVE ABSENCE OF RESEARCH ON WHITE ETHNIC VIOLENCE

The astute reader of this volume will notice a qualitative and quantitative difference between this chapter and those focusing on Latino youth violence or African American youth violence. This chapter is quantitatively different in the sense that there are fewer studies cited, less detailed summaries of research, and a great deal less data displayed. Qualitatively, the discussion in this chapter is undertheorized and sparse, with few established patterns and facts to examine. Given that more violence is committed by White youth, and that White ethnic violence represents an extreme and often quite lethal type of violence, why is the literature so sparse and the data so incomplete?

The most obvious reason can be seen in the hegemonic position of Whites in the United States. Those in power generally do not engage in much self-examination, especially with regard to such deviant behavior as street crime. Hegemonic power can be maintained and even strengthened by having a convenient group of others to focus attention on, especially in the sense that any societal problems can be based on the other people, in this case, people of color. Conflict theory in sociology predicts this outcome as the working class loses its economic standing, the elites benefiting from that decline are beyond reach. The fact that one disadvantaged group targets another similarly disadvantaged group for blame and retribution also strengthens the power of the elites by dividing groups whose common structural position might be the basis for a united front against the elites, and by diverting attention of the media and citizens alike away from the structural cause of inequality and loss of status (see Reiman, 1994).

Furthermore, although the intent of recent government research initiatives involving the inclusion of traditionally understudied populations was clearly not to single out ethnic minorities as perpetrators of violence, in fact, these policies inadvertently help to support the idea that the source of the problem lies with youth of color. This is not to say that tremendous increases in knowledge have not come about from the forced inclusion of previously understudied populations; in fact, they have, and we know more about these groups and their role in violence because of their inclusion. However, it should not be missed that this positive trend in research has, in part, created somewhat of a vacuum on the other side of the color line in youth violence prevention research.

It is also important to note that historical evidence provides plenty of examples of White ethnic violence, from the Irish gangs of New York in the 19th century (and ironically, the recruitment of Irish immigrants into the ranks of the New York City Police Department in the same period) to the Italian and especially Sicilian "mafia" of the early to middle 20th century. A longer term view of the historical record suggests an even greater association between White ethnics and perceived to be out of control, irrational violence. The Romans built Hadrian's Wall in Northern Britain in the 2nd century A.D. to keep out the Picts, a violent race of "barbarians" who were later overrun by the Scottish ancestors of some of the politicians now decrying the out of control violence of youth of color in the United States in the 21st century (Simpson, 1991).

We now turn to a brief (and rather speculative) discussion that attempts to address the lack of theorizing about contemporary White ethnic youth violence by offering a framework within which the examples described here can be understood. We also examine the role White ethnic groups such as the Irish, Jews, and Italians have played in ethnic violence historically in the United States. The rest of this chapter will examine the nature, origins, and the ideological and cultural background of White ethnic violence in the six previously identified categories: White supremacists, survivalists, skinheads, hate crimes, White youth gangs, and school shooters. We conclude with a review of common themes underlying White ethnic violence, as well as implications for youth prevention programming.

#### A HEURISTIC FRAMEWORK OF WHITE ETHNIC YOUTH VIOLENCE

In an attempt to offer some guidance to future researchers interested in White ethnic youth violence, we offer a possible framework within which the types of violence and crime discussed here can be understood as they have



played out in contemporary U.S. society. The evidence for this framework is incomplete and inconsistent, in part, because of limited research on White ethnic youth violence, but this discussion may serve as a point of departure for future endeavors.

One of the most discussed and persistent trends in the economic structure of the United States in the latter half of the 20th century has been the shift from an economy dominated by manufacturing to an economy dominated by information, to use one popular tag for the current economic emphasis. Others have described the transition as one leading to a service, dominated economy; and still others have described the process as the replacement of "red brick" industries with "high, tech" enterprises. What these descriptions have in common is that the fact that not all workers in the traditional economy have been successful at making the transition to the new economy. Wilson discussed how jobs left the inner cities and became beyond the reach of working-class African Americans and other inner-city residents of color (Wilson, 1996). However, in truth, it is more than the fact that these jobs left certain places; rather, the problem is that they simply disappeared, at least in the United States.

