

**Firearm Possession and Use Among Youth:  
Reanalysis of Findings From A Survey of Incarcerated Juveniles  
in South Carolina**

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In recent years, increased attention has been paid to rising rates of youth violence and the nexus between illegal gun use and youth crime. Between 1987 and 1994, arrest rates for violent crimes committed by youths (murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) increased 70% (Sickmund, Snyder, & Poe-Yamagata, 1997). During this period, juveniles' responsibility for violent crime also grew substantially; in 1986, juveniles were responsible for 9% of all violent crimes, but by 1995, their share had increased to 14% (Snyder, 1997). As youths' involvement in violent crime grew, so did their involvement in gun violence. For example, between 1987 and 1994, juvenile arrest rates for weapons offenses doubled (Sickmund et al., 1997), and since 1983, gun homicides by juveniles have tripled (Snyder & Finnegan, 1997, cited in Greenbaum, 1997).

However, recent statistics show a promising decrease in youth's involvement in violent crimes and weapons violations (Sickmund et al., 1997; Snyder, 1997). The juvenile violent crime arrest rate declined 12% between 1994 and 1996 (Snyder, 1997). Much of the decline in violent crime may be attributed to decreases in weapons-related

crimes. For example, juvenile arrest rates for weapons law violations declined 21% since 1993 (Sickmund et al., 1997); the 17% decrease in juvenile homicides between 1994 and 1995 was solely attributable to declines in firearm-related murders.

Despite these recent promising trends, rates of youth violence and illegal firearm use are still alarmingly high. In 1995, 2,300 juveniles were implicated in murders, and 79% of the victims in these homicides were killed with firearms (Sickmund et al., 1997). Moreover, several recent deadly incidents involving firearms within schools have renewed the public's concerns about youths' use of firearms.

### **Juvenile Firearm Possession, Ownership, and Use**

**Prevalence of youths possessing, owning, and using firearms.** As the national crime data suggest, firearms are readily available to youth in the United States. Most studies of youth ownership and use of firearms have involved either urban populations of youths or national surveys. For example, a 1993 poll of 2,500 sixth through twelfth graders (Louis Harris and Associates, 1993) indicated that 15% of respondents had carried a firearm in the last month. A 1998 national survey conducted by the New York Times and CBS News revealed that 15% of 13- to 17-year-olds (and 19% of youth residing in the South) reported that they owned a gun (Goodstein & Connelly, 1998).

In recent years, a number of investigators have examined gun possession and use among school children residing in urban centers across the United States. For example, Callahan and Rivara (1992) observed that among a sample of 970 eleventh graders in urban Seattle, 6.4% reported owning a handgun and 34% indicated that they

had easy access to a handgun. Similarly, Shapiro, Dorman, Welker, and Clough (1998) found that 5% of a sample of 1,619 third, fifth, seventh, ninth, eleventh, and twelfth graders in metropolitan Cleveland owned their own guns. Lizotte and colleagues (1994) observed that 10% of ninth and tenth graders in urban Rochester, New York had owned a firearm, and 7.5% carried one regularly.

Significantly higher rates of gun ownership were found by Sheley and Wright (1993a; see also Sheley, 1994) in their study of inner-city male high school students in California, Illinois, Louisiana, and New Jersey. Nearly one-quarter of the youths (22%) reported that they owned a gun, and 35% carried guns at least occasionally (12% reported that they carried a gun "all" or "most of the time"). Forty-one percent indicated that they could obtain a gun with "no trouble at all." Finally, Webster and colleagues (1993) surveyed seventh and eighth grade students from two inner-city junior high schools in Washington, DC, and observed that 24.8% reported having carried a gun for protection or in case they got into a fight; 16% of these gun carriers carried guns on a routine basis (8-14 days during the previous two weeks).

We are aware of only three studies that have examined firearm use and possession among non-urban samples of school children. Sadowski and colleagues (1989) observed that among a sample of teenagers (mean age 17.4 years) in one rural and one suburban school district in the southeast, 48% of males and 4% of females reported owning a gun. In a study of 432 tenth and eleventh graders from suburban New Orleans, 18% reported having owned a handgun, and 17% indicated that they had carried a gun outside their homes (Sheley, 1994; Sheley & Brewer, 1995; Sheley &

Wright, 1993a). Finally, a recent survey of 6,263 fifth, sixth, and seventh graders from nonmetropolitan schools revealed that 14% of students reported owning rifles or shotguns, and 9% reported owning a pistol or handgun (Melton et al., 1998).

Not surprisingly, those studies that have examined gun ownership and use among samples of incarcerated youth have found significantly higher rates than those involving general samples of school children. For example, Callahan and colleagues (1993) observed that 59% of their sample of males detained in a short-term holding facility in urban Seattle reported owning a handgun. Sheley and Wright (1993a, 1993b) found that 83% of their urban samples of male, serious offenders had owned a gun prior to their confinement, 55% carried a gun "all" or "most of the time" in the year before their incarceration, and 84% indicated that they had carried a gun at least "now and then" prior to their confinement. Seventy percent believed that they could obtain a gun with "no trouble at all" upon their release. Finally, in a recent survey of 380 juvenile delinquents in confinement in New Mexico, 82% reported that they had owned or kept a gun at some point prior to their confinement, and 92% felt that it was easy for youth to obtain guns (New Mexico Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center, 1998).

**Carrying firearms to school.** Not only are firearms readily available to juveniles in the United States, but they are carried to school with disturbing frequency. For example, a national poll of sixth through twelfth graders conducted in 1993 indicated that 4% had carried a gun to school during the last year (Louis Harris & Associates, 1993). Four percent of the eleventh graders surveyed by Callahan and Rivara (1992) in urban Seattle indicated that they had carried a gun to school. Among the high school

boys surveyed by Sheley and Wright (1993a, 1993b) in California, New Jersey, Louisiana, and Illinois, 9% reported having carried a gun to school at least “now and then;” and 3% did so “all” or “most of the time.” In a survey of 859 tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders in a small, urban Midwestern city, 2.6% of students reported having carried a handgun to school during one year (Asmussen, 1992). In their study of nonmetropolitan middle school children (grades 5 through 7), Melton and colleagues (1998) found that 5.5% of youth reported having carried a gun to school. Finally, Callahan and colleagues (1993) reported that nearly half of the youth interviewed in detention facilities in Seattle (46%) had carried a firearm to school.

**Why do youths own and carry firearms?** In view of the high rates of firearm ownership and use among youth and the prevalence of firearm-related crimes committed by youth, it is important to understand their motivation for possessing and carrying firearms. Although relatively few researchers have examined youths’ rationales for owning and carrying guns, available data suggest that significant numbers of youth in urban areas possess guns for reasons associated with self-protection. For example, in studies conducted by Sheley and Wright (1993a, 1993b) a majority of both students and juvenile offenders indicated that self-protection was a “very important” reason for acquiring a gun. In a study of 67 ninth and tenth grade boys in urban Rochester, NY, Lizotte and colleagues (1994) observed that 45% of youth gun-owners owned guns only for protection, 40% owned guns only for hunting or target shooting, and 15% owned guns for both reasons. Finally, among a sample of juvenile delinquents in confinement in New Mexico (New Mexico Criminal Justice Statistical

Analysis Center, 1998), youths reported that kids use guns most frequently for reasons of protection. When asked their own motive for using a gun against someone, the most common responses were for revenge (33%) and for protection (32%).

A somewhat different picture emerges among nonmetropolitan youths, however. In their study of youth in nonmetropolitan communities in the southeast, Melton and colleagues (Melton et al., 1998) observed that of those students who owned guns, most did so for reasons of sport; 44.4% of fifth, sixth, and seventh graders owned guns for hunting, 21.2% for target shooting, 12.4% for protection, 3.5% for instilling fear in others, 3.2% for respect, and 5.9% for other miscellaneous reasons.

Importantly, several studies have shown that patterns of gun ownership vary significantly according to youths' criminal or antisocial behavior. Thus, for example, Lizotte and colleagues (1994) concluded that factors that motivate a youth to acquire a gun for sport are very different from those that lead a youth to acquire a gun for protection. Boys who reported owning guns for sport displayed only slightly higher levels of delinquent behavior than those who did not own a gun. In contrast, those who owned guns for protection displayed significantly higher levels of delinquent behavior. Similarly, Melton et al. (1998) found that reasons for gun ownership were linked with rates of antisocial behavior and bullying. Those students who owned guns to gain respect or to frighten others reported significantly higher rates of antisocial behavior and bullying than did students who owned guns to feel safe or for sporting purposes. This latter group reported only slightly higher rates of antisocial behavior and bullying than did students who did not own guns.

**Purpose of the present study.** These studies paint a troubling picture of illegal firearm and other weapon use by juveniles. To date, however, this research is somewhat limited in its scope, particularly with regards to youth in non-urban communities. Most studies of youth and guns have focused either on urban youth or on nationally-representative samples that do not permit examinations of urban and nonurban trends (Sheley & Brewer, 1995). It was the purpose of the present research project to provide additional data regarding (a) the nature and extent of firearm use by juveniles, (b) youths' motivations for possessing these weapons, and (c) other factors related to weapon possession (both within and outside school grounds) and delinquent behavior (including gang-related activities) among a sample of incarcerated juveniles from metropolitan, non-metropolitan, and rural communities. Previous analyses of our sample of 179 incarcerated youths (Limber & Pagliocca, 1998) revealed very few differences between youths from metropolitan vs. non-metropolitan communities with regard to their patterns of weapon possession, carrying, and use; engagement in antisocial behaviors; and weapon possession and use by family members and friends. Because metropolitan/non-metropolitan differences were not found to be significant, they were not examined in this report.

A second purpose of this study was the development of criteria to identify unreliable and invalid responses by participants and to reanalyze data after the deletion of participants who provided such responses. Although surveys and interviews of youth are major sources of information about youth violence and, in recent years, particularly violence at school, these methodologies are susceptible to careless, exaggerated, and

otherwise false reporting by participants (Cornell & Loper, 1997). Consequently, when asking individuals to report on their own behavior, it is critical to assess the reliability and validity of their responses (Rosenblatt & Furlong, 1997). Unfortunately, many studies of self-reported delinquency fail to use rigorous screening procedures to identify invalid or unreliable responses. Three recent studies are noteworthy exceptions, however. In their study of firearm acquisition and possession by incarcerated youth and high school boys, Sheley and Wright (1993a) identified 2.4% of the inmate sample and 1.5% of the student sample who failed to respond with logical consistency to several survey items. In a study of school violence involving 5th-12th graders in suburban California, Rosenblatt & Furlong (1997) deleted approximately 30% of their sample for (a) having more than four missing items, (b) obvious response sets, and (c) responses out of the valid range. An additional 1.8% of the resulting sample of 6,189 participants were deleted for failing a reliability and/or validity check. (One reliability and one validity item were included in the survey.)

Most recently, Cornell & Loper (1998) deleted 24.2% of their sample of 10,909 7th, 9th, and 11th grade students who completed a survey on school safety. Participants were excluded from the final sample if they failed to meet any one of the following criteria: (a) missing or inappropriate school number, grade level, gender, or age; (b) failure to mark "yes" to two validity items ("I am reading this survey carefully" and "I am telling the truth on this survey."); and (c) marking "once" or "more than once" to all 6 key items related to antisocial behavior at school or marking "once" or "more than once" to all 6 key items related to antisocial behavior outside of school. Nine



percent of the sample provided invalid responses to the two validity items. Findings from the Cornell and Loper (1998) study and the Rosenblatt & Furlong (1997) study suggest that participants who provide invalid or unreliable responses may tend to exaggerate the incidence of high risk behavior among youths at school and outside of school (Cornell & Loper, 1998), the rate of violent victimizations at school, and perceptions of dangerous conditions at school (Rosenblatt & Furlong (1997).

Most previous research on youth firearm possession and use has involved the use of pencil-and-paper surveys completed individually by respondents. Because of concerns that participants in this study might have difficulty reading and comprehending a lengthy survey, a decision was made to conduct individual interviews. It was anticipated that a face-to-face interview would decrease the likelihood of malingering among participants and encourage them to take the task seriously. In recognition that some participants would, nonetheless, give purposefully misleading or false answers, however, an approach similar to that of Rosenblatt & Furlong (1997) and Cornell & Loper (1998) was adopted to identify participants who gave unreliable and/or invalid responses to the interview questions.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

The initial sample included 179 male youths who were incarcerated in a secure juvenile justice facility in South Carolina. Names of potential participants were selected from computerized listings of all youths currently in the facility. From the computerized listing, three groups of youths were identified as potential participants: (a) all youths

who had current school weapons offenses (i.e., all youths who had a school weapons charge as one of their most recent offenses) ( $n=9$ ), (b) all youths who had current non-school-related weapons offenses ( $n=125$ ), and (c) a random selection of youths who had no current weapons offenses ( $n=180$ ). Of the 314 youths selected as potential participants in the study, 201 youths were invited to participate. The remaining 113 were unavailable at the time of the interviewing process. The most common reasons for being unavailable to participate in the study included having been released, having been transferred to a different facility, or being involved in rehearsals for a play. Of the 201 youths who were invited to participate, 22 declined after reviewing the informed consent materials with an interviewer. The resulting sample of 179 participants included 9 youths with current weapons offenses on their records, 67 with current non-school-related weapons offenses, and 103 with no current weapons offenses.

