

Reporting on Violence

Instructor's Guide

A College Mini-Course on Reporting Violence
to Include a Public Health Perspective



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This teaching guide is designed to accompany *Reporting on Violence:
New Ideas for TV, Print and Web* by Jane Ellen Stevens.

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For streaming video examples see:

<http://www.newslab.org>
“Covering Crime in Context”

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And, a final thanks is due here to the first students to tackle this material in the classroom in Esther Thorson and Judy Bolch's class at the School of Journalism University of Missouri-Columbia.

Introduction

& How to Use this Guide

Why do journalists report on crime?

“Do we cover crime so much ‘just to sell newspapers,’ as our critics often charge?” asks *Wisconsin State Journal* editor Frank Denton in *The Local News Handbook*.

“Or,” he continues, “do we cover crime to inform the public so, in our democratic system, citizens can do something about it?”

The presumption underlying this guide is that journalists report crime to inform the public. But, the evidence is that we frighten citizens. And, we provide so little information that they end up making unnecessary and costly decisions about protecting themselves and their families. They accept that they must live with a certain level of crime and the fear that accompanies it. They also vote for legislation or support policies that often don't work.

Crime reporting is a time-honored tradition in journalism. It was developed as a beat in U.S. newspapers in the mid-1800s with the advent of the penny press, when journalists began reporting the details of particularly lurid or noteworthy crimes. That tradition hasn't changed much over the last 120 years.

Crime coverage is a sore spot for many news organizations; it's often the target of criticism from community members and media scholars. Despite the consistent criticism, there have been few changes in the crime beat over the years. One likely reason is that crime is a “cub” beat, where the least experienced reporters learn their new craft.

This guide is a starting point for journalism instructors who are eager for new approaches to reporting on violence, who want to prepare their new graduates for approaching this important topic with skills and perspectives that will serve their communities well.

Crime reporters gather their information primarily from cops and courts. They do an outstanding job on some individual stories. They do a lousy job at reporting the status of crime in a community and the types of crimes that have the most severe economic and emotional impacts on a community.

An example comes from San Jose, California, where, during three months in 1998, the local police department recorded 966 aggravated assaults. Most were domestic violence. During those same three months, the *San Jose Mercury News* reported on five aggravated assaults; none were domestic violence. Similar examples can be found across the United States.

This guide is designed to accompany *Reporting on Violence: New Ideas for TV, Print and Web*. That book is the latest work from the Reporting on Violence Project, a collaboration between journalist Jane Ellen Stevens, Esther Thorson, PhD, Associate Dean of the University of Missouri School of Journalism, and Lori Dorfman, DrPH, director of the Berkeley Media Studies Group. Dr. Thorson, along with Professor Judy Bolch, taught the first college journalism course based on the Reporting on Violence Project's work. Many of the lectures and assignments presented here were first tested in that class. Jane Stevens has been teaching the first multimedia course offered at the University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Journalism; lectures and assignments for the Web lessons were first tested there.

The central idea in *Reporting on Violence* is to modernize crime reporting by changing it into a "violence" beat. Now that violence epidemiology has accumulated a stalwart body of research, and violence prevention has developed a critical mass of organizations and programs, a violence beat should include as much emphasis on, and information from, the prevention, or public health community, as from cops and courts. Because such a "violence" beat differs from beats as they have traditionally been taught, it is important to take students through a brief history of crime and violence reporting as it has existed, critique that coverage, and then introduce the idea of a public-health-based violence beat.

This instructor's handbook focuses on newspaper and television reporting, multimedia reporting of violence, and how violence reporting is handled in converged newsrooms. It's not difficult to include some parts of a public health perspective in newspaper and television stories. Given the space limitations of newspapers, the time limitations of television, and the current corporate environment in most news organizations, however, it's not likely that stories will be allowed to grow long enough to provide members of the community with all the information they need to make informed decisions.

The World Wide Web isn't limited by time and space, but only by the resources required to put together Web sites and feed them. Thus the Web is an important and necessary element in developing a violence beat. Web sites provide a home for the other types of information critical to in-depth reporting on violence: updates on the status of violence in a community, economic and emotional consequences of violence, violence prevention resources for the public, and the latest research into violence prevention. They also provide a place for converged newsrooms to send readers and viewers who want more information about a daily or short feature story.

The emergence of the World Wide Web provides another imperative for news organizations to modernize their crime reporting. Police departments are developing their own Web sites, some of which already do a more thorough job of providing information about local crime than local news organizations do. The Sacramento and San Diego police department Web sites are examples (see <http://www.sacpd.org> and <http://www.sannet.gov/police>).

But the existence of police department Web sites doesn't mean that journalists should abandon crime reporting. To inform the public adequately about violence and violence prevention, journalists play a critical role if they add context and perspective to the numbers, maps, and stories provided by police departments. They need to find other sources and points of view to provide that context and perspective, and be able to point out when those numbers, maps, and information tell only part of the story.

By reporting the status of violence and adding information about the public health response to traditional crime reporting, journalists will modernize the crime beat, and uncover two major hidden stories about crime in any community:

- It is the bulk of "ordinary" violent incidents that harm communities the most and cause cities to spend huge chunks of their budgets (hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars) on police, medical and rehabilitation expenses.
- People are developing predictable, effective methods to reduce and prevent violence.

This approach to covering crime and violence breaks with journalists' traditional coverage. "Journalists are not accustomed to thinking much about effects," writes Denton in *The Local News Handbook*. "In fact, some suggest that our job is merely to report the facts and let others worry about the fallout. But which facts?" asks Denton. "Why them and not others?"

And so, we come full circle: "The answers inevitably lead back to thinking about effects — that is, why we do journalism in the first place," he answers. "For example, do we cover crime so much 'just to sell newspapers,' as our critics often charge? Or do we cover crime to inform the public so, in our democratic system, citizens can do something about it?"

How to Use this Guide

What follows are eight lesson plans, including brief lectures, discussion questions, class exercises, readings and assignments for students. Each lesson plan can be taught in a week, but can also easily be modified. The lessons begin with an emphasis on lecture, then move quickly into interactive, practical applications that will allow students to gain practical skills, cultivate sources for future stories, and build up a body of work based on the ideas and information presented in *Reporting on Violence*.

The guide includes lessons covering newspaper reporting, local TV news, and multimedia reporting. However, the material could be adapted to a class focused on only one medium. We encourage journalism instructors to experiment and modify this material as they see fit. And, we'd enjoy hearing any feedback about how the guide and *Reporting on Violence* were used in the classroom. Students will need a beginning reporting class before encountering this material.