The jobs that replaced them were based on technical and informational skills that traditional working-class individuals often do not possess. Indeed, these are skills that often come from higher education, something that the traditional "blue-collar aristocrat" of the North and Midwest industrial belts, which so dominated the U.S. economy in the 1920s to the 1960s, generally eschewed and disdained (LeMasters, 1966). One of the most telling symptoms of this change is that WalMart is now the largest employer in the United States (Hightower, 2002). WalMart's documented effects on local economies serve to hasten the decline of the working class by lowering average wages, driving competitors out of business, and creating minimum-wage, minimum-benefit jobs to replace the better-paying, and more likely to provide health benefits, jobs that were lost when alternative retailers are driven under. This process has also been accompanied by a parallel development in which other jobs have been continuously downgraded in terms of specialized skills and training required, so that now sophisticated machinery can be assembled by workers who only need to be trained to push a button, or turn a screw one quarter of a turn. This process has been described as the "deskilling" of jobs and workers (Abbott, 1993).

The important point is that working-class Whites in the United States have not prospered during these economic changes but have actually suffered a significant decline in economic status. Equally (if not more) important is the accompanying decline in cultural prestige associated with economic prosperity. The last four decades of the 20th century also were the time frame in which the culture of the country was increasingly recognizing

nonmajority cultures as existing, at least. The increasing numbers of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Pacific Islanders, and other ethnic minorities on network television, in advertising, in the political and social discourses of equal rights, and in the realm of affirmative action have made issues of ethnicity and race front and center in American culture in a manner that was not the case in the earlier parts of the 20th century (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2005b).

Indeed, as a classic example of scapegoating, what is known about contemporary White ethnic youth violence suggests that it emerged in reaction to these shifts in status. Specifically, it appears to be motivated by a perception that (a) Whites have lost status and economic opportunity; (b) immigrants and people of color in general are to blame for this; and (c) federal, state, and local governments have not only stood by and allowed Whites to decline in fortune, but these government entities have actually hastened the process by policies such as affirmative action and minority rights. It makes little difference that the facts still show that Whites of all classes have higher incomes, lower unemployment, and better access to health care than African Americans and Latinos; it is the case that poorly educated and low-skilled White ethnics have suffered in the changing economy, and blaming others is not only convenient but provides a convenient target for such violence. For some people, it is possible that such insecurity can be converted into self-worth by relegating a person or group of people to lower status (Hoffer, 1989; Shafer & Navarro, 2003).

#### WHITE ETHNIC GROUPS AND IMMIGRANT VIOLENCE IN U.S. HISTORY

Most historical accounts of White ethnic violence discuss the Irish immigrants to the United States as the first and foremost example of a group who engaged in violence. It is noted that the Irish were major actors in the urban violence of the Jacksonian Age in America, from the 1830s until the beginning of the U.S. Civil War in 1860 (Feldberg, 1980). Irish immigrants played a major role in the 1863 draft riots during the war in New York City, both in terms of the rioters and the recently formed police force that finally suppressed the riot (Bernstein, 1990; Feldberg, 1980). Finally, the Irish, in the post-Civil War era, launched criminal/violent/ political machines in New York City, establishing the model later immigrant groups used in establishing criminal and violent organizations to gain political, social, and economic power. The first incarnation of the infamous Tammany Hall, which harnessed the violent tendencies of the Irish in the service of political corruption and power, collapsed in 1871, although its

successors continue to Irish violence to dominate some aspects of city politics into the 1930s (Block, 1994), or at least through the turn of the 20th century (Bernstein, 1990; Kelly, Chin, & Shatzberg, 1994).

Why were the Irish so violent in early 19th-century America? One argument is that the Irish, both Protestant Anglo-Irish as well as the immigrant Catholic Irish, were products of a centuries-long violent and murderous oppression, beginning with the dreadful Cromwellian slaughter of Irish Catholics in the 17th century (Feldberg, 1980). The aftermath of Cromwell's so-called "invasion" of Ireland was the development of a long-term guerilla war waged by the Irish Catholics on their Anglo-Irish Protestant overlords, including "whiteboyism," in which Irish Catholic night riders carried out property destruction, robbery, and assassination to fight economic and political oppression (Feldberg, 1980). The Protestant Irish who emigrated to the United States had been used to organizing gangs and fire companies in the homeland for defense, and they brought similar tactics to their new home (Brown, 1991; Culberson, 1990; Feldberg, 1980). Thus, the Irish immigrants to the United States may have been predisposed to use violence as an acceptable political, social, and economic tool in their struggle to establish themselves in a new nation (Culberson, 1990).