## **Measures**

A 92-item questionnaire was developed for use with participants (see Appendix A for the Youth Version of the questionnaire and Appendix B for Interviewer Version of the questionnaire). The questionnaire, which contained both forced-choice and open-ended items, was based in part on similar surveys conducted by Sheley and colleagues of high school students and juvenile offenders (Sheley & Wright, no date; Wright, Sheley, and Smith, 1991a, 1991b) and the Adolescent Injury Questionnaire (Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center, 1990). Items included questions about the youth's demographic characteristics and family background; history of offenses; the prevalence of firearm and other weapon ownership, possession, and use; ease of

obtaining firearms; means of obtaining firearms; rationales for firearm use; firearm use by family members; self-reported victimization; school-related violence and antisocial behavior (including the carrying of firearms to school); antisocial behavior outside of school (including participation in gangs); and attitudes about firearms.

Computerized case record information also was obtained from the state Department of Juvenile Justice for all youths who participated in the study. Case record information included limited demographic information about the youth and his family (including the age of the youth, the youth's home county, the family's yearly income level, and the family's living arrangement), an indication of whether or not the youth's parents and/or siblings had known criminal or juvenile records, and a complete listing of referrals to the state solicitor (including dates and types of referrals, solicitor decisions, and case dispositions).

## **Procedure**

**Interview.** Individual interviews were conducted with each of the 179 participants during a seven-week period in the late fall of 1997. Interviewers were seven project staff and volunteers (1 male, 6 female) who had received training in the administration of the interview. At the request of facility staff, all interviews took place on weekdays during the evening hours (between 6:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.). In order to ensure the privacy of participants, the interviews were conducted in quiet meeting rooms or an unused cafeteria within the facility. Each youth was provided a written version of the consent form and was invited to read it silently while the interviewer read it aloud. The youth was informed that participation was entirely voluntary and that all

answers would be kept confidential. Each also was informed that if he agreed to participate, researchers would obtain additional information from his computerized case records. Interviewers offered to answer any questions before asking the youth if he wanted to participate.

Those youths who elected to participate received a written version of the questionnaire (Youth Version, see Appendix A) and were invited to read along silently as the interviewer read each question aloud. The interviewer recorded all answers on the Interviewer Version of the questionnaire (see Appendix B). Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes (ranging in length from 15 to 45 minutes).

**Identification/Deletion of Participants with Invalid or Inconsistent Answers.**

In order to identify participants who may have provided purposefully incorrect answers during the interviews, all participants' responses were examined closely for inconsistencies (unreliable responses) and extreme answers (invalid responses). Participants were deleted from the sample if they met at least one of the following criteria: (a) provided extreme answers to at least one of 7 specific questions, or (b) provided a response that was inconsistent with another answer given during the interview (five such possible inconsistencies were identified). Examples of answers that were determined to be "extreme" included indicating that one had shot at someone "many times" while on school grounds or at a school activity, or responding that "all kids" at their school carried weapons to school, at least occasionally. Examples of inconsistencies included responding that one had never carried a gun but later indicating that one had carried a gun as a weapon, or indicating that one had never

shot a gun but later indicating that one had shot a gun in at least one situation. Table 1 includes a complete list of items that were used as the basis for deleting subjects.

In all, 39 participants, or 21.8% of the initial sample, were deleted, resulting in a final sample of 140 participants. Of the 39 identified, nearly one-quarter (23.1%) violated at least two criteria for deletion; two participants (5.1%) violated three criteria. Of the final sample, six had a current school weapons offense, 50 had current weapons offense that were not school-related, and 84 had no current weapon offenses, according to their official records (see Table 2).

## **Results<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup>Unless indicated otherwise, an alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

For the purposes of many of our analyses, we made comparisons between youths who had ever been referred to the solicitor for a weapons charge (hereinafter, “Ever Weapons” group) and those who had never been referred to the solicitor for a weapons violation<sup>2</sup> (hereinafter, “Never Weapons” group). Information regarding youths’ referrals to the solicitor was coded from their computerized case record. A total of 69 youths had ever been referred to the solicitor for a weapons offense, 71 had no such referrals (see Table 2).

### **Demographic Information**

**Age.** Youths ranged in age from 12 to 18, with a mean of 16.1 years. There were no significant age differences between youths who had ever been referred to the solicitor for a weapons offense and those who had never been referred for a weapons offense  $t(138) = .23, ns$ .

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<sup>2</sup>Possible weapons referrals included carrying a concealed weapon; discharging a firearm into a dwelling; carrying or displaying a firearm in public buildings or adjacent areas; pointing a firearm; possession of a sawed-off shotgun, rifle, or machine gun; carrying weapons on school grounds; carrying a pistol unlawfully; possession of unlawful weapons; and “other firearms violation.” It is recognized that weapons may have been used by youths in the sample in the commission of other offenses (e.g., assault and battery with intent to kill). If weapons offenses were not specifically listed for a youth, however, they were not categorized as ever having a referral for a weapons offense.

**Race.** More than half of the youths (57.9% ) were African-American, 37.1% were white (non-Hispanic), 1.4% were Hispanic, .7% were Asian, and 2.9% were of mixed race. African-American youths in our sample were more likely than white youths to have ever been referred for a weapons offense,  $\chi^2(1, N = 132) = 11.71, p = .001$  (61.3% of black youths vs. 20.8% of white youths).

**Socio-economic status.** Yearly family incomes typically were quite low. Data from the youths' case records indicated that 43.6% had family incomes below \$10,000. An additional 16.4% had annual family incomes between \$10,000 and \$14,000, and 8.6% had yearly income between \$15,999 and \$19,999. Fewer than one-quarter (23.6%) of the youths' families had incomes in excess of \$20,000. Family income data were missing for 11 youths (7.9%).

**Living arrangement.** Youths reported that prior to their incarceration, 36.4% lived with their mother only, 18.6% lived with both biological parents, 16.4% lived with a parent and a step-parent, 8.6% lived with one or both grandparents, 5.0% lived with their father only, and 14.9% lived in other circumstances.

**Urban/rural status.** The home county of each youth was recorded and assigned a Beale code<sup>3</sup> designation, where scores of 0-3 represent metropolitan

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<sup>3</sup>Beale codes are classification codes that describe counties by degree of urbanization and nearness to metropolitan areas. The 10 county types identified vary from central counties of metropolitan areas with a population of one million or more (code = 0) to completely rural counties or those with an urban population of less than 2,500 (code = 9). Beale codes were prepared in the Rural Economy Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (<http://usda.mannlib.cor.../rural/89021/readme.doc>)

counties, 4-5 represent non-rural counties, and 6-9 represent rural counties. Sixty-six percent of the sample resided in metropolitan counties prior to their confinement, 7.9% resided in non-rural counties, and 25.7% resided in rural counties. There were no significant group differences among weapons offense groups regarding the urban/rural status of the youths' home counties (Beale codes 0-3 vs. 4-9),  $\chi^2(1, N = 139) = .35$ , ns.

### **Criminal Status of Relatives and Friends**

According to self-report and official records, large percentages of youths had family members and friends with juvenile and/or criminal records. According to the youths' official records, nearly one-third (32.8%) had at least one parent with a known criminal record. There were no significant differences between youths with a history of weapons referrals and those with none,  $\chi^2(1, N = 137) = .02$ , ns, with respect to the criminal histories of their parents. Nearly one-third (30.7%) had at least one sibling with a known criminal or juvenile record. Youths with a history of weapons referrals were no more likely than youths with weapons referrals to have a sibling with a criminal or juvenile record,  $\chi^2(1, N = 137) = 2.37$ , ns.

For half of the sample ( $n = 70$ ) neither their siblings nor their parents had a known criminal or juvenile record, but 14.3% had a parent and a sibling with a criminal or juvenile record.

When interviewed, 78.6% of youths indicated that those people with whom they spent a lot of time (e.g., parents, other relatives, good friends) had been arrested for a crime, and 72.3% noted that such individuals had served time in a prison, jail, or



juvenile center. Youths with histories of weapons referrals were no more likely than other youths to indicate that people with whom they spent a lot of time had been arrested or served time in jail,  $\chi^2(1, N = 140) = .11, ns$ ,  $\chi^2(1, N = 137) = .97, ns$ , respectively.

### **Offense History**

**First referral.** We examined the type of first offense for which youths were first referred to the solicitor. In the event that more than one type of offense was charged on a given date, the most serious type of offense was recorded (offenses against persons, followed by property offenses, offenses against the public order, other juvenile offenses, and status offenses).

Youths' first offense most typically was a property offense (28.7%) (e.g., burglary, arson). The next most frequent type of offense was an offense against the public order (24.8%) (e.g., driving under the influence), followed by an offense against persons (21.7%), other juvenile offenses (16.3%) (e.g., unlawful possession/consumption of alcohol, simple assault, threatening a school teacher, driving under a suspended license), and status offenses (8.5%) (e.g., curfew violation, runaway, truancy). We observed no significant differences between youths in the Ever Weapons versus Never Weapons groups regarding the type of first offense,  $\chi^2(4, N = 129) = 3.83$ .

The average age at which youths had their first referral to the solicitor ranged from 8.2 years to 16.5 years, with a mean of 12.9 years ( $SD = 1.9$ ). Those youths with a referral for a weapons offense had earlier referrals to the solicitor (average age of

12.6 years) than did those with no such weapons history (average age of 13.3 years),  $t(138) = -2.3, p < .05$ .

**Total referrals.** According to their computerized records, youths in the sample had been referred to the solicitor for an average of 7.7 offenses (range of 1 to 32). Youths in the Ever Weapons group had significantly more referrals than youths in the Never Weapons group,  $t(137) = 2.42, p < .05$

We further examined the frequency with which youths had been referred for status offenses, other juvenile offenses, property offenses, public order offenses, offenses against persons, weapons offenses, and school-related weapons offenses (see Table 3); and the average numbers of each type of referral (see Table 4).

**Status offenses.** The type of offense that appeared least frequently in youths' case histories was a status offense. Fewer than one-third (29.0%) of youths had been referred for a status offense (see Table 3). On average, youths had been referred for .4 status offenses ( $SD = .8$ ) (see Table 4). There were no significant differences between the Ever Weapons group and the Never Weapons group,  $t(136) = 2.77$ , regarding the frequency of referral for status offenses.

**Other juvenile offenses.** Nearly two-thirds of the youths in our study had been referred for at least one other juvenile offense (66.2%). On average, youths were referred for a total of 1.7 ( $SD = 2.1$ ). Youths in the Ever Weapons group had been referred for no more other juvenile offenses than youths in the Never Weapons group,  $t(1,137) = .72$ .

**Public order offenses.** Nearly 70% (69.1) of the young men in our sample had

been referred for at least one public order offense. On average, they had been referred for 2.3 offenses against the public order ( $SD = 2.6$ ). Youths in the Ever Weapons group had significantly more referrals for public order offenses than did youths in the Never Weapons Group,  $t(137) = 4.11, p < .001$ .

**Property offenses.** Over 60% (62.6%) of youths had at least one referral for a property offense. Youths had been referred for an average of 1.9 property offenses ( $SD = 2.4$ ). Youths in the Ever Weapons group had no more referrals for property offenses than did youths in the Never Weapons group,  $t(137) = 1.04, ns$ .

**Offenses against persons.** Nearly two-thirds of the participants in our sample (64.7%) had a record of at least one offense against persons. Youths had been referred for an average of 1.1 offense against persons ( $SD=1.1$ ). Youths in the Ever Weapons group had no more referrals for offenses against persons than did youths in the Never Weapons group,  $t(137) = .39, ns$ .

**Most recent referral.** Table 5 provides data regarding the participants' most recent referral to the solicitor. The most recent offense for which youths had been referred was an offense against persons (33.6%), followed by other juvenile offenses (26.6%), an offense against public order (22.7%), property offenses (14.1%), and status offenses (3.1%).

**Referrals to a juvenile facility.** Over one-third (35%) of the youths who were interviewed indicated that they had stayed in a juvenile correctional facility prior to their current incarceration. On average, these youths indicated that they had been placed in such a facility on two previous occasions. Youths who had ever had a weapons referral

were no more likely than youths with no weapons offenses to have been placed in such a facility,  $\chi^2(1, N = 139) = .90, ns$ .

**Summary.** In sum, most of the participants--particularly those with weapons referrals--had fairly extensive histories of referrals to the state solicitor. On average, participants had been referred for 7.7 offenses, their first referral taking place before the age of 13. Those youths who had a history of weapons referrals had significantly more referrals to the solicitor and received their first referral at a significantly younger age than other youths--on average eight months earlier. The most common type of offense for which participants had been referred were public order offenses, although well over half of the participants also had been referred for other juvenile offenses, property offenses, and offenses against persons. Fewer than one-third of the participants had ever been referred for a status offense. Finally, a sizable minority of youths (more than one-third) had previously been sent to a juvenile correctional facility, although youths with a history of weapons referrals were no more likely than other youths to have spent time in such facilities.