Newspaper and TV Materials Online

Additional material focused on newspaper reporting can be found in the online version of our original handbook at <http://www.pcvp.org>, click "Reporters."

Find streaming video examples of local TV news stories with public health perspectives included at <http://www.newslab.org>.

Lesson 1 Background and Overview

Judy Bolch and Esther Thorson

Learning objective: By the end of this session and completion of assignments, students will understand how current crime news content affects readers and viewers.

Alcohol, not crack cocaine or other illegal drugs, is the substance most often associated with violent acts. The victim's family or acquaintances commit at least half the murders in the U.S. In 90 percent of murders, victim and assailant are of the same race (Stevens, 1997).

When one considers that homicide and suicide are among the top ten causes of premature death, right up there with cancer and heart disease, it is easy to realize just how important this issue is. In fact, the impact of crime and violence is such that since the 1970s, epidemiologists have begun to regard violence as an epidemic (Stevens, 1998). Public health professionals, and increasingly law enforcement and criminal justice professionals, view prevention, reduction and control of violence as a public health issue.

The news media, however, do not. They conceptualize crime and violence primarily in terms of law enforcement and criminal justice. Thus it can be argued that crime and violence news misses an important part of the story, the public health perspective. Today we will examine the research on news coverage of crime and violence, and then discuss the implications for developing new approaches to report these critically important topics better.

Research on Crime and Violence News

Many researchers argue that news about crime and violence has become degraded and misrepresentative to a disturbing and unacceptable degree. David Krajicek (1998), in fact, subtitles his critique of crime and violence news "media miss real

story on crime while chasing sex, sleaze and celebrities.” Westfeldt and Wicker (1998) also critique news coverage of crime and violence. An important part of both Krajicek’s and Westfeldt and Wicker’s proposed solution is that there should be more intense coverage of the criminal justice system.

News about crime and violence has been a staple of U.S. newspapers since before the penny press (Dorfman & Thorson, 1998). But at least since the 1950s, crime news has been criticized extensively. These criticisms can be summarized under five topics:

- 1 Crime news misrepresents the relative frequency of various types of crime** (e.g., Davis, 1951; Jones, 1976; Dominick, 1978; Garofalo, 1981; Fedler & Jordan, 1982; Winhauser et al., 1990; Jerin & Fields, 1994; Barlow, Barlow & Chiricos, 1995). Dorfman, Thorson, & Stevens (2001) report that 80% of local murders were reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, but only 2% of assaults and sexual assaults were reported. Miller (1998) reported that a content analysis of TV newscasts in Baltimore showed that 38% of the broadcasts concerned crime. In contrast, local government or politics comprised only 8% of coverage, education 4%, 4% on health, and only 1% on business.
- 2 Crime news exaggerates and sensationalizes violence** (Reid, 1971, Howitt & Cumberbatch, 1975, Halloran, 1978; Graber, 1980; Singer, 1983). Barlow et al (1995) reported that in a content analysis of *Time* magazine stories, 73% of 144 articles focused on violent crime, although only 10% of crimes known to the police involve violence. The researchers also pointed out that although most crime involves the acquisition of property, violent crime dominates media portrayals.
- 3 Crime news ignores causal and contextual processes producing crime patterns** (Isaacs, 1961; Dominick, 1978; Halloran, 1978; Stevens, 1997). Barlow, Barlow, & Chiricos (1995) also point out that there is little attention to the causal relationship between economics and crime, particularly the fact that unemployment and crime are highly associated, but a connection is seldom noted in news stories. These authors also report that of the *Time* articles they looked at, 82% were about crime and criminals but only 17% were about criminal justice. Stevens (1997) points out that a large proportion of crimes are committed under the influence of alcohol but that this causal factor is seldom reported. And finally, Miller (1998) reported that in local television crime reporting in Baltimore, coverage of local crimes was melodramatic, with anguished interviews and gruesome facts, but devoid of any information that would provide understanding of causes or frequency of particular kinds of crime.

- 4 Crime news fosters stereotypes by over- or underrepresenting certain ethnicities, gender and age of victims and perpetrators** (Halloran, 1978; Barlow, Barlow & Chiricos, 1995; Williams & Dickenson, 1993; Farkas and Duffett, 1998; Miller, 1998, and Sorenson, Peterson, & Berk, 1998). Johnstone, Hawkins, & Michener (1994) report that, overall, fewer than a third of the homicides committed in Chicago in 1987 were reported in either of the metropolitan daily papers, and the homicides that were reported were more likely to involve multiple victims and less likely to include homicides where the victims were African-American or Hispanic. Sorenson et al (1997) analyzed all *Los Angeles Times* stories about homicides occurring 1990 to 1994 and found that homicides of women, children, the elderly, multiple victims, those with suspects who were strangers to victims, and those that occurred in wealthier neighborhoods were more likely to be reported than homicides of African Americans, Latinos, the less educated, and those involving a weapon other than a firearm, or when the suspect was an intimate of the victim.
- 5 Crime news unfairly or inappropriately frames crime stories** (Weimann & Gabor, 1987; Dorfman & Schiraldi, 2001). Miller (1998) characterized the framing of crime in terms of its arbitrariness, randomness and insanity, committed by “wandering demons.” Miller also characterized most of the crime coverage as framed in terms “anti-urban propaganda,” that is, emphasizing crime in metropolitan Baltimore and de-emphasizing crime in the suburbs. Weimann & Gabor (1987) reported that in Canadian daily newspapers, there was a “blame frame” involved in much of the crime reporting. In fact, in 25% of the stories, the victim’s contribution to the offense was noted. The blame frame was more likely when the victim was female, the perpetrator a male, and the offense violent. Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon, & Wright (1996) showed that crime is often framed as associated with minority status, which causes viewers and readers to perceive certain minority or youthful groups as “super-predators.”

Negative Impacts of Crime Reporting on the Public

It is clear then, even from this brief overview that crime news often fails to represent the occurrence of crime and violence accurately. But what, if anything, is the impact on consumers of crime news? The research literature provides support for negative impacts that fall into four categories: people’s overestimation of the frequency of different classes of crime and violence; increase in fear levels; failure to register the fact that crime has decreased in the past few years; and encouragement of support for punitive and discouragement of support for preventive crime policies. We will look briefly at each of these kinds of effects.

Looking first at mistaken estimates of crime and violence frequency, O'Keefe (1984) showed that television crime news exposure was directly related to perceptions of the probability of violent crime. McLeod, Daily, Guo, Eveland & Bayer (1994) showed that attention to crime news (both television and newspaper) was related to perceived salience of crime. McLeod et al (1996) showed that local television news, but not national network news, was strongly related to perceptions of crime both in one's city and one's own neighborhood. It was also related to the belief that crime was increasing in the city.