Research on organized crime in U.S. history suggests that immigrant groups who followed the Irish became involved in organized crime and violence for similar reasons: poverty, discriminatory treatment by groups that arrived in the country before them, and the desire to gain economic, social, and political power (Bell, 1953; Kelly et al., 1994). Jewish immigrants and later Italian immigrants came to the United States and found limited legitimate opportunities; this does not mean that all immigrants were or

are now involved in violence and crime. It should also be noted that, especially before 1940, violence between Whites and African Americans mainly consisted of gangs of Whites invading African American neighborhoods and engaging in property destruction, looting, and murder of largely defenseless residents (Feldberg, 1980; Grimshaw, 1969).

Considering the involvement of later groups of White ethnic immigrants in violence and crime in the United States, it is clear that Italian immigrants played a major role in organized crime, especially before, during, and after Prohibition; exactly what role, and how organized this involvement was, is much less clear (Kelly et al., 1994). There is some evidence that eastern European Jewish immigrants also became involved in organized crime in New York City and perhaps elsewhere, and there is considerable evidence and scholarship now focusing on Russian immigrant involvement in violence and organized crime (Finkenauer, 1994). The history of the United States is full of examples, and continues to be so, of White ethnic groups being heavily engaged in violence.

TYPES OF WHITE ETHNIC VIOLENCE  
IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

The basis of the various groups known as White supremacists is a misperception among some Whites that the hegemonic power of the White race is in decline or in fact has declined. Although such a view is difficult to sustain if one examines data on the relative social and economic power of Whites versus others in industrialized Western nations, the notion that the "darker" races have overthrown the hegemony of the White race, which is assumed by White supremacists to be the natural dominant race, is the driving force behind most if not all White supremacist movements and ideologies (Arena & Arrigo, 2000). This perception may be driven by the fact that African Americans and Latinos have made some economic and social progress in the past 50 years. The literature cited by White supremacist groups speak of various manifestations of this "takeover," including such factors as White job loss to people of color, intermarriage between Whites and people of color thus creating "impure Hybrid" races, and supposed conspiracy among the United Nations, Jews, and "dark races" to enslave and dominate Whites. It should not be surprising to note the common themes among different White supremacist groups, as the Internet and computers have made communication and the spread of such ideas much easier during the past two decades.

The types of violence likely to result from this ideological base involve both antigovernment violence, as White supremacists are often convinced that the government, any government, is part of the mechanism whereby this conspiracy operates to force Whites into decline, as well as violence directed at ethnic and racial groups perceived to be the direct threat to White opportunities and success.

How does this ideology of White loss of power work effectively in the face of substantial evidence to the contrary? A major consideration is the class origins of the followers of such movements and their perception that blue-collar workers have suffered a decline in standard of living in the United States, in part, because of the influx of immigrants. Among the implications of globalization are increased stress on the working class of core nations, such that low-skill jobs have become a shrinking part of the economy of most postindustrial states. As the information economy continues to develop, fewer and fewer low-skill jobs in countries such as the United States are being sought by working-class Whites. Rather increasing numbers of immigrants seek these types of jobs, leaving Whites vulnerable to White supremacist ideology (Shafer & Navarro, 2003). In memory, most working-class occupations were denied to Blacks, Latinos, and other nonWhite ethnics, but legal barriers to discrimination have made for more competition for fewer positions in this part of the economy. Whites who



find themselves disadvantaged in this sector of the economy might easily perceive that the White race has fallen from power. Indeed, an analysis of White supremacist and "patriot" organizational memberships confirms the impact of economic restructuring and the loss of family farm jobs as significant positive predictors of membership in such groups (Van Dyke & Soule, 2002).

### The Ku Klux Klan

The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (also called White Knights, Imperial Knights, Invisible Empire, etc.) is the oldest and best known of all the hate groups and White supremacist movements in U.S. history. Tracing its origins to the post-Civil War era, the Klan was seen as the protector of southern Whites from the twin deprivations of federal Reconstruction and emergent Black political and social power, which were fostered by Reconstruction and the presence of northern troops until 1877 in most southern states (Lewis & Serbu, 1999). Once the White southern authorities reestablished their political, social, and economic power in the "Jim Crow" period after Reconstruction, the southern Klan seems to have faded to some extent, only to be reestablished in the 1920s in northern states such as Indiana and Ohio (McVeigh, 1999, 2001), and western locations such as Oregon (Horowitz, 1998) and California (Rhombert, 1998). The Klan became a major issue at the national Democratic Party convention in 1924; a platform plank that would have specifically denounced the Klan was narrowly defeated, suggesting the strong influence the Klan had in national politics in that era (McVeigh, 2001).