### **Weapon Ownership, Possession, and Use**

**Frequency of self-reported weapon ownership and possession.** From a list of weapons, youths were asked to indicate which ones they had ever owned or possessed. As illustrated in Table 6, overall, 80.7% of participants indicated that they had ever owned or possessed a handgun and 63.6% had owned or possessed a rifle or shotgun. Youths who had ever been referred for a weapons offense were no more likely than those with no weapons referrals to indicate that they had ever owned or

possessed a rifle or shotgun,  $\chi^2(1, N = 140) = .16, ns$ . However, participants with a weapons referral were more likely than those with no weapons referrals indicate that they had ever owned a handgun,  $\chi^2(1, N = 140) = 7.30, p < .01$ .

We further asked participants to tell us the total number of guns that they had owned or possessed prior to their referral to the correctional facility. On average, youths reported owning or possessing 4.5 guns ( $SD = 5.8$ ), ranging from 0 to 36 guns. Youths with a history of weapons referrals reported owning no more guns than those with no such referrals,  $t(136) = 0.0, ns$ .

**Frequency of carrying weapons.** From the same list of 10 weapons, youths were asked to indicate which weapons they had ever carried (see Table 6). Three-quarters of all participants (74.3%) indicated that they had ever carried a handgun, and 43.6% indicated that they had ever carried a rifle or shotgun. There were no differences between the Ever Weapons or Never Weapons groups with respect to their having ever carried a rifle or shotgun,  $\chi^2(1) = .44, ns$ , but youths who had a weapons referral were more likely than those with no such referral to report that they had ever carried a handgun,  $\chi^2(1) = 8.97, p < .05$ .

Youths were asked to indicate, on a scale of 0 to 5 (where 0 = never, 1 = only once or twice in my life, 2 = a few times a year, 3 = a few times a month, 4 = a few times a week, and 5 = almost every day), how often they had carried a knife or a gun before they came to the correctional facility. Mean scores for youths were 1.91 for knife-carrying, indicating that most carried a knife no more than a few times a year, and 3.08 for carrying a gun, suggesting that most carried a gun a few times a month.

Participants with a referral for a weapons offense indicated that they had carried a knife somewhat less frequently than other youths,  $t(138) = -2.63, p < .05$ . Youths who had a record of a weapons referral reported carrying guns more frequently than did youths with no weapons referrals,  $t(137) = 3.27, p < .005$ .

**Frequency with which youths used weapons to commit crimes.** Youths also were asked to identify, from the list of weapons, those that they had ever used to commit a crime. Over half of the participants (55.7%) indicated that they had ever used a handgun to commit a crime, while 16.4% reported that they had used a long gun to commit a crime (see Table 6). Although youths with a weapons referral were no more likely than those with no such referrals to say that they had committed a crime with a rifle or shotgun,  $\chi^2(1) = .02, ns$ , participants with weapons referrals were significantly more likely to report having committed a crime with a handgun,  $\chi^2(1) = 12.91, p < .001$ .

We further asked youths to indicate on a 6-point scale the frequency with which they had used a weapon to commit a crime (where 0 = never, 1 = only once or twice in my life, 2 = a few times a year, 3 = a few times a month, 4 = a few times a week, and 5 = almost every day). The average score for all youths was 1.27, indicating that on average, youths had used a weapon to commit a crime once or twice in their lives. Youth with a record of weapons referrals reported using a weapon to commit a crime more frequently than did youths with no weapons referrals,  $t(136) = 3.30, p < .01$ .

Of the 118 youths who indicated that they had handled firearms, 26.5% reported obtaining a gun specifically to use in committing a crime. This represents only 22.1% of

the total sample. Those with referrals for weapons offenses differed significantly from those without such referrals, with the Ever Weapons group more frequently obtaining guns for criminal activity,  $\chi^2(1, n = 117) = 7.03, p < .01$

**Ease of obtaining weapons.** Youths reported that they had ready access to both handguns and long guns. Eighty-six percent of participants reported that they could have obtained a handgun if they had wanted to, and 78.6% reported having easy access to rifles or shotguns (see Table 6). Ease of access to handguns or long guns was unrelated to whether participants had ever had a referral for a weapons offense,  $\chi^2(1, N = 140) = 1.36, ns$ ,  $\chi^2(1, N = 140) = 1.32, ns$ , respectively.

Youth were also asked about obtaining guns in the future. Using a 4-point scale (ranging from “impossible” to “not difficult at all”), they were asked to predict the difficulty of obtaining a gun upon their release from the juvenile correctional facility. The vast majority of youth (72.1%) reported that it would not be difficult to obtain a gun upon their release, while only 5.7% reported that it would be impossible to do so. Youths who had a history of weapons referrals did not differ from those who had never had any weapons referrals in their assessment of the ease of obtaining a gun after their incarceration,  $t(133) = 1.24, ns$ .

**Means of obtaining handguns, rifles, and shotguns.** Those youths who reported ever having owned or possessed a handgun, rifle, or shotgun were asked several questions to ascertain where and how they obtained their most recent gun. As indicated in Table 7, youths reported obtaining handguns most frequently from friends (39.5%) and through illegal means (36.8%) such as from a fence, “on the street,” stolen

from someone's home, or from a junkie. Of those who reported obtaining their handgun illegally, 42% indicated that they obtained the weapon from a drug dealer or from a junkie or crackhead. Less frequently, youths reported having obtained their handgun from a family member (13.2%) or from a store or pawn shop (7.0%). Those youths who had a history of a weapons offense were more likely to indicate that they obtained handguns through illegal means than were youths with no history of a weapons offense,  $\chi^2(1, n = 114) = 5.11, p < .05$ .

Most commonly, youths reported having obtained rifles through illegal means (31.3%; 35% of those who obtained rifles through a variety of illegal means reported receiving them from drug dealers or junkies) (see Table 7). Somewhat less frequently, youths indicated that they had obtained their rifles from friends (26.6%), family members (21.9%), stores or pawn shops (15.6%), or from other sources (4.7%). There were no differences among youths in the ever weapons vs. never weapons groups regarding the source of their rifles,  $\chi^2(1, n = 64) = .50, ns$ .

The most common sources of shotguns were friends (32.9%) (see Table 7). Somewhat fewer youths reported having obtained their shotgun through illegal means (32.9%; of these 33.3% reported obtaining the shotgun from a drug dealer or junkie), or from a family member (23.3%). Five percent (5.5%) of youths obtained their shotgun from a store or pawn shop, and 5.5% indicated that they obtained the shotgun through other means. Youths with histories of referrals for weapons offenses did not differ from youths with no such referrals with respect to the reported origins of their shotguns (illegal versus legal acquisition),  $\chi^2(1, N = 73) = .35, ns$ .



In addition to questions about procuring specific weapons prior to incarceration, youths were asked how they might obtain a gun once released from the juvenile correctional facility. As illustrated in Table 8, the most common means of obtaining a gun upon release would be to buy, borrow, or be given one from a friend or family member (40%). Almost one-third (30.7%) reported that they would use illegal means to obtain a weapon if they wanted one. These figures suggest that, once back in the community, this sample of youth would likely use means similar to those used by many of them prior to confinement. In addition, 12 participants reported already having a gun at home that they could access upon their release. The two groups of youths (Ever Weapons vs. Never Weapons) showed no significant differences in the means they would use to obtain a firearm in the future,  $F(4, N = 128) = 2.55, ns$ .

**Reasons for carrying handguns.** Youths were asked to examine a list of 13 reasons why someone might choose to carry a gun. For each reason, they were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 3 (where 1 = not important, 2 = sort of important, and 3 = very important) how important each reason was for them to carry a handgun, a rifle, and a shotgun. As Table 9 reveals, the reasons that were most frequently and strongly endorsed for carrying a handgun were, to protect oneself, all one's enemies carried guns, and protection of family.

To identify inter-relationships among the youths' ratings of these 13 reasons and to identify underlying factors among the reasons, we conducted a series of Pearson correlations (see Table 10) and examined the internal consistency of the items. As can be seen in Table 10, for the most part, youths' ratings of the reasons for carrying

handguns were highly inter-correlated and internally consistent ( $r = .74$ ). One reason, “hunting/target shooting,” had a low item-total correlation ( $-.18$ ) and therefore was not included in the factor analysis. Importantly, this item was *negatively* correlated with most other reasons for carrying a handgun. An independent  $t$ -test revealed that youths who had a weapons referral were no more or less likely than their peers to rate “hunting/target shooting” as an important reason for carrying a handgun,  $t(111) = -1.07$ , ns.

A Principal Components Analysis (with Varimax rotation) was conducted with the remaining 12 items. As Table 11 reveals, four components emerged from the factor analysis of the remaining 12 items, explaining 58.51% of the variance in youth’s responses. Component one primarily included reasons related to “Respect” (“my friends carried guns,” “to feel important,” “to get respect”). Component two included five variables related to reasons of “Protection” (“to protect myself,” “my enemies carry guns,” “in my neighborhood it would be stupid not to carry guns,” and “to protect my family”). Component three, “School-Related Reasons & Crime,” included two variables related to carrying handguns to school (“it would be stupid not to carry guns at my school,” and “when one persons starts bringing guns to school everyone has to”) and two crime-related reasons (“to commit a crime,” “to get somebody”). One item, “to scare others” loaded on Component one and three.

Component scores were calculated and used as dependent variables in a series of  $t$ -tests analyzing the effects of weapon category (Ever Weapons vs. Never Weapons). Those youths with no history of weapons referrals had significantly higher

component scores on component two than did those with weapons referrals,  $t(110) = -2.33$ ,  $p < .05$ , indicating that they were more likely than youths with weapons histories to cite reasons of protection as important reasons for carrying handguns. There were no other significant group differences.

**Reasons for carrying rifles.** As illustrated in Table 9, the reasons that youths most frequently and strongly endorsed for carrying a rifle included hunting and target shooting and protection of their family.

In order to identify inter-correlations among the participants' responses and to examine underlying factors among the youths' responses, we conducted a series of Pearson correlations (see Table 12) and examined the internal consistency of the items. With one exception, the items were highly inter-correlated and internally consistent ( $\alpha = .74$ ). The item, "hunting/target shooting" was deleted from the subsequent factor analysis, because it had a low item-total correlation ( $-.18$ ). Importantly, hunting/target shooting was negatively correlated with most other items. A separate independent  $t$ -test was conducted to examine possible group differences in youths' ratings of the importance of carrying a rifle for "hunting/target shooting. Youths who had a history of weapons referrals were no more or less likely than their peers to report that "hunting/target shooting" was an important reason for carrying a rifle,  $t(62) = .92$ , ns. A Principal Components Analysis, with Varimax rotation, was conducted with the remaining 12 items and four Components emerged, explaining 76.07% of the variance (see Table 13). Component one, "Protection" included reasons associated with protection ("to protect myself," "all of my enemies carry guns," "it would be stupid

not to carry a gun in my neighborhood,” “to protect my family”). Component two, “Respect” included variables such as “it made me feel important” and “to get respect from others.” Component three, “Engage in Criminal or Antisocial Behavior,” included reasons such as “to commit a crime” or “need a gun to get somebody,” “to scare somebody.” Component four, School-Related Reasons/Frighten Others,” included reasons associated with protection at school (“In my school, it would be stupid not to carry a gun,” “when one person brings a gun to school, everyone has to”) and one item associated with intimidating others (“to scare somebody”). As revealed in the table, several items loaded on more than one factor (e.g., “all my friends carry guns,” “to scare others,” and “if one person brings a gun to school, everyone has to.”

Component scores were calculated and used as dependent variables in a series of t-tests examining the effect of weapon category (Ever Weapon vs. Never Weapon). No significant group differences were observed with respect to participants’ component scores.

**Reasons for carrying shotguns.** Among youths who had ever carried a shotgun, the most commonly-cited reasons for carrying the weapon were to protect one’s family and oneself (see Table 9). Table 14 reveals correlations among the 13 reasons for carrying shotguns. A test of internal consistency revealed that hunting/target shooting was not strongly related to other reasons for carrying a shotgun. By deleting this item, the alpha increased from .79 to .84. To identify underlying factors among the youths’ responses, we conducted a principal components analysis (with Varimax rotation) (see Table 15) with all items except hunting/target shooting, which

was analyzed separately. Three components emerged, which explained 61.84% of the variance. Component one, "Respect/Aggression" included reasons associated with gaining respect ("to get respect from others, "it made me feel important") and using the firearm in an aggressive manner ("to get somebody," "to frighten or scare other people"). Component two "Protection/Crime," included reasons associated with protection ("to protect myself," "to protect my family," "it would be stupid not to in my neighborhood," "my enemies carried guns") and one variable associated with the commission of a crime. Component three, "Peers/School" included two variables related to carrying firearms to school and one related to peer influences ("all my friends were carrying guns"). Component scores were calculated and used as dependent variables in a series of  $t$ -tests, where weapon category (Ever Weapon vs. Never Weapon) was the independent variable. One significant group difference was observed. Participants with a history of a weapons referral received significantly higher component scores on the Protection/Crime factor than did youth with no weapons referrals,  $t(72) = 2.04$ ,  $p < .05$ , indicating that those with weapons referrals were more likely to carry shotguns for reasons of protection and committing crimes.