In terms of fear responses, Warr (1993) reported from the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey that 55% of respondents indicated that "being a victim of crime was something they personally worry about." Farkas and Duffett (1998) and Miller (1998) reported evidence from a phone survey in Baltimore that 84% of respondents said they worry that they or someone they care about will become a victim of crime. Thirty-six percent of former Baltimore City residents who left the city said they did so at least partly because of the crime problem, and 54% said they have seriously considered leaving at least partly because of crime. In spite of these high levels of concern about crime, only 7% indicated they had been a victim of a violent crime and 26% said they had had property stolen.

Even though crime actually declined in Baltimore during the 1990s, the Farkas and Duffett (1998) study showed that only 13% of the respondents *believed* there was less crime in Baltimore over the past year, while 80% said crime had either increased or remained the same. McLeod et al (1995) found the same general pattern for Madison, Wisconsin.

And finally, crime news has been demonstrated to have impact on support for punitive as opposed to preventive measures for dealing with crime. McLeod et al (1996) reported that the more exposure and attention people had to crime news, the more they supported punitive measures. Antecol & Thorson (1999) showed that exposure and attention to crime news led both to greater support for punitive measures and less support for preventive measures.

So it is clear that the way crime news is structured makes some important differences to audiences. It seems reasonable, then, to ask what crime news would include if it were to provide information for people to use in understanding crime and violence from a public health point of view.

Class Discussion Questions

- 1 Crime coverage has drawn readers to newspapers since the earliest days of journalism. Is a “good story” enough reason to go to print? Why or why not? What about for local TV news, which fares the worst when it comes to violence reporting?
- 2 Research about the news rarely reaches practitioners in newsrooms. Should that change? What kinds of research should newsroom managers and reporters consider valuable? Are news audits useful to the practice of journalism? What about studies of news effects?

Assignments

Reading:

Dorfman, Lori, and Schiraldi, Vincent. (2001). *Off Balance: Youth, Race, and Crime in the News*. Executive Summary, <http://www.buildingblocksfor youth.org>.

Krajicek, D. (1998). *Scooped! Media Miss Real Story on Crime While Chasing Sex, Sleaze, and Celebrities*. Columbia University Press: New York.

Shaw, D. (2000, July 11). Column One: Kids Are People Too, Papers Decide. *Los Angeles Times*, page A1.

Stevens, Jane Ellen. (2001). *Reporting on Violence: New Ideas for Television, Print and Web*, Modernizing Crime Reporting, pp. 7–12 and What Does Crime News Look Like — And Why Does It Matter? by Lori Dorfman, pp. 13–14.

Exercise in Class: “Top Stories”

In small groups, students examine different daily newspapers from the same day, compare crime stories, and discuss the differences and similarities in the stories. Do the stories seem complete? Is there information missing? This exercise should prepare the students for looking critically at the news in anticipation of the homework assignment below.

Homework: “Perception and Reality”

- 1 Each student examines two weeks of local newspapers, and writes a two-page description of what they would know of violence in their town if this were their only source of information.
- 2 Students collect crime statistics about their town and then compare the statistics to what they've perceived in the newspaper coverage.

Note from Professors Thorson and Bolch:

We found that even those students with the least amount of reporting experience brought with them the common definition of news values to the course. They knew that in most newsrooms a crime's news potential is evaluated in terms of its abnormality, not its normality. The more bizarre and sensational, of course, the more likely a crime is to be covered. From day one, we asked that students examine all crime stories in terms of perception vs. reality. We began immediately to discuss the contrast between what people believe about the nature and prevalence of crime, based on what the news media report, and its actual characteristics and occurrences.

Lesson 2 The New Rules of Reporting

Learning objective: By the end of this session and completion of assignments, students will have identified and practiced new models for violence reporting.

The violence beat can produce not only stories that provide a more accurate view of the pattern of crime in a community, but some excellent, readable and involving stories. Violence stories can be driven by a news hook, i.e., something that occurs locally, in the state or nationally. The thinking about how to cover these stories is somewhat different from what students have been taught about the police beat. Perhaps one of the best ways to teach this new approach is by asking questions.

Areas of Inquiry for Reporting on Violence

Think about violence stories in terms of four critical variables: context, consequences, risk factors, and resources. Violent incidents should not be represented as isolated or random. Violent events have causal patterns, and only when those causes are discussed can people understand the patterns that typify crime. Also, violence has consequences for perpetrators and victims, their families, and the community at large — everything from economic to psychological effects. Consequences also occur at the community level in terms of need for medical treatment, rehabilitation, incarceration, trial, welfare, reduction in property values, and attitudes and beliefs of residents about their own community (e.g., Miller, 1998).

Violence stories are driven by local, state or national events; local, state or national data; or research on violence risk factors. This grid can be used to guide your explorations and prompt investigations into different aspects of violence.

		Individual		Family	Weapon	Social Environment	Physical Environment
		Victim	Suspect				
Context							
Consequences							
Risk Factors							
Resources	Data						
	Prevention Programs						

Individual Victim & Suspect	Family	Weapon
age	effects on family members	type
race	effects on children	where obtained
gender	whom they live with, number of people living per room	cost
income/job	economic effects	how often used in this type of violence
relationship	retention of home	how many produced
residence	history of violence	how many sold
how often this incident occurs		
injuries		
rehabilitation		
death		
incarceration		
trial		
health insurance		

In providing this information, Stevens (2001) suggests a variety of specific content be added. Examples include: **1** regularly providing information about the status of different types of violence in a community; **2** information about the economic and psychological consequences of different types of violence; **3** information that puts violent incidents into context about what is usual and can be prevented, and what is unusual and cannot be prevented; **4** information of methods being developed to prevent violence and how successful they are or aren't; and **5** information about whether local communities are implementing these approaches.

For example, these may be the elements of particular stories. Consider this a starting point — a tool to build on. Add areas of inquiry as new research on violence is released and from your own experience reporting on violence.

Social Environment	Physical Environment
economic level unemployment level job opportunities youth employment population concentration crime level alcohol mores costs of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • court • hospital • rehabilitation • convalescence • foster care 	location of violent incident: street, house, apartment alcohol outlet density alcohol advertising number of people living per room neighborhood lighting healthy community: services (parks, transportation), schools, libraries, supermarkets, entertainment centers, churches, mix of businesses, ratio of abandoned buildings

Questions to ask When Reporting on Violence

Basic questions common to all types of violence:

What are the age, race, sex, and income level of the victim?