Although the Klan traditionally engaged in violence and terrorism, such activities were not exclusively aimed at African Americans; the Klan has always maintained a strong anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish stance in rhetoric and action (Horowitz, 1998; McVeigh, 2001; Seltzer & Lopes, 1986). During the 1980s and 1990s, the Klan emerged into the limelight once again, drawing a great deal of media coverage for a mobilization drive in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, in the early 1980s and the unsuccessful campaign for governor of Louisiana by David Duke, a former self-styled Grand Wizard of the Klan, in 1991 (Keil, 1985; Kuzenski, Bullock, & Gaddie, 2002). A survey conducted in the mid-1980s in Tennessee showed that there was considerable support from a random digit-dial telephone survey sample for the Klan and its racist, anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish rhetoric (Seltzer & Lopes, 1986). At least two studies have suggested that recent Klan activities are likely to be more successful in places where competition from non-White ethnic and racial groups is more significant (Beck, 2000; Keil, 1985).

A related supremacist group that operates only in prisons is the Aryan Brotherhood. This group is a derivative of other supremacist groups outside

of prison and of individual White prisoners convicted of hate crime against people of color. Many such individuals do not come to prison with an organized ideology of White supremacy, but to survive in the highly racialized settings that u.s. prisons have become (the Black Guerrilla Family or the Mexican Mafia serve the same functions for their ethnic male and female members), individuals have been drawn to the influence of prison-based White supremacist groups. The Aryan Brotherhood and other similar groups socialize and indoctrinate new recruits who become supremacists by the time they leave prison (see Levin & McDevitt, 1993).

Thus, from the fringes of the White American working class, White supremacist ideology has some appeal. However, it seems clear that an underlying perception of a decline in the status of the working class is driving this ideology, prompting such disadvantaged Whites to respond by attacking the "other," that is, people of color, who are vulnerable and equally powerless in society. Although youth do not dominate such violence per se, youth are involved in such movements through family connections and recruitment.

#### White Survivalists and the Expression of Antiethnic Violence

White survivalists and White supremacists share a great deal in terms of ideology. Whereas White supremacists believe that the power of the White race has declined and is threatened by "dark" races, and that by striking violently at these groups and at the government, Whites can reclaim their hegemonic position, survivalists argue that it is already too late for such action. Survivalist ideology typically argues that the fall of civilization, that is, "White civilization," has already occurred or, is so close to occurring that no possibility exists to prevent it through violence or political action (Berbrier, '1998). Survivalist thought suggests that the way to salvation is to withdraw from the corrupted society of today, create a self-sufficient local environment where the White race, culture, and way of life can be preserved uncontaminated by others, only to reemerge sometime in the future when the corrupted civilization has fallen of its own contradictions and inherent weaknesses (Mitchell, 2002).

This ideological approach makes it less likely that White survivalists will commit acts of violence. However, if such groups feel directly threatened, they are likely to lash out at the threat, whether it be from the government or an encroaching group of people of color perceived as a threat to the isolation of the group. For example, the siege at Ruby Ridge in 1992 by federal agents is a classic example of a survivalist group, generally based on a family or extended family, reacting violently to the intrusion of government agents. The 1993 siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, is another example; this religious cult shared many antigovernment beliefs

of survivalist movements. Once again, although youth are not always involved in such violence, typically survivalist groups depend on youth to supply much of the firepower when attacked. At Ruby Ridge, Randy Weaver's 14-year-old son, Samuel, was killed in the initial gun battle with federal agents; and a large number of youth were involved in and died in the siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco (Kaplan, 2000).

### Skinheads

Skinheads is a term usually applied to an offshoot of the punk rock music movement that developed in the 1970s in England and elsewhere as a counterpoint to hippies and rock and roll in general. These "punk rockers," who perceived rock and roll as oriented to the middle class, were working class youths coming of age in a postindustrial Britain with little or no economic opportunity (Kaplan, 2000). However, skinheads evolved in the late 20th century to become similar to other urban and suburban youth groups in the United States but with a racist aspect that involves Whites against youth of color. This is somewhat ironic, because the original skinheads in London were multiracial and often specifically antiracist in ideology (Kaplan, 2000; Smith, 2000). A significant branch of skinheads also developed in Norway in the 1980s (Fangen, 2000).