To examine possible group differences related to the importance participants placed on hunting/target shooting as a reason for carrying a shotgun, a  $t$ -test was performed. Participants who had no history of referrals for weapons offenses were significantly more likely than those with a history of weapons referrals to indicate that hunting/target shooting was an important reason for carrying a shotgun,  $t(72) = -2.68$ ,  $p < .01$ .

### **Locations to which youths reported carrying handguns, rifles, and**

**shotguns.** Those youths who had ever carried a handgun, rifle, or shotgun were asked to examine a list of six places where someone might carry a gun (to school, to a park, to a friend's house, to a store or mall, on the street, and in a car) and to indicate how frequently they had carried a handgun, rifle, and shotgun to each location (where 0 = never, 1 = once, 2 = a few times, 3 = many times). Those youths who said they never carried a handgun, rifle, or shotgun, were assigned a "0" on these items. As Table 16 reveals, the most common location for carrying handguns included: (a) on the street (77.1% of the total sample of youths indicated that they had carried a handgun on the street "at least once;" 62.7% reported carrying a handgun on the street "many times"), (b) to a friend's house (70.0% "at least once," 47.9% "many times"), and (c) in a car (69.8% "at least once," 52.5% "many times").

Youths' ratings' of locations for carrying handguns were highly correlated (see Table 17), suggesting that those youths who reported carrying a handgun to one location were likely to carry it in many locations. Because the items were highly inter-correlated, they were combined additively to form a "Locations for Carrying Handguns" scale, with a mean of 10.83 ( $r = .82$ ,  $SD = 4.79$ ). Participants from the Ever Weapons group did not differ from those in the Never Weapons group with regard to their scores on this scale,  $t(110) = -.18$ ,  $ns$ , suggesting that both groups carried handguns to various locations with similar frequency.

The most common locations for carrying rifles included: (a) to a friend's house (30.2% of the full sample had ever carried a rifle to a friend's house, and 11.5% had

done so “many times”), and (b) in a car (29.5% had carried a rifle in a car at least one time, 10.8% had done so “many times”). We observed significant correlations among the locations where youths reported carrying rifles (see Table 18). Youths who reported carrying a rifle to a store were particularly likely to indicate that they also had carried a rifle to school ( $r = .55$ ). Youths who carried a rifle to a park were very likely to report having carried a rifle on the street ( $r = .39$ ). Because the six items were highly inter-correlated, a “Locations for Carrying Rifles” subscale was created by combining the items additively ( $\alpha = .56$ ,  $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 3.15$ ). In order to examine group differences in youths’ responses, we conducted a  $t$ -tests, where weapon category (Ever Weapon group vs. Never Weapon group) was the independent variable and youths’ scores on scale was the dependent variable. No significant group differences were observed,  $t(62) = -.26$ , ns, indicating that youths in both groups carried rifles to the six locations with similar frequency.

The most frequently cited locations for carrying shotguns included: (a) in a car (38.8% of all youths had ever carried a shotgun in a car, 20.1% had done so “many times”, (b) to a friend’s house (37.4% had done so at least once, 15.1% had done so “many times”), and (c) on the street (31.7% had carried a shotgun on the street at least once, 13.7% had done so “many times”). As Table 19 reveals, there were significant correlations among the locations to which youths reported carrying shotguns. A “Locations for Carrying Shotguns” scale was created ( $\alpha = .65$ ,  $M = 5.82$ ,  $SD = 3.65$ ). Participants who had a history of weapons referrals did not differ from their peers who had no such referrals with regard to their scores on this scale,  $t(71) = .32$ , ns.

Regardless of weapons history, youths reported carrying shotguns to various locations with similar frequency.

**Situations in which youth report a likelihood of carrying a gun.** In addition to questions related to experience with specific weapons, youths who had reported ever having carried a gun of any kind were asked a series of questions related to their experience with guns in general. For example, they were asked to indicate the likelihood that they had carried a gun of any kind in specific situations in the year prior to incarceration (see Table 20). A majority of participants (57.1%) indicated that it was “not likely” that they would carry a gun while out drinking, but they indicated that it was either “somewhat likely” or “very likely” that they would have carried a gun in the remaining situations or purposes: for protection (74.3%), going to a strange part of town (65.7%), at night (70.8%), hanging out with friends (56.4%), when they knew they would be with others who were carrying guns (53.6%), doing a drug deal (50.0%), and planning to commit a crime (45.0%). Although all items were highly endorsed, only eight youths indicated that they were “very likely” to have carried a gun in all of these situations. Youths’ ratings were highly intercorrelated (see Table 21) and internally consistent ( $r = .88$ ). A principal components analysis (PCA) identified a single component, explaining 55.6% of the variance (eigenvalue = 4.45) (see Table 22). This component may be seen as a general likelihood to carry a gun in public, which is supported by the results reported above, in which youth reported a high frequency of carrying weapons to multiple locations.

Factor scores for the single component of “carrying a gun in public” were



computed and used to compare those participants who had ever had a weapons referral with those who had never had a weapons referral. In their likelihood to carry a gun in public, the Never Weapons ( $M = -.076$ ,  $SD = 1.099$ ) did not differ significantly from the Ever Weapons group ( $M = .072$ ,  $SD = .902$ ),  $t(110.5) = .821$ , *ns*.

**Frequency of firing a gun in various situations.** As part of the same series of questions related to experience with guns in general, participants were asked how often they had actually fired a gun in a variety of situations. For the individual situations, the percentages of youths who had fired a gun at least once were as follows: hunting/target shooting (50.0 %), in self-defense (47.9%), hanging out with friends (72.9%), when just horsing around (50.7%), when drunk or high (43.6%), to scare somebody (40.0%), during a fight (37.9%), during a crime (37.9%), during a drug deal (36.4%), and when trying to get a way from police (16.4%) (see Table 23). Of those who indicated that they had handled firearms, only five indicated that they had never fired a gun in any of the identified circumstances. When hunting/target shooting was removed from the list, still only 14 youths reported that they had never fired a weapon. Thus, it appears that firing guns is quite common for this sample. With the exception of hunting or target shooting, all other circumstances were highly intercorrelated (see Table 24). An internal consistency analysis, using all but the hunting/target shooting variable, suggests that this series of questions taps a “frequency of illegally firing a weapon” behavior that cuts across circumstances (scale = .85).

To identify possible underlying factors among the shooting-situation variables, we conducted a principal-components analysis (see Table 25), using the remaining nine

variables. Two components emerged, which explained 60.8% of the variance. Component one involved primarily illegal and aggressive behavior. Component two involved social behaviors such as hanging out with friends.

To examine group differences for weapons status (Ever Weapons vs. Never Weapons), we calculated separate t-tests, using the component scores as dependent variables. No significant differences between the groups were found on either component. Participants without weapons referrals ( $M = -.15$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ) reported having fired a weapon for illegal, aggressive purposes as often as those with a history of referrals for weapons charges ( $M = .14$ ,  $SD = .98$ ),  $t(122) = 1.62$ ,  $p = ns$ . Likewise, those without weapons referrals ( $M = .06$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) reported firing weapons in social situations as frequently as those with weapons referrals ( $M = -.05$ ,  $SD = .96$ ),  $t(122) = -.59$ ,  $p = ns$ . Thus, whether these youths have ever come to the attention of the judicial system because of weapons violations, they admit at comparable rates to having illegally fired a gun.

Results of an additional t-test revealed that the two groups also did not differ on the frequency with which they had fired weapons while hunting or target shooting. (Ever Weapons:  $M = 1.33$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ; Never Weapons:  $M = 1.45$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ;  $t(122) = -.48$ ,  $p = .ns$ ). Although the majority in both groups had fired a weapon at least once for sporting purposes (Ever Weapons - 53.0%; Never Weapons - 60.3%), for both groups, the most frequent response was "never" (Ever Weapons - 47.0%; Never Weapons - 39.7%).

**How youths learned to use firearms.** In an open-ended question, participants

were asked how they learned to use a gun. Responses were grouped into four major categories (see Table 26), indicating that most youths had learned on their own and/or had been taught by a relative. When examined for weapons charge status, those with weapons charges were most likely to have taught themselves, while those without weapons charges were most likely to have been taught by a relative,  $\chi^2(4, n = 121) = 10.11, p < .05$ . For both groups, however, friends were also involved in teaching them to use guns (see Table 27).

**Summary.** In sum, large percentages of participants in our study reported owning, carrying, and using firearms. Regardless of weapon history, youths reported owning an average of 4.5 firearms prior to their referral to the juvenile facility. Eighty percent of participants indicated that they had ever owned or possessed a handgun, and 64% reported having ever owned or possessed a rifle. Youths with histories of weapons referrals were more likely than other youths to report having owned or possessed a handgun but were no more likely than their peers to have ever owned or possessed a rifle or shotgun. Similarly, large percentages of youths reported having carried handguns (74%) and long guns (44%). On average, youths reported carrying a gun a few times a month; those with histories of weapons offenses carried guns significantly more frequently than other youths. On average, participants reported having used a gun to commit a crime once or twice in their lives. Not surprisingly, youths with histories of weapons referrals were more likely than those with no such referrals to admit to doing so. Youths reported having had access to a wide array of firearms prior to their confinement. Moreover, nearly three-quarters of the participants

indicated that it would not be difficult to obtain a gun upon release from the juvenile facility.

Regardless of their histories of weapons referrals, participants reported that they obtained their handguns, rifles, and shotguns most frequently from friends and through illegal means (frequently through drug dealers or “junkies”). In considering any future procurement of firearms, participants expect to look to family and friends or to obtain them through illegal means, much as they had done in the past. Self-protection and protection of family members predominated youths’ rationales for carrying handguns and shotguns, while the most common reasons for carrying rifles were for hunting/target shooting and protection of family members. Other commonly-cited reasons for carrying firearms included those related to gaining respect and reasons associated with the commission of crimes. Importantly, those youths who reported carrying handguns, rifles, or shotguns for hunting/target shooting were unlikely also to indicate that they had carried these firearms for criminal and/or antisocial reasons or for reasons of protection.

Regardless of their histories of weapons referrals, youths reported having carried firearms in multiple circumstances. At least half indicated that it was likely that they would carry a gun for protection, when going to a strange part of town, at night, when hanging out with friends, when they knew they would be with others carrying guns, and when doing a drug deal. Over 35% of the youths indicated that they had fired a gun in self-defense, when hanging out with friends, when horsing around, when drunk or high, to scare someone, during a fight, when committing a crime, and during a drug deal.

Finally, most youths had either been taught to use a gun by a relative or had taught themselves, but a large percentage had been taught by their peers.

### **Family Members' Possession and Use of Firearms**

All participants were asked about gun ownership by members of their household, including the types of guns owned and the reasons for owning them. In over half the households ( $n = 71$ , 50.7%) at least one person, other than the youth, owns a gun, with fathers being the most likely to own. In only a small number of households (4) do both parents own a gun. No significant differences between those with and without a history of referrals for weapons offenses were found for any of the youth's household relatives (see Table 28). Clearly, the presence of firearms in the home is a common experience for this sample of youth.

When a youth indicated that a household relative owned a gun, he was also asked what type of gun(s) were owned. Responses were then categorized as either rifles/shotguns or handguns. Different patterns emerged for each of the relatives. Fathers most commonly owned shotguns or rifles, while mothers and other household relatives owned handguns more often than other firearms (see Table 29). Youths were not asked the number of weapons owned by their relatives.

**Reasons for gun ownership.** Through an open-ended question, youths were also asked why their fathers, mothers, and others in their household own their guns. Responses were coded into four categories: protection, hunting/sport, hobby/collection, and work/profession (some participants also indicated that they did not know the reasons for gun ownership). Much like the youths, themselves, household relatives

tend to own guns primarily for protection, with hunting/sport purposes also being cited frequently for fathers (see Table 30 ).

**Carrying guns outside the home.** Youths were also asked how many of their friends and household members carried weapons outside the home. For this incarcerated sample, a disturbingly large percentage (85%) indicated that at least “some” of their friends (i.e., those with whom they associated before incarceration) carried weapons outside the home. Moreover, youths who had never been referred for weapons offenses did not differ significantly from those who had in their patterns of responses on this question,  $\chi^2(3, n = 138) = 2.14, ns$ . Thus, those without official weapons referrals were just as likely to have friends who carry weapons (82.9%) as those participants who, themselves, had been referred for weapons offenses (89.7%).

In contrast to the number of youths whose friends carry weapons outside the home, less than one-fourth (23.6%) indicated that any household members carried weapons outside the home. Considering that youths identify protection as a primary reason for owning and carrying weapons (for both themselves and their family members), it is noteworthy that the majority of their friends carry weapons into the community, while family members appear to keep theirs at home. The location of where one might need a gun for protection appears to differ for these two groups.