What are the age, race, sex, and income level of the suspect?

What is their relationship?

Where did the violent incident occur?

Where do the victim and suspect live? With whom do they live?

How often does this type of incident happen in this community? In other similar communities? Are incidents like this on the rise, or are they decreasing?

Is this the first time that the victim and suspect have been involved in this type of incident or a similar incident?

What type of weapon was used? Where was it obtained? How much did it cost? How often is this type of weapon used in this type of violent incident? How many of these weapons are produced in the United States and sold in this community?

What are the injuries? If so, how long will the victim remain in the hospital? Will the victim have to undergo rehabilitation? Does the victim have health insurance?

What happened to the suspect? If charged with a crime, will the suspect pay for a defense attorney, or will the community bear the cost of a public defender? Will the suspect undergo mandatory counseling?

If one or both breadwinners are incapacitated, how will the rest of the family survive economically?

Will the victim and suspect and/or their families be able to keep their home?

Do the victim and suspect have children? Did the children witness the violent incident?

What will happen to the children? Will they be put into foster care? Will they have to change schools? Are they receiving any counseling?

How did this violent incident affect the immediate family and community, psychologically, economically, socially, and physically?

How much does incarceration cost the community? Foster care? Hospitalization of the victim? Court costs? Welfare?

Were either the victim or the suspect drinking alcohol? Using drugs? How often does alcohol figure in this type of incident? How often do other drugs figure in this type of incident?

Were the victim and suspect employed? Will they be able to keep their jobs?

What type of housing do the victim and suspect live in? What is the economic health of the neighborhood or community? How many alcohol outlets exist in the neighborhood? Is there much drug traffic?

Family or domestic violence

Did the victim die? If so, who will pay for the funeral? How much are the burial costs?

What type of policy does the community have for suspects of family violence? What type of policy does it enforce?

Will the suspect have mandatory counseling? Do most of the suspects believe in male dominance over women?

What support services does the community provide for victims of family and domestic violence?

Had a restraining order been issued against the suspect? How long ago, and for how long?

Was the victim in the process of ending the relationship with the suspect?

What types of domestic and family violence prevention programs exist in the community? How do they compare to other communities?

Homicide

Who will pay for the funeral of the victim? How much are the burial costs?

Do the victim and suspect have jobs?

What types of violence prevention programs exist in the community? How do they compare with other communities?

Child Abuse

Did the victim die? If so, who will pay for the funeral? How much are the burial costs?

What is the nature of the abuse: exploitation, physical, sexual, neglect?

Where did the abuse occur?

Has the victim or suspect been involved in previous abuse incidents?

If the victim is school age, will the victim have to leave school? For how long?

If the victim has siblings, what is happening to them? Have they been removed from the home while the investigation is ongoing?

Will the victim and suspect continue to live together or see each other?

What types of child abuse prevention programs exist in the community? How do they compare to other communities?

Rape

Where did the rape occur?

Has the victim or suspect been involved in previous incidents of rape?

If the victim sustained injuries, did the victim require medical attention? If hospitalized, for how long? Is rehabilitation required? Counseling? Does the victim have health insurance?

What types of rape prevention programs exist in the community? How do they compare to other communities?

Elder Abuse

Did the victim die? If so, who will pay for the funeral? How much are the burial costs?

What is the nature of the abuse: exploitation, physical, sexual, neglect?

Where did the abuse occur?

Will the victim and suspect continue to live together or see each other?

What types of elder abuse prevention programs exist in the community? How do they compare to other communities?

Youth Violence

Did the victim die? If so, who will pay for the funeral? How much are the burial costs?

Do they attend school? Do they have jobs? What types of extracurricular activities are they involved in?

Are they members of a gang? What type of gang? How many people belong to the gang?

With whom do they live? Parents? Mother? Father? Are their parents employed?

What type of youth offender rehabilitation programs exist in the community?

Will the victim and suspect undergo mandatory counseling?

What types of youth violence prevention programs exist in the community? How do they compare to other communities?

What is the level of parental, or any adult, involvement in the young person's life?

Aggravated Assault

What types of violence prevention programs exist in the community? How do they compare to other communities?

Fault Lines: Another Lens for Violence

“Fault Lines” is another way to expand the boundaries around traditional crime news. The concept of “Fault Lines” was developed by Robert Maynard, the late publisher of the *Oakland Tribune*. His daughter, Dori Maynard, now president of the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, continues to teach the concept in newsrooms around the country.

Robert Maynard believed that people naturally divided along lines of race or ethnicity, gender, class, geography and generation. These “Fault Lines” are another rubric for examining the pressure points in a community around violence. The concept could be applied to a variety of crimes. Consider youth violence through the Fault Lines lens (see Lesson 7 for an application to domestic violence):

Race/ethnicity: How many ethnic groups exist in the community, and are there historical grievances among them? What is the racial or ethnic distribution in the neighborhoods where violence is prevalent?

Gender and/or sexual preference: How many young women are victims or perpetrators of violence? How many young men? Is there a history of gay-related violence or hate crimes? What is the incidence of dating abuse among teenagers, and how is the community dealing with it?

Class: What happens when young people from poor families are arrested for violence? Is it the same for kids from rich families? Do news organizations report crimes of a particular class more than others?

Geography: Where does the violence occur most often? What’s the geographic distribution of victims compared with resources? In other words, are resources readily available to those who need them?

Generation: Do young people have a different pattern of violence than their elders? At what age does the pattern change? How do experts explain the decline in violence in the late 1990s despite the increase in the number of young men in the population? Are crimes against young people reported as often as crimes by children or youth? What do young people die of most? In her series “Dying young, Teenagers who perish out of the public eye,” *San Francisco Examiner* reporter Elizabeth Fernandez examined all the city’s teenage deaths in a 27-month period and found that of the 56 deaths, 40 could have been prevented.

Class Discussion Questions

- 1 What sources do reporters, editors and producers typically seek in crime stories? Where else might they look for information about the event itself and/or trends and contextualizing information?
- 2 What information is relevant in a crime story? Does it matter what the purpose of the story is (refer back to Lesson 1's discussion of the traditions of crime reporting)?

Assignments

Reading:

Stevens, Jane Ellen. (1998, Winter). Integrating the public health perspective in reporting on violence. *Nieman Reports*, pp. 38–41.

Thompson, Bob. (1998, March 29). The science of violence: Guns, politics and the public health. *Washington Post Magazine*, March 29, 1998.

Wilson, James Q., & Kelling, George. (1982, March). Broken windows: The police and neighborhood safety. *Atlantic Monthly*.