Although skinhead groups have proliferated in the United States in recent years, there has been relatively little research on understanding and preventing this type of activity. Still, some efforts have been made to document types of skinhead groups, typical activities, and risk factors for involvement. For example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) re-

cently completed a 7-year investigation of skinhead groups in Southern California during the 1990s (Shafer & Navarro, 2003). According to their findings, the skinhead groups they identified typically consisted of uneducated, young, White males between the ages of 13 and 24 who have little prospects for long-term job and career success. In many cases, they lack adequate parental supervision.

For youth who are disengaged and disenchanting with their lives, becoming a skinhead can provide an answer for their plight that conveniently lays the blame elsewhere. Otherwise stated, the answer to the question of "why can't I get ahead in life" is simple—because the rights to run this country are being turned over to minorities. For those who have long struggled to control their anger, the skinhead movement provides an organized form of expression for this anger and a type of "legitimacy" based on group norms. Peer validation also bolsters their sense of self-worth, and at the same time prevents introspection. Furthermore, joining a group empowers individuals who feel otherwise ineffective—hate is the glue that binds them together. Skinheads often see themselves as soldiers in a race war. To

sum up, White racial purity is the main item on the Skinhead agenda (Kleg, 1993).

Although hate is a common theme for all skinhead groups, they can be divided into two categories: criminally motivated and hate-motivated. According to the FBI report (FBI, 2003), criminally motivated skinhead groups focus on for-profit criminal activities. In other words, their primary motivation is economic gain, and crimes typically include drug sales and burglaries. Racially motivated hate crimes do occur, but they are somewhat incidental to their regular activities. These hate crimes are often designed to keep ethnic minorities out of their neighborhoods. In contrast, hate-motivated skinhead groups devote the majority of their time to hate crimes, although they may commit petty crimes to support daily needs. Hate-motivated skinhead groups often spend their time prowling the streets looking for ethnic minorities to attack. Indeed, interviews with members of each group reveal that criminally motivated skinheads identify themselves as criminals first and haters second. In contrast, hate-motivated skinheads feel that the world is against them and nothing will work for them. They regularly make reference to the fact that if they quit being a skinhead they would have "nothing."

Overall, most skinhead groups are not well-organized and lack the leadership found in many well-established street gangs. Despite this lack of organization, it is still common for them to establish a group identity through symbols, rituals, and mythologies, such as adopting the swastika, the Confederate flag, or other supremacist symbols. However, some skinhead groups are more organized. These groups frequently engage in active and well-planned recruitment through a variety of techniques. One former recruiter for skinheads tells of cunning recruitment strategies targeting children as young as 12 years old. "One strategy was to post hate flyers near schools and campuses. Minority students believed White students had posted them. When altercations occurred between White and minority students, the skinheads were always around to help the White students. This way the skinhead became the "savior, ingratiating himself with the White student" (Townsend, 2003, p. 1). The recruiter also describes the extensive network for recruiting youth that extends to music, magazines, comic books, and the Internet. Indeed, there are thousands of hate sites on the Internet, including several 24-hour Web radio sites that play hate music juxtaposed with old Nazi propaganda footage.

## Hate Crimes

As discussed above, skinheads are composed of youth who are motivated, to at least some extent, by hatred of non-White groups. As such,



much of their violent activity would be considered a form of hate crime. A hate crime, as defined by the FBI, is a criminal offense committed against a person or property that is motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, ethnicity/national origin, or sexual orientation (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2003). A number of organized hate groups exist in the United States at this time. However, as statistics reveal, most hate crimes are not actually committed by hate groups (FBI, 2003).

Hate or bias crime law is different from most criminal law in that it is based on the idea that the motivation of these crimes makes them especially harmful to the community and the victims (Jacobs & Potter, 1998). The passage of the federal Hate Crime Act of 1990 mandated that the Justice Department collect and publish annual statistics on hate or bias crimes. During the past decade, the FBI has reported about 8,000 hate crimes annually. However, participation in the Hate Crime Statistics report is voluntary, and several states do not participate fully, resulting in a likely underreporting. For this reason, data in regard to ethnicity of both offenders and victims must be viewed cautiously.