### **Victim/Witness Experience**

All participants were asked a number of questions related to their experience as either victim of or witness to a violent act. Experiences included those that may have happened to them directly, as well as those that may have happened to friends or

family members (sometimes referred to as “secondary victimization”). Table 31 shows the percentage of youths who had each experience at least once. Clearly, this group has a high level of victim/witness experience, with the most frequent being: (1) having friends who have been shot at (79.3%), (2) witnessing a wounding or killing involving a weapon (71.4%), and (3) having been threatened with a gun (67.9%). In addition, 67.9% indicated that they had been shot at on at least one occasion. Together, Table 31 and Table 32 demonstrate the extent to which participants’ family and friends have been the victims of firearms violence.

To examine group differences in victim/witness experience, a series of independent t-tests and chi-square analyses were conducted for the Ever Weapons/Never Weapons groups. Across all victimization experiences, only one significant difference was found. Youths with a history of weapons offenses (Ever Weapons) were significantly more likely to have witnessed someone being seriously wounded or killed by a gun, knife, or other weapon ( $M = 1.49$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) than those without such a history ( $M = 1.11$ ,  $SD = .95$ ),  $t(138) = 2.21$ ,  $p < .05$ . While 75.4% of the Ever Weapons group reported that they had witnessed such an act at least once, 67.6% of the Never Weapons groups also reported witnessing similar events. Clearly, both groups contain an unacceptably large number of youths who have witnessed another person being wounded or killed. No other comparisons for victim/witness experience were found to be statistically significant.

**Youths’ sense of future.** To assess participants’ sense of their own future, they were asked to predict the likelihood that they would be victimized in specific ways. A

majority indicated that it was “not likely” that they would be shot (58.6%), stabbed (76.4%), or dead (73.6%) by the time they turn 25 (see Table 33). Of the 135 youths who responded to these questions, over half (52.6%) indicated that it was “very unlikely” they would have any of these experiences before age 25, and no participants predicted that all of them would occur. Because these three variables were highly inter-correlated (see Table 34), they were combined additively to form a “sense of future” scale, with a mean of 4.06 (SD = 1.42). Youths from the Ever Weapons (M = 3.89, SD = 1.39) and Never Weapons (M = 4.21, SD = 1.44) groups did not differ in their primarily positive prediction of not being seriously victimized before reaching the age of 25,  $t(133) = -1.32, ns$ .

Significant positive correlations were found, however, between previous victimization and youths’ sense of future ( $p < .01$ , two-tailed); that is, those with higher levels of previous victimization predicted that future victimization was more likely. This was apparent primarily for those who had experienced the following: been threatened with a gun ( $r = .31$ ), been shot at ( $r = .37$ ), and witnessed someone being wounded or killed with a weapon ( $r = .39$ ). Likewise, previous secondary victimization appears to be positively and significantly correlated with youths’ expectations about their own future victimization. In particular, those who had family members shot at ( $r = .32$ ), friends shot at ( $r = .26$ ), and friends shot and killed ( $r = .39$ ) predicted greater victimization before age 25.

### **School-related Violence and Antisocial Behavior**

**Victimization at school.** Participants were asked to indicate on a four-point



scale (where 0 = never, 1 = once, 2 = a few times, and 3 = many times) the frequency with which they had been victimized in various ways while they were on school grounds or at a school activity. As illustrated in Table 35, 35.3% of all youths reported that they had ever been threatened with a gun while on school grounds or at a school activity, 33.8% reported having been threatened with a knife, and 32.6% reported that they had been threatened with another type of weapon. Overall, 46.8% reported having been beaten up while at school or at a school activity, 10.1% said that they had been shot at while on school grounds or at a school activity, 9.3% had been stabbed with a knife, and 22.3% reported having been injured with another weapon while on school grounds or at a school activity.

The school victimization items were highly inter-correlated (see Table 36). The frequency with which participants reported being beaten up was unrelated to the frequency with they reported been shot at or stabbed at school, however. A “School Victimization Scale” was created by adding scores of all items ( $r = .77$ ,  $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = 3.60$ ). No significant difference were observed between the Ever Weapons and Never Weapons groups in regard to their scores on this scale,  $t(136) = -1.62$ ,  $ns$ .

Finally, 12.9% of youths reported that they had ever stayed home from school because they were worried about violence at school. Youths who had ever had a weapons offense were no more likely than other youths to report that they had avoided school because of fear of violence,  $\chi^2(1, N = 139) = .201$ ,  $ns$ .

**Prevalence of weapons.** Nearly two-thirds (65.5%) of the youths reported that during the year before they came to the juvenile facility, they had known at least one

person (not including themselves) who had carried a gun with them to school (see Table 37). Thirty-six percent reported knowing “a few people” who had carried a gun to school, and 15.7% reported knowing “many people” who had carried a gun to school. Youths with histories of weapons referrals and those with no weapons referrals reported knowing similar numbers of youths who had brought guns to school  $t(137) = -.23$ .

When asked to estimate how many students in their school carried a weapon of some sort to school, half of the participants reported that either no kids (13.6%) or only a few kids in their school (36.4%) carried a weapon to school (see Table 38). More than one in five (21.4%) reported that many students carry weapons to school, but most do not. One-quarter of the youths interviewed reported that most of the students in their schools carried a weapon to school, at least occasionally.

The majority of students (73.2%) reported that in the year before they came to the juvenile correctional facility they had never carried a gun to school; 17.4% indicated that they carried a gun to school “now and then”; 6.5% reported carrying a gun to school “most of the time,” and four youths (2.9%) reported carrying a gun to school “all of the time” (see Table 39). Youths who had a history of referrals for weapons offenses carried a gun to school no more frequently than did youths who had no such referrals,  $t(137) = -.23$ , ns.

Approximately one-fifth of youths (22.9%) reported that they had, on occasion, carried a gun to school but left it outside the building. Most reported that they had left the gun in a car (43.8%) or hidden in bushes or woods outside the building (40.6%).

Youths were asked several additional questions about firearm possession at

school. On a scale of 0 to 3 (where 0 = never, 1 = once, 2 = a few times, and 3 = many times), youths indicated the frequency with which they had ever (a) asked other people in the school to carry a gun for them, (b) kept a gun hidden in their school locker, (c) kept a gun hidden somewhere else in the school, and (d) had a gun taken away by school officials (see Table 40). Overall, 12.9% indicated that they had asked others in the school to carry a gun for them; two (2.2%) had done so many times. Youths who had a history of referrals for weapons offenses did not differ from youths with no weapons referrals regarding the frequency with which they reported enlisting others to carry guns for them at school,  $t(137) = 54$ , ns.

Approximately one in ten participants (11.5%) reported having ever kept a gun hidden in their school locker; and one said that he had done so many times. Similarly, 10.1% of youths indicated that they had kept a gun hidden somewhere else at the school, and two (1.4%) had done so many times. Students who had ever been referred for a weapons offense did not differ from youths with no such referrals regarding the frequency of hiding a gun in a locker,  $t(137) = .31$ , ns, or elsewhere at school,  $t(137) = -.140$ , ns.

Finally, 7.2% (10 youths) reported ever having had a gun taken away by school officials. Of these 10, nine indicated that they had guns taken away from them one time; only one participant had a gun taken away on more than one occasion. Youths who had a history of weapons referrals did not differ from other youths regarding the frequency with which they reported having had a gun confiscated by school officials,  $t(137) = .31$ , ns.

Youths also were asked how often they carried weapons other than guns to school during the year before their confinement in the juvenile facility (see Table 41). Approximately half of all youths (50.3%) indicated that they had never carried a weapon other than a gun to school, 30.2% reporting having done so “now and then,” 10.8% reported having carried a weapon to school “most of the time,” and 8.6% (12 students) reported having done so “all of the time.” Participants also were asked to identify the type of weapon that they had carried. Most frequently, the weapon was a pocket knife (carried to school by 20.1% of participants), followed by brass knuckles (7.9%), and a switchblade (4.3%). Other weapons included a hunting knife (2.9%) and a straight razor (3.6%).

**Self-reported violence/antisocial behavior at school.** Youths were asked to indicate on a 4-point scale the frequency with which they had victimized others while on school grounds or at school activities (where 0 = never, 1 = once, 2 = a few times, and 3 = many times) (see Table 42). Overall, 25.2% of the participants reported having threatened someone with a gun while on school grounds or at a school activity, 17.3% reported threatening someone with a knife, and 24.5% reported threatening someone with another weapon. The vast majority of youths (82.7%) reported that they had ever beaten someone up while on school grounds or at a school activity, 8.6% had shot at someone, 7.2% had stabbed or injured someone with a knife, and 19.4% had injured someone with another weapon while on school grounds or at a school activity.

As revealed in Table 43, the seven items were highly inter-correlated, although the frequency with which participants admitted to beating up another student were

unrelated to the frequency with which they reported shooting at or stabbing another student at school. A “Victimization of Others at School” scale was created by adding individual scores from these seven items ( $r = .74$ ,  $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 3.39$ ). An independent  $t$ -test was conducted to examine possible group differences in youths’ scores on this scale. Those participants in the Ever Weapons group had similar scores on the scale compared to participants in the Never Weapons group,  $t(137) = -.34$ , ns.

Youths were asked to indicate on a 4-point scale (where 0 = never, 1 = once, 2 = a few times, and 3 = many times) the frequency with which they had hit a teacher, been suspended from school, and been expelled from school (see Table 44). The vast majority of youths (79.1%) reported that they had never hit a teacher, while 15.1% reported having hit a teacher once, 5.0% indicated that they had done so a few times, and one student reported having hit a teacher many times. No differences were observed between the Ever Weapons and Never Weapons groups regarding the frequency with which they had hit a teacher,  $t(137) = -.46$ , ns.

The overwhelming majority of participants reported that they had been suspended from school (96.4%) (see Table 44). Two-thirds (66.9%) indicated that they had been suspended many times. Youths with a history of referrals for weapons offenses were no more frequently suspended than those with no such referrals,  $t(137) = -.04$ , ns. Participants were asked to explain the reasons for their suspensions, and up to two reasons were coded for each. The most frequent reasons for suspensions included fighting (cited by 70.5% of those participants who reported ever having been suspended), talking back to or cursing at a teacher (25.8%), being tardy or truant

(13.6%), disrupting class (13.6%), or smoking (9.8%). Less frequent reasons included harassing or threatening another student (6.0%) possession or use of drugs (3.0%), possessing a weapon (3.0%), assaulting a teacher (2.3%), or other miscellaneous reasons (12.9%).

Three-quarters of participants (75.6%) indicated that they had ever been expelled from school; 36.7% of youths reported having been expelled at least a few times. Youths with a history of referrals for weapons offenses were no more frequently expelled from school than were youths with no weapons offenses,  $t(137) = -.03$ , ns. Participants were asked to report the reasons for their expulsions, and up to two responses were coded. The most frequently cited reason for expulsion was fighting (cited by 40.6% of those students who said they had ever been expelled). Other common reasons included possessing a weapon at school (12.9%), possession or use of drugs (8.9%), assaulting a teacher (8.9%), and being tardy or truant (9.9%) (see Table 45).

Youths reported extremely high rates of truancy in the year prior to their confinement at the juvenile facility. One-quarter of youths (27.2%) indicated that they had, on average, skipped school one to five days each month; 17.6% reported having skipped school between six and ten days per month, and nearly one-third (32.4%) reported having skipped school more than 10 days per month. Youths who had ever been referred for a weapons offense reported skipping no more school days than did youths who had never received a referral for a weapons offense,  $t(134) = 1.26$ , ns.

**Summary.** In summary, participants in our study reported high rates of

victimization, weapon-carrying, and aggressive and antisocial behavior at school.

Thirty-five percent indicated that they had been threatened with a gun while at school or at a school activity, while 34% had been threatened with a knife, and 33% with another type of weapon. Thirteen percent of participants said that they had skipped school because they were worried about violence. Two-thirds of the youths said that in the year prior to their confinement, they had known at least one student who had carried a gun to school. Although the majority had not done so themselves, 27% reported having carried a gun to school in the year prior to their confinement. Approximately one in ten reported having hidden a gun in his school locker, 10% said that they had hidden a gun elsewhere at school, and 7% had a gun taken away by school officials. Substantial minorities of participants reported ever having threatened someone with a gun (25%), a knife (17%), or another type of weapon (25%) while at school or at a school activity. Finally, participants reported very high rates of suspension (96%), expulsion (75%), and truancy (nearly one third reported skipping more than ten days per month). Youths with histories of weapons referrals did not differ from other youths with respect to their reports of victimization, weapon-carrying, or antisocial behavior at school.

### **Antisocial Behavior Outside of School**

In addition to the multiple questions related to violence at school, youths were asked a variety of questions related to violent and antisocial behavior, not restricted to school grounds or activities. Questions addressed general delinquent and violent behavior, association with violent friends and relatives, gun dealing, and gang involvement.