Gladwell, Malcolm. (1996, June 3). The Tipping Point: Why is the city suddenly so much safer — Could it be that crime really is an epidemic? *The New Yorker*.

Exercise in Class: “New Questions”

Select two crime stories and write “after” versions of each incorporating the new questions discussed in class. Students may work in teams of two.

Homework: “New Questions — Violence Trends”

Students should write two stories on local or statewide violence trends and/or specific incidents of violence, “Questions to Ask When Reporting on Violence.” They should use sources from law enforcement, criminal justice, *and* public health.

Lesson 3 Changing the Paradigm

Learning objective: By the end of this session and completion of assignments, students will understand the rationale for approaching the traditional crime beat from a public health perspective.

Given the shortcomings of crime and violence reporting as it most commonly occurs, what would crime reporting look like if it included a public health approach in addition to law enforcement and criminal justice? *Reporting on Violence* offers two examples of the concepts discussed so far to print and local TV stories.

[Lecture on the first and second challenges to modernizing the crime beat from pp. 15–26 of *Reporting on Violence*. Discuss the “before and after” print and local TV stories with the class. Ask for their reflections on what was done differently and if they agree or have other suggestions for bringing a public health perspective into the stories.]

Class Discussion Questions

- 1 What kind of background should a crime reporter have? Is the reporter's education the only variable that is important?
- 2 How can reporters make links to systemic issues in the context of individual stories? That is, how can information related to the responsiveness or performance of health and hospital systems, community-based prevention, criminal justice, law enforcement, housing, and/or education systems be connected to individual crime stories? Are all those systems relevant to every crime story? How can you tell which stories connect to which systems?

- 3 What can be done in first-day stories? Follow-up stories?
- 4 Many newsrooms these days are turning to teams to expand the comprehensiveness of reporting. What combination of beat reporters would compose an effective violence team?

Assignments

Reading:

Morgan, Arlene. (1998, October 5) Inquirer discusses how to remove “helplessness” from coverage of crime and violence. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, page A-10.

Open Society Institute: *Race, Crime and the Media*, especially “Placing crime in context,” pp. 8–10.

Shepard, Judith. (October, 1999). A Tale of Two Massacres. *American Journalism Review*, pp. 40–45.

Exercise in Class: “Before & After — Newspaper”

Study the changes in the newspaper story on pp. 2–25 in *Reporting on Violence*. Select two crime stories and write “after” versions of each. Students may work in teams of two.

Homework: “Before & After — Newspaper”

Students should rewrite one of the stories from their content analysis of two weeks of a local newspaper, applying the data and/or calling public health sources that they identified in last week’s assignment.

Lesson 4 Reporting Invisible Violence

Learning objective: By the end of this session and completion of assignments, students will have identified and practiced new models for violence reporting applied to family violence, the most frequent form of violence in most U.S. communities.

Public health researchers note that certain kinds of violence are extremely common but because they are not reported, they remain invisible to the public which then underestimates the extent of the problem. For example, domestic violence is one of the most common ways in which women suffer violence, but it seldom appears as news. Child abuse is the most common cause of violence and death to children, but usually takes a back seat to the reporting of such events as school shootings and kidnappings, which are far less common.

[Lecture from the Family Violence Case Study, pp. 33–39 in *Reporting on Violence*.]

Given the shortcomings in current crime and violence reporting, what can be done? We suggest that the guiding principle is to find a way to report crime and violence in context and make such an approach common practice. This does not mean that details of horrendous or shocking crimes are not sometimes reported.

Instead, we add new elements. We offer more stories that talk about risk factors for crime: poverty, unemployment, alcohol or drug abuse, child neglect or abuse, and family relationships.

We emphasize stories about prevention and about the costs of crime as they relate to medicine, public health, law enforcement, criminal justice, loss of work time, loss of property value, and pain and suffering of victims. We produce more stories about consequences. What happens to the families of victims and offenders, for example?

Class Discussion Questions

- 1 How do human service and public health surveillance systems interact? That is, how do the different responsibilities of the public health system, such as providing the health care of last resort and collecting data on who suffers from different illnesses and injuries, work together? What are the differences between public health and law enforcement surveillance and data collection? How can reporters get at that story?
- 2 How can reporters tell meaningful stories yet not compromise the subject's safety or confidentiality? Are there times when news stories can do more harm than good? What are good strategies for balancing agency insistence on confidentiality and the public's right to know about crucial problems?

Assignments

Reading:

Alexander, Mary Jane. (1998). Civic journalism as rationale for aggressive coverage of domestic assault. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 19(1), pp. 2–15.

Pages 20–21 in *Reporting on Violence*. Students should access the *San Jose Mercury News* Web site at <http://www.mercurycenter.com> and read the original series written by Michelle Guido and Carole Rafferty, including the letters to the editor published in response. Note: students will need a password to access the archives and there may be a fee.

Exercise in Class: “Before & After — Family Violence”

Provide students with a number of domestic violence stories that have appeared in print (consult the morgue at your city's newspaper). Most of these will be about murders or murder/suicides. Each student rewrites two of the stories incorporating the principles of context, consequences, risk factors, and resources.

Homework: “Cultivating Sources”

Students should interview local sources who work on preventing and intervening in family violence and child abuse. They should identify which public and private agencies are working on the problem, their missions, funding sources, and assessment of the problem. Students should visit with representatives from law enforcement, criminal justice, and public health including the district attorney's office, coroner, beat cops, emergency room physicians, shelter staff, and health department staff. Students should note whether there are gaps in services or innovative programs being implemented locally.

Lesson 5 Putting the Principles into Action

Learning objective: By the end of this session and completion of assignments, students will have applied the new models for violence reporting to their own series of stories.

Have students discuss story ideas, including topics that explore the origins of violence, risk factors, consequences on institutions and communities, patterns and unintended consequences. Students can focus on individual victims or they can conceptualize the whole community as the “victim.” Stories may or may not have an immediate news “peg.” Discuss the circumstances in which students will want to identify national experts with broader perspectives to supplement local viewpoints.

Class Discussion Questions

- 1 What “evergreen” violence stories should reporters on the violence beat be ready to tell? Is it important to wait for a news peg in order to tell them?
- 2 What milestones and anniversaries provide potential pegs for violence trend and/or prevention stories?
- 3 What violence-related information does a community need on a regular basis?

Assignments

Reading

Students should browse Web sites listed in *Reporting on Violence* to become familiar with national sources for data on different types of violence. Students should learn to navigate both government and non-governmental sites.