Considering all motivations for hate crimes in 2002, race and ethnicity accounted for about 63% of the incidents, with religion accounting for 19%, and sexual orientation about 17%. In terms of ethnicity of the perpetrator, in 2002, the latest year for which national data currently are available, crimes against people, the largest category of hate crimes reported, revealed an ethnic distribution of 62 % Whites and 22 % African Americans. In addition, hate crimes are much less violent overall than the other types we have discussed. Overall, crimes against people made up two thirds of the hate crimes reported, but of these, more than half consisted of intimidation, a type of crime that is more psychological than it is violent, in that it involves no physical contact between victim and offender (FBI, 2003).

Hate crimes have a long and inglorious place in U.S. history, and that history is dominated by both violence and an almost exclusive involvement of Whites as offenders of such violence and blacks and other people of color as victims. The most prominent example of this is the history of lynching, which in some places in the post-Reconstruction South became law de facto if not de jure (Culberson, 1990; Grimshaw, 1969). Even before the Civil War and during that conflict, lynching or the hanging of a victim by an illegal mob was a common method for Whites to express hate and bias against Blacks, Native Americans, and others (Feldberg, 1980; Jacobs & Potter, 1998). During the draft riots in New York City after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued by Lincoln in 1863, as many as 1,500 to 2,500 Blacks were murdered, many by lynching (Bernstein, 1990). Between 1889 and 1919, five southern states reported officially nearly 1,500 lynchings of

Blacks; this number does not include unreported lynchings (Jacobs & Potter, 1998). Hate crime toward other groups such as Native Americans and Catholics and later Jews was also relatively common both before and after the u.s. Civil War, and into the 20th century.

The degree to which these historical examples of hate crimes are congruent with the current view of hate crime is another issue. There is much evidence to suggest that many hate crimes both then and now are motivated by factors even beyond race and ethnicity. Anti-immigration has been a consistent theme, as has religious persecution, an interesting feature in a country supposedly founded on the principle of religious tolerance.

### White Youth Gangs

As discussed previously, much of the youth violence, including organized youth violence, during the 19th century was carried out by White youth. Gangs were primarily Irish, Jewish, and Italian. However, from the 20th century to today, ethnic minorities are more likely than Whites to be involved in youth gangs. However, it is difficult to determine exactly how many White youth are involved with gangs. Estimates range from 5% to 25%, depending on the source of information and location (Howell, 1997). Communities with emerging gang problems, on average, report a larger proportion of White gang members than any other ethnic group (Howell, Egley, & Gleason, 2002).

Although police in smaller cities report emerging White ethnic gang problems, and some observers have reported contemporary White ethnic gangs (see Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991), detailed studies of gang joining and persistence continue to show that youth gangs are more attractive to youth of color and that such youth persist longer and are much more likely to become seriously involved (Farrington Gordon, Lahey, Loeber, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1999). Klein (1997) presented convincing evidence that the majority of gangs and gang members in the major U.S. cities are African American or Latino.

### School Shooters: An Almost Exclusive White, Male Club

Any listing of the major school shootings in the last few years shows a striking connection between ethnicity and the offenders of these horrific cases. More than 90% of these offenders are White, and more than 90% are male, giving this form of ethnic violence a distinctive profile (FBI, 2000). Why should this one type of violence be so exclusively linked to young White males?

Although these mass school shootings generate an enormous amount of media coverage, there are relative few of them in the United States. For example, between October 1997, when the Pearl, Mississippi, shooting occurred, and the May 2001, Santee, California, incident, there were four other major events—Paducah, Kentucky; Jonesboro, Arkansas; Springfield, Oregon, and the infamous Columbine incident in Littleton, Colorado. Despite the relatively small number of cases, some striking patterns have emerged. For example, the vast majority of the shooters were considered social outcasts by others and in most cases by the shooters themselves (Cornell, 1999). It has even been suggested that these shootings represent a "cultural war" between the outcasts of the junior and high school social scene and the dominant groups such as athletes, cheerleaders, and high achievers (Cook, 2000). Certainly some of these offenders were suicidal, while others were not, suggesting that the alienation felt by these outcast youth was not always self-destructive.

One study that examined school violence and compared Whites and African Americans found that for Whites, involvement in school violence was predicted by a sense that the conventional community in the school had rejected the respondent, yet among African Americans, this factor had no impact. In contrast, rejection by family was the best predictor for African Americans (D'Apolito & Wan, 1998). This suggests that White youth may be more sensitive to the approval or rejection of the school social scene, thus making White youth more vulnerable and more likely to strike out externally if suicide is not a viable option.