**General delinquent and violent behavior.** Participants were asked the frequency with which they had engaged in specific delinquent behaviors, ranging from going to school high or drunk to firing a gun at another person. As can be seen in Table 46, mean scores suggest that, on average, youths had engaged in most behaviors at least once. Some interesting exceptions were noted, however: 87.1% said they had never hit one of their parents; 81.3% indicated that they had never stolen money for drugs or alcohol; and 55.4% reported that they had never carried a weapon with the intention of using it in a fight.

An examination of the interrelationships among these various self-reported delinquent (SRD) behaviors revealed a high degree of inter-correlation, with the exception of the youth having hit one of his parents (see Table 47). Eliminating this one variable resulted in a high degree of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .88$ ). We then conducted a principal-components analysis of the remaining 12 variables. As can be seen in Table 48, three components emerged from the analysis, explaining 64.5% of the variance in youth's responses. The three components may be seen as, "Aggression Against Persons," "Nonaggressive Property Offenses," and "Drug Involvement" (see Table 48 for individual items). Component scores were calculated and used as dependent variables in a series of independent t-tests, analyzing the effects of weapon category (Ever Weapons vs. Never Weapons) on the three classes of delinquent behavior. Youths with a history of weapons offenses scored significantly lower ( $M = -.24$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) on nonaggressive offenses against property than those who had never had any weapons referrals ( $M = .23$ ,  $SD = .89$ ),  $t(136) = -2.84$ ,  $p < .05$ . The two



groups, however, reported comparable rates of illegal drug-related behaviors and aggression against others.

**Association with violent friends and relatives.** In an attempt to assess youths' association with others who engage in violent behavior, participants were asked whether any family members or close friends had ever shot someone. Nearly a quarter (22.1%) indicated that at least one family member had shot someone; and over half (55.0%) reported that at least one friend with whom they spend a lot of time had shot someone. In addition, 36.4% ( $n = 51$ ) had both family members and friends who had shot another person. Youths' history of weapons offenses was not related to whether they had family members ( $\chi^2(1, N = 137) = .95, ns$ ) or friends, ( $\chi^2(1, N = 136) = 1.98, ns$ ) who had shot someone.

To examine the relationship between youths' admitted delinquent behavior and their association with relatives and close friends who engage in violent behavior, a series of independent t-tests was conducted. The three SRD components were used as outcome variables to compare youths on whether or not their relatives and close friends had ever shot someone (grouping variables). Youths with at least one family member who has shot someone ( $M = .53, SD = .82$ ) reported a significantly greater frequency of aggressive offenses against others than did those whose family members had never shot anyone ( $M = -.17, SD = .99$ ),  $t(134) = -3.6, p < .001$ . Likewise, those whose friends had shot someone ( $M = .59, SD = .80$ ) also reported greater frequencies of aggression against others than those whose close friends had not shot anyone ( $M = -.75, SD = .67$ ),  $t(133) = -10.29, p < .001$ . Thus, youths whose family and friends

engage in violent behavior also engage in a variety of aggressive behaviors.

**Youth involvement in gun dealing.** Almost one fifth of the sample (19.3%) reported having dealt in guns (buying, selling, or trading) at some point. This group split nearly evenly between those who had been referred at some point for weapons-related offenses (48.1%) and those who had never been referred for such offenses (51.9%). Likewise, youths living in urban areas were no more likely than their nonurban counterparts to engage in gun dealing,  $\chi^2(1, N = 139) = 1.65, ns$ . Those who reported that they had been involved in dealing guns were also asked open-ended questions about their roles in such transactions. Responses were classified into major categories of “obtaining” and “selling” weapons. One fourth (25.9%) were involved in both obtaining and selling, while others were involved in only one end of the transaction (see Table 49). An additional open-ended question assessed the source of those weapons (e.g., in-state or out-of-state, stores, houses); only one response per youth was recorded. The most frequently-mentioned source was out-of-state (36.0%) with the remaining responses being distributed across the other sources mentioned by participants (see Table 50).

### **Youths’ Attitudes Toward Weapons**

All participants were asked a series of questions assessing their attitudes toward carrying and using weapons. Using a four-point Likert scale, they indicated their level of agreement with each statement. As illustrated in Table 51, a majority of youths endorsed either “strongly disagree” or “disagree” on all items, indicating a generally negative attitude toward carrying and using weapons across situations, despite the

prevalence of gun ownership and usage among participants.

To assess further the relationships among youths' responses to the attitude questions, we conducted a series of Pearson correlations (see Table 52) indicating that most variables were highly intercorrelated. An internal consistency analysis revealed a reliable scale, involving all but one variable (no big deal to bring a weapon to school) ( $\alpha = .79$ ). From a principal-components analysis of the remaining six items, two components emerged, explaining 71.49% of the variance (see Table 53). The components may be seen as reflecting two aspects of youths' attitudes: "acceptability of using guns" and "social value of carrying guns." Component scores were calculated and used as dependent variables in independent  $t$  tests, examining possible differences between the Ever Weapons and Never Weapons groups. Those with a history of weapons referrals were no more likely than those with no official weapons history to view the use of guns as acceptable,  $t(137) = 1.24$ , ns, nor were they any more likely to hold that carrying a weapons was important to being accepted and respected by their peers,  $t(127) = -1.81$ , ns (equal variances not assumed).

**Youths' involvement in gangs.** All youths were asked a series of questions assessing their involvement in gangs prior to their incarceration. Forty-five participants, or 32.1% of the sample, reported that they had ever been members of a gang (see Table 54). Of these 45 youths, 71.1% considered themselves a member of a gang at the time that they came to the juvenile correctional facility. Slightly more than three-quarters (77.8%) of the participants who reported ever being a member of a gang described their group as an "organized gang," while 22.2% indicated that their gang was

“just a bunch of people they hung out with” (see Table 55). Closer inspection of this latter group of youths revealed that their groups had a number of characteristics of organized gangs (e.g., 30% reported that their group had a name, 40% had a leader, 70% said their group had its own territory or turf, and 50% had a stash of guns for members’ use). Thus, for purposes of further analyses, both groups of youths (those who were part of organized gangs and those who said that their group was not “organized”) were combined.

The age at which youths first joined gangs ranged from 7 to 17, with the average age at initiation being 12.7 years. The reported size of gangs varied considerably, ranging from 3 to 1,000. Only 7 estimated the size of their gang to be 100 or more. Some participants indicated that they considered themselves members of gangs with a national presence, which may account for the large numbers reported by some (follow-up questions on national membership were not asked routinely and so the number of youths who fall into this category cannot be determined). Additionally, some reports may have been exaggerated.

Most youth who described themselves as gang members indicated that their gangs had a number of characteristics that have frequently been associated with youth gangs involved in antisocial behavior. For example, a majority reported their gangs to have a name (84.4%), leader (75.6%), stash of guns (64.4%), special clothing or symbols (77.8%), and its own turf or territory (68.9%) (see Table 56). In addition, most members said that their gangs had been involved in a variety of illegal activities, ranging from stealing cars to beating up people, on at least one occasion (see Table 57).

In order to examine possible differences between participants who were self-reported gang members and those who were not, several analyses were conducted to examine the backgrounds, self-reported behaviors, and attitudes of these two groups of youths. Chi-square analyses revealed that self-reported gang members did not differ from the other participants in the whether they resided in metropolitan or non-metropolitan counties,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 136) = .00, ns$ , or whether their siblings or parents had criminal or juvenile records,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 134) = .04, ns$ ,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 134) = .79, ns$ , respectively. In addition, self-reported gang members were no more likely than other participants to have had a weapons referral,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 137) = .53, ns$ . Moreover, both gang members and non-members had similar numbers of total referrals to the solicitor,  $t (134) = 1.86, ns$ .

A number of significant group differences were observed, however, with respect to participants' reports of carrying and use of firearms, violent activities of friends, self-reports of antisocial behavior, and attitudes toward weapons, and sense of future. Self-reported gang members were compared with non-gang members with respect to their likelihood of carrying a gun in public. An independent  $t$ -test was conducted, using gang membership as the independent variable and participants' factor scores for the component, "carrying a gun in public." Gang members received significantly higher factor scores than their peers, indicating that they were significantly more likely than non-members to report carrying a firearm in public,  $t (117) = -3.18, p < .01$ . Gang members were no more likely than other participants to report having gotten a gun to commit a crime,  $t (114) = -1.06, ns$ .

Gang and non-gang members' responses were compared to examine differences in the frequency with which they reported firing a gun in various situations. Independent  $t$ -tests were conducted, using factor scores for the "illegal and aggressive behavior" component and the "socialization/acceptance behaviors" component as dependent variables and gang membership as the independent variable. Gang members received higher scores on each component than their peers, indicating that gang members reported having fired a weapon for illegal, aggressive purposes,  $t(120) = -3.71, p < .001$ , and in social situations more frequently than did non-gang members,  $t(120) = -2.13, p < .05$ .

A number of significant group differences were observed with respect to participants' reports of victimization and violent behavior. Self-reported gang members were significantly more likely than non-gang members to report that a friend had ever been shot at,  $\chi^2(1, N = 136) = 4.23, p < .05$ , that a friend had ever been shot and killed,  $\chi^2(1, N = 135) = 9.47, p < .01$ , or that a friend had ever shot anyone,  $\chi^2(1, N = 137) = 5.41, p < .05$ , although gang members were no more likely than non-members to report that a family member had ever been shot at,  $\chi^2(1, N = 135) = 1.69, ns$ , that a family member had been shot and killed,  $\chi^2(1, N = 135) = .003, ns$ , or that a family member had ever shot anyone,  $\chi^2(1, N = 137) = 1.42, ns$ , (see Table 58).

In order to examine differences between gang members and non-members with respect to self-reported delinquency, independent  $t$ -tests were conducted, using the three component scores on the self-reported delinquency questions as dependent variables. Self-reported gang members were significantly more likely than non-

members to report committing aggressive offenses/offenses against persons,  $t(134) = -4.07$ ,  $p < .001$ , and property offenses,  $t(134) = -2.95$ ,  $p < .01$ , but they were no more likely than non-members to report committing a drug-related offense,  $t(134) = 1.34$ ,  $ns$ .

Youths' attitudes toward weapons were examined for possible group differences. Independent  $t$ -tests were conducted, with gang membership as the independent variable and participants' component scores on the "acceptability of using guns" component and "social value of carrying guns" component as the dependent variables. Gang members were no more likely than non-members to find it acceptable to use guns,  $t(135) = -.65$ ,  $ns$ , but they were significantly more likely to believe that carrying a weapon was important to being accepted and respected by their friends,  $t(135) = -3.83$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Finally, gang members and non-members were compared with regard to their scores on the sense of future scale. Gang members received significantly higher scores,  $t(131) = -4.36$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that they were more likely than their peers to believe that they would be injured or killed by the time they were 25 years old.

### **Youths' Recommendations Regarding Weapons**

Finally, youths were asked to indicate what steps they thought could be taken to keep kids from using weapons. Responses to this open-ended question were coded into one of 11 response categories (see Table 59). The majority of participants provided at least one concrete suggestion. Only 16% indicated that nothing could be done to keep young people from using weapons, and 5.7% replied that they "don't know" what could be done. The most common response included suggestions for

prevention and early intervention initiatives (e.g., mentoring programs, violence prevention programs) (suggested by 28.6% of the participants). The next most frequent suggestion, which was mentioned by 20.7% of the youths, related to providing stricter regulation of firearms and other weapons (e.g., “make it harder to get guns”). Thirteen percent of youth mentioned the need for more parental involvement in their children’s lives and/or increased parental supervision of kids’ activities. Other responses included the need for stricter punishments for weapons violations (7.1%), increased surveillance (e.g., police, cameras) at school (5.0%), stricter regulation of other delinquent or criminal activities (e.g., gang involvement, drug use) (2.9%), and the need to teach youth self-defense strategies (e.g., judo) (.7%).

### **Discussion**

Findings from this sample of 140 incarcerated youths revealed that firearms were readily available to them and were frequently carried by them prior to their confinement. Eighty percent of the participants indicated that they had owned or possessed a handgun, approximately three-quarters reported having carried a handgun, and more than one-quarter reported having used a handgun to commit a crime. Most youths indicated that they had carried a gun a few times per month prior to their confinement. These high rates of firearm possession and use are similar to those of others who have surveyed juvenile offenders. For example, 59% of Callahan and colleagues’ (1993) sample of youth from a short-term holding facility reported owning a handgun. Among Sheley and Wright’s (1993a, 1993b) sample of urban serious offenders, 83% reported having owned a gun prior to their confinement, and 84% admitted that they had carried



a gun at least “now and then” prior to their incarceration. Finally, 82% of a sample of juvenile delinquents in New Mexico reported having owned or kept a gun prior to their confinement (New Mexico Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center, 1998).