Exercise in Class: “Violence Column”

Students work in teams to outline the elements of a weekly Violence Column or Violence Page, including stories and graphics.

Homework: “Violence Column”

Students write two stories on different violent incident or trend topics incorporating information obtained from national and local sources. Students can choose to write stories that would fit on the weekly Violence Column they developed in class.

Lesson 6 Local TV News

Learning objective: By the end of this session and completion of assignments, students will have applied the new models for violence reporting designed for local TV news.

Local television is the primary source of news for most Americans. But its limitations are legion, especially when it comes to crime and violence (see Lesson 1 and pages 13–14 in *Reporting on Violence* for details). Local TV news has less time to tell stories, depends on visuals and action rather than information and analysis, and rarely delves deep into issues. And, more than ever before, television stations are answering to a different master: shareholders. These pressures have made it ever more difficult to produce meaningful local television news.

John McManus, in his award-winning book *Market-driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?* (Sage 1994) documents what happens when news is produced to satisfy the demands of investors and sponsors rather than to inform the public. McManus shows that the imperative to attract the largest possible audience conflicts with local news producers' ability to provide news that counts for citizens who need information for decision-making.

But the limitations in broadcast coverage do not mean that the public health model of violence reporting cannot be successfully incorporated. The same questions that need to be asked by print reporters can be asked by television reporters. How many people in this community are dying or being injured by this type of violence? How much does violence cost individuals, families and communities? What are city, state, and national authorities doing to prevent it? Is enough money being spent on research and on prevention? These questions, and others related to context, consequences, risk factors, and resources, are relevant for television news.

Given the constraints in most local TV newsrooms, what can be done? For television news in particular, new techniques for illustrating risk factors for crime

need to be developed. Local TV producers and reporters have to be able to picture poverty, unemployment, alcohol or drug use, child abuse and neglect, and destructive family relationships in the context of specific — and often horrific — news events.

Visuals must be developed that easily transmit complex concepts like prevention and the costs of crime as they relate to medicine, public health, law enforcement, criminal justice, loss of work time, loss of property value, and pain and suffering of victims. The techniques discussed so far for print reporters now get the visual treatment.

Class Discussion Questions

- 1 What opportunities and challenges does the local TV news format offer for including a public health perspective in crime stories?
- 2 What visuals can tell the contextual side of the violence story?

Assignments

Reading

McManus, John. (1994). *Market Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Holley, Joe. Should the coverage fit the crime? *Columbia Journalism Review*, May–June 1996 and Dorfman, Lori. Crime: Dig Deeper. (Letter) *Columbia Journalism Review*, July–August 1996.

Woodruff, Katie. (1998, Winter). Youth and race on local TV news. *Nieman Reports*, 3pp. 43–44.

Exercises in Class & Homework: “TV”

The assignments for the five lesson plans already presented can be adapted for a second-level broadcast news course. The exercises below may be substituted for, or included with, the exercises and homework assignments included in Lessons 1–5, or combined for a single exercise and homework assignment in an overview course that includes both print and broadcast students.

Lesson 1

- Students examine two weeks of nightly local newscasts (early or late broadcast) and write a two-page description of what they would know of violence in their town if this were their only source of information.
- Students collect crime statistics about their town and then compare them to what they've seen on the TV news.

Lesson 2

The instructor will bring in two broadcast news stories on crimes that have happened in the local area. The students should assume the stories ran on the early news broadcast. Working in teams of two, students write follow-up stories for the late newscast, taking into account the script and video possibilities for including a public health perspective.

Lesson 3

Select two TV stories, record and transcribe them, and write “after” versions of each incorporating the new questions discussed in class. Students may work in teams of two. If time and resources allow, produce the “after” version, adding new footage where necessary.

Lesson 4

If possible, show students a story on domestic violence that has run on the local television newscast. If none are available, have the students work from a print story. Each student rewrites the story incorporating the principles of context, consequences, risk factors, and resources. Students should be prepared to discuss how they approached the story videographically to ensure a clear, concise and thought-provoking story while maintaining the privacy of private individuals.

Lesson 5

Students plan a special video news segment on crime. This will be longer than the standard eighty-second package. Plan for a 10-minute segment, composed of several stories. Students should plan which stories they wish to cover, what kind of angles they will be taking and how to make this a comprehensive examination of the issue they have selected. Students should produce as many stories for the series as they have time, but should prepare scripts for the entire series. Students should also be prepared to discuss how to transform this special news segment into a regular feature on the broadcast.

Lesson 7 Multimedia: Violence Reporting on the Web

Learning objective: By the end of this session and completion of assignments, students will have identified and practiced new models for multimedia violence reporting.

The limitations of time and space evaporate on the Internet. News organizations can take advantage of the new horizons the Web offers to modernize crime reporting in three important ways. First, newspapers or television stations can organize a database and resources “shell” that is regularly updated, so that the news outlet can provide information and stories about the crimes that cause the most damage to a community, including features, investigative pieces, or series. Second, the Web can help news outlets provide context for the traditional — or unusual — crime stories in newspaper, television news, or converged newsrooms so that people are informed, but not scared. Finally, a news organization’s Web site can serve as a resource for its own reporters and editors by containing databases on local violence and links to outside sources.

The Regularly Updated Data & Resource Shell

Traditionally, it is said, journalists report the unusual. And most crime reporting focuses on unusual crimes: multiple murders, school shootings, interracial murders, women who are murdered by strangers, children who are kidnapped and/or murdered by strangers.

But those are not the crimes that affect or cost communities the most, economically or emotionally. Those are not the crimes that fill the courts and jails, that lead to the increase in the budgets of police departments, courts, hospital emergency rooms, emergency medical response units. Those are not the crimes that contribute to the flight of businesses from neighborhoods or that depress a community spiritu-

ally and economically. Those are not the crimes that contribute to pressures on the welfare, housing and social services of a community.

By reporting the unusual, news organizations are not accurately reporting crime; they are missing the story about the effects of crime on a community.

The crimes that are the usual, the normal, the everyday crimes that news organizations generally ignore in daily crime reporting are the most numerous. So, the question becomes: How does a journalist regularly report the usual crimes that cause the most damage to a community? Reporters at the *Los Angeles Times*, for example, can't write a story about every one of the more than 4,000 aggravated assaults that occur each month.

But, a news organization can provide regular information about violent incidents and the efforts the community is — or is not — taking to reduce them.

The way that journalists can do this is, first, to break down violent incidents — aggravated assaults, murder, rape, robbery — into different types of violence. Reporters need to have this data, because different types of violence require different solutions. For example, in the case of aggravated assault, youth-on-youth violence has a different solution than domestic violence. Spousal abuse has a different solution than child sexual abuse. In the case of homicide, men murdered by male strangers around bars have a different solution than spousal murder.