Two additional factors—guns and media/entertainment—should also be mentioned in this context. A study of school shooters by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that most of the weapons used in the school shootings were obtained from relatives or friends (CDC, 2003). Some have argued that video games play a role in these school shootings; rushing into a building and trying to shoot everyone in the building, one expert pointed out, is reminiscent of the style of play in single player shooting-oriented video games (Cornell, 1999). In addition, mass media has some influence as well. It was said the Columbine shooters were inspired by an episode of the TV show, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, in which the school was rigged to explode to destroy an "evil" entity residing in the school; in their style of dress, the shooters in Colorado were obviously imitating the style of dress in a popular movie of that time, the *Matrix*. These factors are not the primary causes of these school shootings, but the easy access to guns and to games and movies that glorify such violence add to the likelihood that a young White male who is alienated and wishes to strike back at the dominant youth culture will find an extreme method for doing so.

## CONCLUSION

Six types of White violence have been described in this chapter. It is clear from these descriptions that there are common threads in all six, although they vary in salience and degree. Typically, White ethnic violence involves the search for a scapegoat who can shoulder the blame for one's difficulties and problems. People of color or people who are marginalized because of particular circumstances become viable targets. These hate-motivated reactions are often facilitated by joining together with other like-minded individuals in an array of hate-focused affiliations.

The 1950s were a period of total White hegemony in the United States, during which people of color were all but invisible in the media and in public life. After the Civil Rights movement began, people of color served as scapegoats for all that was "wrong" with the nation among the fringes of the White population. This factor combined with the increasing marginalization of the least skilled and least educated members of the working class has created a potential for violent White reaction to people of color, as well as to other disenfranchised groups such as immigrants. Although these types of violence remain rare, White ethnic culture does contribute to the problem of violence in U.S. society and will continue to be a source of potential violence and victimization in the future.

What can be done to prevent or mitigate White ethnic youth violence? Clearly, some attention needs to be paid to address critical gaps in research and knowledge. What is needed in the case of White ethnic youth violence is basic empirical research in epidemiology, etiology, and greater theoretical development in both the areas of "Whiteness" or White ethnic culture and the youth violence that can spring from this dominant culture.

Prevention strategies must address the complex mixture of individual motivation and group processes. As discussed previously, when White ethnic violence is linked to membership in a particular group, the group becomes a source of legitimization, validation, anonymity, and diminished accountability. Group cohesion is solidified through a variety of rituals, symbols, and mythologies. Intervening to dismantle immature and disorganized groups should be easier than breaking down sophisticated groups or encouraging individuals to opt out of those groups. In the prior case, providing alternate options for positive engagement in schools, families, and the community via either school-sanctioned or court-mandated actions should prove useful. In the later case, where groups are more sophisticated or primarily criminally motivated, it is likely to require elaborate intervention strategies such as used more generally with criminal street gangs.

For example, a program based on Spergel's (1999) Comprehensive Model combined traditional gang worker individual intervention with a coordinated response from agencies such as police, probation, schools, and



the business community to effectively and persistently intervene in targeted neighborhoods with severe gang problems. In a 5-year evaluation, this approach resulted in a significant decrease in youth gang and nongang violence in two targeted neighborhoods (Parker, 2002).

For White ethnic violence that is linked more to individual pathologies and problems than to group membership, different types of preventive interventions are warranted. In the case of school shooters, much effort has gone into enhancing efforts at early identification and threat assessment (FBI, 2000). Coordinated efforts to provide services for isolated and troubled youth in school settings may have a side-effect of reducing the likelihood that one of these White youth will become a school shooter. Additional efforts to enforce the existing laws and policies that are supposed to prevent access to high powered weapons among youth would also have a significant preventive impact on school shooters. Ultimately, more effective programs and interventions designed to prevent or control White ethnic violence can only be developed with additional research in schools, communities, courts, and juvenile detention facilities. An important but missing piece for understanding and preventing violence among White youth is to disentangle violence by White youth that results from the experience of Whiteness (as described in this chapter) from other developmental and community conditions that increase risk for violence among White youth but that are not linked to ethnic separatism based on Whiteness. As we have pointed out, although youth violence occurs disproportionately among ethnic minority youth of color, its significance as a problem perpetrated by White youth should not be overlooked.

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