Given the high prevalence of gun ownership and use, it is not surprising that youths reported that firearms were very easy to obtain. Indeed, 72% of our sample reported that it would not be difficult for them to obtain a firearm upon release from the juvenile facility. These findings are consistent with those of Sheley and Wright (1993a, 1993b), who observed that 70% of their sample could obtain a gun with “no trouble at all” upon their release from the detention center, and those of the New Mexico Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center (1998), which reported that 92% of their participants in confinement believed that it was easy for youths to obtain guns. The most frequently-cited means of obtaining firearms among our participants were from friends and through illegal means, while somewhat smaller percentages of youths reported having obtained handguns (13%), rifles (22%), and shotguns (23%) from family members. Disturbingly, substantial minorities of youth who reported obtaining firearms illegally did so from drug dealers or drug users.

Not only did the youths report ready access to firearms, but they also reported frequently carrying these firearms to many different locations (e.g., in a car, to a friend’s house, on the street) and in many different situations (e.g., when going to a strange part of town, when hanging out with friends). They also reported alarmingly high rates of firing weapons across a wide array of circumstances, involving both illegal, aggressive activities (e.g., while fighting or while involved in committing a crime) and while

socializing with peers.

Disturbingly high percentages reported having carried guns and other weapons to school. Twenty-seven percent reported having carried a gun to school during the year prior to their confinement, and one quarter said that they had previously threatened someone with a gun while at school or at a school-sponsored event. Moreover, 35% reported that they had been threatened with a gun while at school or at a school activity, and two thirds said that in the year prior to their confinement, they had known at least one student who had carried a gun to school. As disturbing as these rates are, they should be viewed somewhat cautiously. Youths may have broadly interpreted the language of several of these questions or simply exaggerated their answers. For example, participants may have interpreted “ever carried a gun to school” to include leaving a gun outside of the school (e.g., in an automobile that was parked on school grounds). Indeed, approximately 10% of all participants admitted that they had previously left a firearm in their car on school grounds. Similarly, in response to questions regarding the frequency with which they had threatened someone with a gun, youths’ answers may reflect the reasonable assumption that it is possible to threaten someone with a gun at school without having the gun physically present. Although such behaviors may still raise significant concerns, they are not as alarming as bringing a firearm into a school building. Youths’ responses to several more specific questions may be more instructive regarding the frequency of gun possession at school. Twelve percent reported having hidden a gun in their school locker, and 10% said that they had hidden a gun elsewhere at school.

Any efforts to reduce illegal firearm use by adolescents at school or in the community must address youths' reasons for carrying such weapons. Findings from our study suggest several consistent groupings of reasons for carrying firearms: (a) reasons of protection, (b) reasons associated with committing a crime, (c) reasons associated with the desire for respect, and (d) reasons associated with hunting or target shooting. The most common rationales for carrying handguns and shotguns were self-protection and protection of family members, while the most common reasons for carrying rifles included hunting/target shooting and protection of family members. Substantial minorities of youth also cited the need for respect and the intention to commit crimes as important motivations for carrying firearms, however.

These findings are consistent with those of others who have found that protection is a primary reason that urban school children and youthful offenders cite for possessing a gun (Lizotte et al., 1994; New Mexico Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center; 1998 Sheley & Wright, 1993a). Given youths' substantial concerns about safety, successful efforts to reduce the frequency with which they carry firearms must focus on creating safer neighborhoods and convincing youths that they can survive, unarmed, in these neighborhoods without being victimized (Sheley & Wright, 1995).

Importantly, those participants who cited hunting/target shooting as an important motivation for carrying guns were unlikely to indicate that they also carried firearms for criminal and/or antisocial reasons or for reasons of protection. Apparently, those youths in our sample who used firearms for sporting purposes formed a fairly distinct subgroup of gun-carriers. These results are consistent with the findings of others who

have observed that factors that motivate a youth to obtain or carry a gun for sport are very different from those that lead a youth to acquire a gun for other types of reasons (e.g., protection or reasons of aggression) (see e.g., Lizotte et al., 1994).

The presence of firearms in the home is common among this sample of youth. Prior to their incarceration, over half lived in homes in which at least one person owned a gun. Most often, youths report protection as the principal reason that family members own their guns. Although most family members do not carry weapons with them outside the home, participants' friends are highly likely to do so.

Youth report involvement in a wide array of delinquent behaviors, ranging from attending school while intoxicated to firing a gun at another person to dealing in weapons. In addition to having committed offenses sufficient enough to result in incarceration (as well as those for which they have not come to the attention of juvenile authorities), youth in this study are all too familiar with being the victim and/or witness to violent crime. A disturbingly large number of them have friends who have been shot at, witnessed serious injury or death from violence, or have, themselves, been threatened with a gun. Despite this overall high level of involvement as both victimizer and victim, this sample remains optimistic about their ability to reach their mid-twenties without having been seriously injured or killed. In addition, they maintain a rather dim view of using weapons against others and do not subscribe to popular notions about the importance of guns to gaining acceptance and respect from peers.

### **Group Differences**

A number of significant differences were observed between youths who had a

history of weapons referrals and those with no such referrals. For example, participants with histories of weapons referrals were more likely than those with no such referrals to have been referred to the solicitor for property offenses. In addition, they had more total referrals to the solicitor and received their first referral at a significantly younger age. These youths also were more likely than others to indicate that they had owned or possessed a handgun, carried a handgun, and used a handgun to commit a crime. During the year prior to their incarceration, they reported having carried guns more often than other participants, but they were less likely than their peers who had no weapons referrals to have carried a knife. Youths with histories of weapons referrals were more likely than others to report having obtained handguns through illegal means. In examining youths' reasons for carrying guns, several significant group differences were observed. Youths with weapons referrals were less likely than their peers to indicate that protection was an important reason for carrying handguns or shotguns. Those without weapons referrals were more likely than their peers to consider hunting/target shooting an important reason for carrying a shotgun. Those youths with histories of weapons referrals were more likely than others to have taught themselves to use a gun, whereas youths without such referrals were more likely to indicate that a relative had taught them to use a firearm. They were also more likely than other youths to report having witnessed someone being seriously wounded or killed by a gun, knife, or other weapon. In sum, these findings suggest that youths with histories of weapons violations may carry weapons more frequently (and with the intent to engage in criminal behavior), and have more extensive juvenile records than other incarcerated youths.

On the other hand, we did not observe significant differences between youths with histories of weapons referrals and those with no such referrals with respect to their reports of the accessibility of guns; the number of guns that they possessed prior to their confinement; the frequency which they owned, carried, or committed crimes with long guns; the likelihood of their carrying firearms in different situations, the frequency with which they engaged in aggressive, illegal behavior, or the frequency with which they shot guns in public. In addition, those without a history of weapons referrals were just as likely as those with referrals to report having family members who owned firearms, parents or siblings who had been incarcerated in an adult or juvenile correctional facility, friends who carried guns, and friends and family members who had shot someone. With one exception, there were no group differences in youths' experience as a victim of or witness to a violent act. (As noted above, youths with a history of weapons referrals were more likely than their peers to have witnessed someone being seriously wounded or killed.)

Curiously, we observed no significant group differences with respect to youths' reports of school-related aggressive behavior and weapon-carrying to school. Participants with weapons referrals were no more likely than others to report being involved in violent behavior at school, being suspended or expelled from school, having carried a gun to school, having asked others to carry a gun for them to school, having hidden a gun at school, and having had a gun confiscated by school officials. Moreover, these youths were no more likely than their peers to know kids who brought guns to school.

It should be emphasized, however, that participants were included in the Ever Weapons group only if they had a record of a referral for a weapons offense. Undoubtedly, some youth who had committed such offenses were not included in our Ever Weapons group, either because their referral did not necessarily specify the use of weapons (e.g., “assault and battery with intent to kill” may not necessarily involve weapons) or because the youths were not caught using weapons illegally. Moreover, assessing group differences based upon official weapons referrals is only one way of examining important differences in youths’ use of firearms and other weapons. Future analyses should examine other possible group differences in weapon ownership and use (e.g., whether or not youths had committed Index I crimes).

### **Family and Peer Context**

Despite the fact that we found no significant differences between weapons offense groups regarding family members’ ownership of firearms or involvement in criminal activity, our findings nevertheless underscore the importance of the family and peer context in any efforts to prevent illegal firearm use (or other types of criminal activity) by juveniles. Youth in our sample resided in families that were economically disadvantaged and in which significant percentages of family members had been involved in delinquent and/or criminal activity. Nearly half of the participants’ families earned less than \$10,000 annually, and only one-third of youths lived with two parents. According to the youths’ official records, more than one-third had at least one parent with a known criminal record and almost one-third had at least one sibling with a known criminal and/or juvenile record. Nearly 80% of the youths indicated that people with

whom they spent a lot of time (e.g., parents, other relatives, good friends) had been arrested; 72% noted that these individuals had served time in prison.

Youth in our sample reported high rates of firearm ownership by family members and friends. More than half of all participants lived in a home where at least one other person owned a gun. Most commonly, these guns were owned for reasons of protection. The overwhelming majority (85%) reported that at least “some” of the friends with whom they associated prior to their incarceration carried weapons outside of the home, whereas fewer than one-fourth indicated that family members carried firearms outside of their home. Nearly one-quarter reported that at least one family member had shot someone, and over half indicated that someone with whom they spent a lot of time had ever shot someone. Similarly, high percentages of youths reported that their friends and family members had been victimized. Half responded that a family member had been shot at, while one-quarter had a family member who had been shot and killed. More than three-quarters reported that at least one friend had been shot at; over half had a friend who had been shot and killed.

Consistent with this culture of antisocial behavior, a substantial minority of youth reported belonging to organized gangs, most of which actively engaged in a wide range of aggressive and deviant behavior. Gang members were more likely than non-members to report having carried a firearm in public, fired a weapon for illegal/aggressive purposes or in social situations, and committed offenses against persons and property offenses. In addition, gang members were more likely to report having friends who had been violently victimized or who had shot another person and to



report that carrying a weapon was important to being accepted by their friends. Finally, self-reported gang members had a more limited sense of future than their peers, believing that they were more likely to be injured or killed by their mid-20s.

These findings are consistent with a wealth of other evidence linking family and peer relations to serious antisocial behavior (e.g., Loeber & Hay, 1997). Any effective violence prevention and intervention efforts that target high-risk youth, such as those in our sample, must comprehensively address known risk factors across the many contexts in which the youths interact (i.e., family, peer, school, and neighborhood).

### **Deletion of Participants for Invalid or Unreliable Answers**

Studies, such as this one, that rely primarily on self-report data, are limited by the very real potential of false reporting by participants. Some participants may have been motivated to exaggerate their claims of involvement in high risk, antisocial, or criminal behavior, while others may have under-reported such involvement. In the present study, we attempted to limit such instances by conducting individual, face-to-face interviews and by omitting participants who provided responses that were determined to be unreliable or invalid. It was our hope that youths would take the questions more seriously if they were presented in a context in which a researcher personally impressed upon them the importance of obtaining accurate and complete data and reassured the youths that their answers would be kept confidential, rather than if the questions were presented in a written survey and administered in a group format. Overall, 21.8% of the participants in our sample met at least one of the twelve criteria for deletion, by providing extreme or inconsistent responses. This percentage is

consistent with those deleted from the analyses of Cornell and Loper (1998) and Rosenblatt & Furlong (1997) in their surveys of school children. Although the methodology that was used in this study clearly does not eliminate the possibility of false or misleading responses, the rigorous screening procedures likely significantly increased the validity of the data. Future analyses will examine possible differences between those subjects who were deleted from our analyses and those who were not to determine if deleted subjects provided inflated reports of antisocial behavior and weapon possession.