Then, reporters can determine which crimes are most numerous, which cost a community the most economically and emotionally, and allocate the news organization's resources accordingly.

From this starting point, journalists can build a Web shell of data and resources that surrounds breaking, daily, feature, series or investigative stories. In a previous lesson, we've addressed the new content necessary for a complete violence beat: context, economic and emotional consequences, violence prevention resources, and information about the latest violence prevention research on risk factors.

In the case of domestic violence, for example, these categories could contain the following specific information — in graphs, charts or interactive databases — which is regularly updated.

Context:

the number of domestic violence cases this year, for the last 10 years, the type of weapon used, the number of times alcohol was involved, etc.

Consequences:

the number of visits to domestic violence shelters, the number of people in batterers' counseling, the number of times police responded to domestic violence calls, the number of court cases, and the cost of all of these services. The number of families going on welfare as a result of domestic violence, the number of children and spouses requiring counseling, the number of families turned away from social services because of a lack of resources.

Risk Factors:

the effectiveness of batterers counseling, how alcohol use figures in domestic violence, the link of gun availability to domestic violence, how people become victims of domestic violence, etc.

Resources:

contact information for shelters, counselors, police domestic violence units, family court, welfare agencies, hospitals, physicians who specialize in domestic violence, etc.

Models for this data and resource shell can be found on bmsg.org. For comparison, see the sports and business sites of WashingtonPost.com which offer a model for organizing a similar amount of information in the areas of sports and business.

Added Context for Traditional Crime Stories

Modernizing crime reporting still means that news organizations will report the unusual crimes. For example, a news organization would thoroughly cover the unusual crime of a wealthy white woman murdered by a poor Mexican stranger. A Web site shell can provide data that demonstrate in a graphic how unusual it is for a woman to die this way, and that most times, women who are murdered die at the hands of someone they know, usually of the same ethnic group.

Any school shooting, for example, would also be covered thoroughly. Data in a violence “shell” would show how rarely school shootings occur, the research that explores the risk factors that contribute to juvenile violence, where and from whom children are most at risk, and what the community is doing, or not doing, to prevent juvenile violence, and how this community differs from others on all these dimensions.

“Fault Lines” is another way to expand the boundaries around traditional crime news. (See Lesson 2 for a discussion of the concept of Fault Lines.) How this concept applies to domestic violence, for example, is in examining the victims of domestic violence:

Race/ethnicity:

How many ethnic groups exist in the community, and are there shelters for all ethnic groups, especially those women who are recent immigrants and do not speak English? The *Los Angeles Times* did a story that looked at the emergence of battered women’s shelters for recent immigrants from Central and South America. Most could not speak English, and thus did not know how to ask for help from shelters whose counselors spoke only English and did not understand the women’s culture.

Gender and/or sexual preference:

How many women are battered in the community? How many men? How much domestic violence occurs in gay and lesbian couples? What resources exist for those victims and batterers?

Class:

Do wealthy men who are batterers have an easier time dodging jail time, counseling, or support issues?

Geography:

What's the geographic distribution of victims compared with resources? In other words, are resources readily available to those who need them?

Generation:

Do elderly women suffer from as much spousal abuse as younger women in the community? What is the incidence of dating abuse among teenagers, and how is the community dealing with it?

A Web-based Resource for Reporters and Editors

Multimedia stories are non-linear in-depth stories comprising video clips, text, still photographs, and/or graphics that are not redundant. The violence beat shell serves as a resource for data from which stories arise. Its structure provides a guideline for reporters and editors to explore the various aspects of a story. And, of course, it provides resources for readers.

Class Discussion Questions

- 1 What elements, including links, should be resident on a violence shell? Are there elements that will come and go and others that will be furniture? How should the news organization go about determining what to include on its violence site? Who would be responsible for updating the information?
- 2 One of the Web's best features is its ability to link people to information sources quickly, including databases. This can be as important for reporters, producers, and editors as it is for the site's readers. What does the site need to include if it is to serve the news staff as well as the public? Will the information or its presentation need to be any different?

Assignments

Reading

Explore the Fault Lines concept via the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, <http://www.maynardije.org/programs/faultlines/>.

Exercise in Class: “Violence Shell”

Devise a data and resource “shell” for a violence reporting beat in your community. You can use the sports or business pages of WashingtonPost.com as examples. Identify resources for each category, e.g., context — police department data, local hospital emergency room data, etc.

Focus on one type of crime, e.g., family or domestic violence. Based on the data and resources, identify stories for different parts of the shell. For example:

Context:

Which agencies gather data on domestic violence? Can reporters obtain good data on domestic violence? What is good data? How do other communities gather and publish domestic violence data?

Consequences:

If a community could reduce domestic violence cases by 20 percent, how much money would be available for other things the community wants: parks, after-school programs, etc.? What percentage of the community budget is taken up by police, courts, prisons?

Resources:

Study a domestic violence case and follow it from the time it was reported to police for a year. List all the people and agencies involved in the process of assisting the victim, batterer, and children.

Risk Factors:

Examine the risk factors that show up in violence epidemiology literature on domestic violence. What are the identified risk factors? Do any domestic violence prevention programs work? How do people become victims? Begin with the journals listed on page 41 of *Reporting on Violence*.

Apply the Fault Lines approach to your stories, and include as subdivisions in the violence shell if necessary.

Homework: “Developing Data Sources”

- 1 Identify sites with local and/or statewide data or stories and information relevant to violence prevention in your state and a neighboring state. Compare the information available on local police sites, news sources, local and state government sites and prevention-oriented or community-based organization sites.
- 2 Become familiar with the search engines on sites that contain the latest scientific literature on violence prevalence and prevention including the *American Journal of Public Health* at <http://www.ajph.org>, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* at <http://www.jama.org>, and the *Journal of Public Health Policy* at <http://www.jphp.org>. Locate the Web site for at least one additional injury or violence-related journal.

Lesson 8

Convergence: Reporting on Violence in the Modern Newsroom

Learning objective: By the end of this session and completion of assignments, students will have experimented with writing the same violence story for different media.

In 2000, the *Tampa Tribune*, WFLA-TV and tbo.com moved into the same building. WFLA-TV and tbo.com employees work on the same floor. A large atrium above a huge raised area of desks, from which the photographers and multimedia coordinator operate, opens to the floor above, where *Tribune* reporters and editors work.

The Tampa news operation is the first truly converged newsroom in the United States. Reporters and editors work closely with each other across print, TV and Web platforms. Some television reporters write for the newspaper. Some newspaper reporters appear on the nightly news. For the Web site, Web journalists put together stories comprising video clips, text, still photos and links, and use the same media components to adapt them to television and print. As a result, a story put together by one reporter can appear in all three media.

[For examples, go to <http://multimedia.tbo.com> and click on any of the “multimedia reports” links in the stories. In the window that pops up, the television story, a video clip, appears on the left. The link to the story as it appeared in the newspaper is in the middle or the right (usually marked “Full Story”). Other links may be added, as well as still photos and graphics. You’ll likely find crime and violence stories archived in the “Highlights” section.]

Another news organization recently converged. The Lawrence (Kansas) *Journal-World*, 6News and World Online moved into one building at the end of September 2001. On <http://www.ljworld.com> appear video clips from the TV station’s news, combined with stories from the newspaper. Web journalists provide updates throughout the day.

Other news organizations that are doing some aspect of convergence include the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. Many journalists think that converged newsrooms will become common as TV stations and newspapers merge operations, or as they expand their Web sites.

Converging Opportunities

Converging newsrooms can offer opportunities for journalists to include a prevention, or public health, perspective in violence reporting. There's nothing special about a converged newsroom that lends itself to employing a public health perspective in particular. However, a converged newsroom offers reporters and editors opportunities for experimenting with traditional beats. Science and health reporters from the newspaper side can provide additional information or graphics to a television report. Reporters from the multimedia operation can provide links, data and resources for which neither television nor print has time or space. When television reporters have only time to focus on an individual event, newspaper reporters can put together a story looking at the big picture, or do an analysis.

Class Discussion Questions

- 1 How could a "Violence Beat" be constructed in a converged newsroom? Which reporters would pursue which types of stories? How would a combined print-TV-Web team of reporters approach a violence story if they wanted to include a public health perspective?
- 2 Which elements of a public health perspective in violence stories lend themselves to each medium?

Assignments

Reading:

Anzur, Terry. (2001, September 5). If you build it, will they care? *Online Journalism Review*. <http://ojr.usc.edu/content/story.cfm?id=631>.

Fitzgerald, Mark. (2001, January 16). Media convergence faces tech barriers. *Editor & Publisher*, p. 30.

Strupp, Joe. (2000, August 22) Print, Web, TV operations live under same roof in Tampa. *Editor & Publisher*, p. 18.

Benning, Jim. (2000, February 28) Chicago Tribune.com: the Windy City as it happens. *Online Journalism Review*. <http://ojr.usc.edu/content/story.cfm?request=336>.

Exercise: “Convergence”

- 1 Record a crime/violence story from a local TV newscast. Find the same story in the local newspaper. If either news organization has a Web site, download the story as it appears, making note of any links or extra information. Let the class study all three stories. Then discuss the differences among the stories, what aspects of the story each medium reports the best, and what aspects of the story are difficult for each medium to cover.
- 2 Find a 15-inch crime/violence story in the local newspaper and turn it into a television script. Record a crime/violence story on a local TV news broadcast, and turn it into a print story with additional information about a prevention or public health approach. Turn both into a multimedia story, and add information appropriate to a Web site, including the information components of a violence data and resource shell. How could you augment the TV story to include a prevention, or public health, approach without increasing the length of the story?

Homework: “Cross Medium Switcharoo”

Students can take one of their previous stories and add a local TV news and Web version, or can create a new set of three stories. Each story should incorporate at least one public health or prevention angle. They should be prepared to discuss in class why they chose certain elements for each version of the story.

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Additional Resources

Building Blocks for Youth

<http://www.buildingblocksforyouth.org>

The organization, an alliance of children's advocates, researchers, law enforcement professionals and community organizers does research and analyzes decision-making in the juvenile justice system to promote rational and effective justice policies.

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence

<http://patch.Colorado.EDU/cspv>

CSPV collects research and resources on violence prevention, offers technical assistance on the development and evaluation of violence prevention programs, and does research. People can search VIOLIT, a database that contains bibliographic information and abstracts of violence literature, and VIOPRO, a database of national violence prevention programs.

Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hicrc/prevention.html>

The multi-disciplinary center based at the Harvard School of Public Health partners with community organizations, including the Boston Public Health Commission, the Boston Police Department, the Boston mayor's office, and the New England Medical Center.

Join Together Online

<http://www.jointogether.org>

A project of the Boston University School of Public Health, Join Together provides news and information about prevention research and efforts in gun violence and substance abuse, particularly alcohol.

Justice Policy Institute

<http://www.cjcj.org/jpi>

The institute does research on effective approaches in the U.S. justice system, including the myths surrounding school violence.

Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse

<http://www.mincava.umn.edu>

The center's very useful electronic clearinghouse contains links to resources that deal with many types of violence, from dating violence to elder abuse.

National Crime Prevention Council

<http://www.ncpc.org/ncpc1.htm>

On-line resource center provides good information on what local communities are doing to prevent crime. Has section for teens.

National Institute of Justice

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>

This is the Department of Justice's research and development arm, a good resource for violence data and research.

National Violent Injury Statistics System

http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hicrc/firearm_description.html

Funding from six private foundations is enabling the Harvard Injury Control Research Center to build a model national reporting system for violent injuries, which are the second-leading cause of injury death in the U.S., similar to the Fatal Accident Reporting System for auto crashes, which are the No. 1 leading cause of injury death in the U.S.

Pacific Center for Violence Prevention

<http://www.pcvp.org>

Great resource for all types of information about violence, from basic data to links to prevention programs, research, and resources. Here find the online version of the original *Reporting on Violence: A Handbook for Journalists*.

Partnerships Against Violence Network (PAVNET)

<http://www.pavnet.org/>

This site draws data from seven federal agencies to provide resources related to violence and youth-at-risk. It lists more than six hundred prevention programs, links to other sources, and funding sources.

University of Maryland's Preventing Crime Web site

<http://www.preventingcrime.org>

This site provides information about evaluations of crime-prevention projects across the United States, a federally-mandated research project by the University of Maryland.

Violence Policy Center

<http://www.vpc.org/>

The center aims to increase people's understanding of firearms violence as an expanding public health crisis.

Violence Prevention Coalition of Greater Los Angeles

<http://www.vpcla.org>

One of the leading violence prevention coalitions in the United States, this organization was founded in 1991 to take a public health approach to preventing violence. Its members include representatives of grass-roots organizations, law enforcement, criminal justice, universities, hospitals, public health and the entertainment communities. The site provides fact sheets, information on programs, and resources.