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## Tables

**Table 1**  
**Questions Used as the Basis for Deleting Participants From the Final Analysis**

<b>Item #(s)</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b># Participants</b>
20b vs. 22a	Consistency (Reliability)	Indicated that they had “never” carried a gun (20b) but responded “yes” to ever having carried a gun as a weapon.	2
22b, 22c vs. 46	Consistency (Reliability)	Indicated that they had not fired a gun, either for hunting/sport (22b) or otherwise (22c) but said they had fired a gun in at least one situation (46).	4
22c vs. 46	Consistency (Reliability)	Indicated that he had not fired a gun other than for hunting/sport (22c) but said he had fired a gun in multiple non-hunting/sporting situations (46).	1
22c vs. 22g	Consistency (Reliability)	Indicated that he had not fired a gun (other than hunting or sport) (22c) but indicated that he had shot at someone with a gun (22g).	1
22g, 61, 84c	Consistency (Reliability)	Gave conflicting responses to whether they had ever “shot at someone with a gun” (22g), “shot at someone” (61), and “fired a gun at some other person” (84c).	20
27, 34, 41	Extreme answer (Validity)	Indicated that he had carried a handgun, rifle, and shotgun “many times” to school, a park, a friend’s house, a store or mall, on the street, and in a car.	1
66-b	Extreme answer (Validity)	Indicated that the number of family members who have shot someone > 2 SD above the mean (i.e., more than 5).	2
67-b	Extreme answer (Validity)	Indicated that the number of family members who have been shot and killed > 2 SD above the mean (i.e., more than 4).	1
70e	Extreme answer (Validity)	Indicated that they have been shot at “many times” while on school grounds or at a school activity.	7
70f	Extreme answer	Indicated that he had been stabbed/injured with a knife “many times” while on school grounds or at a school activity.	1

	(Validity)		
71e	Extreme answer (Validity)	Indicated that they had shot at someone "many times" on school grounds or at a school activity.	5
78	Extreme answer (Validity)	Responded that "all" of the kids at their school carried weapons to school, at least occasionally.	5



**Table 2**

**Information About Final Sample of Participants**

<b>Current charge</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>	<b>%</b>
<b>School weapon offense</b>	6	4.3
<b>Weapon offense (not school-related)</b>	50	35.7
<b>No weapon offense</b>	84	60.0
<b>Total</b>	140	100

<b>Ever Had a Weapons Referral?</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	69	49.3
<b>No</b>	71	50.7
<b>Total</b>	140	100

**Table 3**

**Percentages of Youths Referred for Different Types of Offenses**

	<u>n</u>	%
<b>At least one status offense<sup>1</sup></b>	40	29.0
<b>At least one other juvenile offense<sup>2</sup></b>	92	66.2
<b>At least one offense against public order<sup>2</sup></b>	96	69.1
<b>At least one property offense<sup>2</sup></b>	87	62.6
<b>At least one offense against persons<sup>2</sup></b>	90	64.7

<sup>1</sup>Valid N = 138

<sup>2</sup>Valid N = 139

**Table 4**

**Average Number of Referrals for Each Type of Offense**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b><u>SD</u></b>
<b>Total offenses<sup>1</sup></b>	7.73	1-32	6.19
<b>Status offenses<sup>2</sup></b>	.44	0-3	.77
<b>Other juvenile offenses<sup>1</sup></b>	1.73	0-10	2.07
<b>Offenses against public order<sup>1</sup></b>	2.32	0-13	2.62
<b>Property offenses<sup>1</sup></b>	1.94	0-11	2.35
<b>Offenses against persons<sup>1</sup></b>	1.08	0-5	1.12

<sup>1</sup>Valid N = 139

<sup>2</sup>Valid N = 138

**Table 5**

**Type of Most Recent Referral**

	<u>n</u>	%
<b>Status offense</b>	4	3.1
<b>Other juvenile offense</b>	34	26.6
<b>Offense against public order</b>	29	22.7
<b>Property offense</b>	18	14.1
<b>Offense against persons</b>	43	33.6

Valid N = 128



**Table 6**

**Ownership, Carrying, Use, and Access to Firearms**

	<b>Handgun % (<u>n</u>)</b>	<b>Rifle or Shotgun % (<u>n</u>)</b>
<b>Ever owned or possessed?</b>	80.7 (113)	63.6 (89)
<b>Ever carried?</b>	74.3 (104)	43.6 (61)
<b>Ever used to commit a crime?</b>	55.7 (78)	16.4 (23)
<b>Could have gotten one easily?</b>	86.4 (121)	78.6 (110)

N = 140

**Table 7**

**Means of Obtaining Most Recent Weapon**

<b>Means</b>	<b>Handgun (n=114)</b>	<b>Rifle (n=64)</b>	<b>Shotgun (n=73)</b>
<b>From a friend</b>	39.5 (45)	26.6 (17)	32.9 (24)
<b>From a family member</b>	13.2 (15)	21.9 (14)	23.3 (17)
<b>Through illegal means (fence, street, drug dealer, out of someone's home or car, junkie or crack head)</b>	36.8 (42)	31.3 (20)	32.9 (24)
<b>From a store/pawn shop</b>	7.0 (8)	15.6 (10)	5.5 (4)
<b>Other</b>	3.5 (4)	4.7 (3)	5.5 (4)

**Table 8**

**Means of Obtaining Weapons Upon Release from DJJ**

<b>Means</b>	<b>% <sup>1</sup> (n)</b>
<b>From a family member or friend</b>	40.0 (56)
<b>Through illegal means (steal from house or car, off the street, drug dealer, junkie, trade)</b>	30.7 (43)
<b>Youth already has a gun</b>	8.6 (12)
<b>Other</b>	8.6 (12)
<b>From a store/pawn shop</b>	3.6 (5)

<sup>1</sup>Total is less than 100%; 12 participants did not respond to this question.



**Table 9**

**Reasons for Carrying Firearms**

	<b>Handguns (<u>n</u> = 113) <u>M</u> <u>SD</u></b>	<b>Rifles (<u>n</u> = 64) <u>M</u> <u>SD</u></b>	<b>Shotguns (<u>n</u> = 74) <u>M</u> <u>SD</u></b>
<b>For hunting/target shooting</b>	1.26 (.56)	1.80 (.89)	1.61 (.84)
<b>To protect yourself</b>	2.50 (.67)	1.47 (.76)	1.89 (.90)
<b>To use to commit a crime</b>	1.55 (.72)	1.23 (.53)	1.55 (.78)
<b>Needed a gun to get somebody</b>	1.43 (.64)	1.22 (.52)	1.26 (.55)
<b>All your friends were carrying guns</b>	1.56 (.77)	1.11 (.40)	1.34 (.73)
<b>All your enemies were carrying guns</b>	2.10 (.86)	1.50 (.80)	1.69 (.89)
<b>It made you feel important</b>	1.47 (.70)	1.23 (.58)	1.28 (.63)
<b>To get respect from others</b>	1.60 (.79)	1.23 (.56)	1.39 (.70)
<b>To frighten or scare other people</b>	1.47 (.68)	1.25 (.50)	1.43 (.70)
<b>In your neighborhood it would be stupid not to carry guns</b>	1.74 (.86)	1.47 (.80)	1.64 (.88)
<b>In your school it would be stupid not to carry guns</b>	1.22 (.55)	1.09 (.34)	1.11 (.39)
<b>When one person starts bringing guns to school, everyone else has to</b>	1.21 (.49)	1.06 (.24)	1.05 (.23)
<b>To protect your family</b>	2.08 (.89)	1.75 (.88)	1.99 (.94)

(scale: 1 = not important, 2 = sort of important, 3 = very important)

**Table 10**

**Correlations Among Reasons for Carrying Handguns**

	hunting	protect.	crime	get some-body	friends carry guns	enemy. carry guns	feel import.	get respect	scare others	need to in my neigh.	need to in my school	when one person brings...	protect family
hunting	1.00	-.13	-.24*	-.14	-.11	-.22	-.06	-.09	-.08	-.01	.05	.04	.01
protect		1.00	.09	.19*	.02	.49**	.02	.15	.03	.40**	.13	.06	.50**
crime			1.00	.29**	.15	1.9*	.14	.12	.40**	.14	.28**	.20*	-.01
get some-body				1.00	.25**	.25**	.10	.28**	.37**	.17	.26**	.32**	.21**
friends carry					1.00	.19*	.54**	.48**	.32**	.23*	.04	.25**	.16
enem. carry						1.00	.11	.19*	.20*	.46*	.20*	.25**	.43**
feel import.							1.00	.61**	.40**	.05	.05	.04	.01
respect								1.00	.45**	.07	.31**	.11	.10
scare others									1.00	.10	.34**	.18	-.06
need to in my neigh.										1.00	.31**	.36**	.35**
need to in my school											1.00	.46**	.02
when one person brings...												100	.21*
protect family													

\*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

## Table 11

## Principal-Components Analysis: Reasons for Carrying Handguns

Component	Eigenvalue	% Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.55	29.57	29.57
2	2.03	16.91	46.48
3	1.44	12.03	58.51

Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization

Rotated Component Matrix

	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
To protect yourself	.04	<b>.79</b>	.07
To commit a crime	.13	-.04	<b>.65</b>
To get somebody	.25	.24	<b>.51</b>
All your friends were carrying guns	.74	.16	.11
All your enemies were carrying guns	.14	<b>.72</b>	.26
It made you feel important	<b>.87</b>	-.15	.04
To get respect	<b>.82</b>	.09	.16
To frighten other people	<b>.54</b>	-.11	<b>.57</b>
In your neighborhood it would be stupid not to carry guns	-.03	<b>.64</b>	.36
In your school it would be stupid not to carry guns	.03	.10	<b>.77</b>
When one person starts bringing guns to school, everyone else has to	-.09	.24	<b>.65</b>

Component 1: **Respect** (friends carried guns, to feel important, to get respect, to frighten others)

Component 2: **Protection** (protect yourself, enemies carried guns, in neighborhood it would be stupid not to carry guns, to protect family)

Component 3: **School/Crime** (at school it would be stupid not to, when one person brings guns to school everyone has to, to commit a crime, to get somebody)

**Table 12**

**Correlations Among Reasons for Carrying Rifles**

	hunting	protect.	crime	get some-body	friends carry guns	enemy. carry guns	feel import.	get respect	scare others	need to in my neigh.	need to in my school	when one person brings..	protect family
hunting	1.00	-.28*	-.17	-.07	-.07	-.23	-.06	-.16	-.10	-.31*	-.20	-.16	-.11
protect		1.00	.28*	.26*	.30*	.66**	.22	.30*	.02	.66**	.38**	.18	.47**
crime			1.00	.62**	.18	.47**	.18	.24	.31*	.38**	.14	.13	.24
get some-body				1.00	.04	.35**	.14	.32*	.27*	.36**	-.03	.02	.16
friends carry					1.00	.47**	.02	.17	.25*	.33**	.15	.09	.22
enemy. carry						1.00	.26*	.34**	.24	.78**	.35**	.16	.53**
feel import.							1.00	.61**	.23	.17	.36**	.56**	.52**
respect								1.00	.30*	.29*	.13	.48**	.38**
scare others									1.00	.22	.23	.26*	.18
need to in my neigh.										1.00	.48**	.26*	.52**
need to in my school											1.00	.69**	.24
when one person												1.00	.23
protect													1.00

family														
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\*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)  
\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

**Table 13**

**Principal-Components Analysis: Reasons for Carrying Rifle**

Component	Eigenvalue	% Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.48	37.37	37.37
2	1.77	14.79	52.15
3	1.43	11.88	64.03
4	1.06	8.79	72.82

Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization.

	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
<b>To protect yourself</b>	<b>.85</b>	.16	.05	.03
<b>To commit a crime</b>	.27	.08	<b>.77</b>	.10
<b>To get somebody</b>	.19	.12	<b>.83</b>	-.13
<b>All your friends were carrying guns</b>	<b>.46</b>	-.23	.14	<b>.47</b>
<b>All your enemies were carrying guns</b>	.84	.10	.31	.08
<b>It made you feel important</b>	.12	<b>.89</b>	.07	.11
<b>To get respect from others</b>	.17	<b>.73</b>	.35	.08
<b>To frighten or scare other people</b>	-.08	.13	<b>.55</b>	<b>.61</b>
<b>In your neighborhood it would be stupid not to carry guns</b>	.83	.11	.21	.22
<b>In your school it would be stupid not to carry guns</b>	.36	.32	-.21	.69
<b>When one person starts bringing guns to school, everyone else has to</b>	.05	<b>.66</b>	-.10	<b>.61</b>
<b>To protect your family</b>	<b>.61</b>	<b>.50</b>	.08	-.08

Component 1: **Protection** (protect yourself, enemies carried guns, stupid not to in neighborhood, protect family)

Component 2: **Respect** (feel important, get respect)

Component 3: **Engage in Criminal or Aggressive Behavior** (commit crimes, get someone, frighten someone)

Component 4: **School/Frighten Others** (at school it would be stupid not to, frighten someone)

Table 14

Correlations Among Reasons for Carrying Shotguns

	hunting	protect.	crime	get some-body	friends carry guns	enemy. carry guns	feel import.	get respect	scare others	need to in my neigh.	need to in my school	when one person brings to school...	protect family
hunting	1.00	-.27*	-.31**	-.14	-.07	-.28	-.05	-.06	-.20	-.20	-.08	.04	-.23*
protect		1.00	.34**	.39**	.35**	.71**	.27*	.24*	.14	.52**	.15	.16	.37**
crime			1.00	.46**	.32**	.31**	.23**	.30**	.33**	.34**	.16	.14	.29*
get some-body				1.00	.40**	.31**	.62**	.52**	.45**	.36**	.06	.33**	.03
friends carry					1.00	.40**	.54**	.44**	.43**	.54**	.40**	.30**	.31**
enemy. carry						1.00	.33**	.24*	.15	.72**	.30*	.29*	.39**
feel import.							1.00	.86**	.62**	.21	.21	.37**	.12
respect								1.00	.63**	.12	.14	.30*	.26*
scare others									1.00	.13	.18	.28*	.17
need to in my neigh.										1.00	.35**	.24*	.40**
need to in my school											1.00	.40**	.15
when one person...												1.00	.003
protect family													1.00

\*\* p < .01 (2-tailed)

\* p < .05 (2-tailed)



**Table 15**

**Principal-Components Analysis: Reasons for Carrying Shotgun**

Component	Eigenvalue	% Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.18	26.47	26.47
2	2.90	24.14	50.61
3	1.73	14.41	65.02

Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization.

Rotated Component Matrix

	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
To protect yourself	.17	<b>.80</b>	.04
To use to commit a crime	.40	<b>.50</b>	-.07
Needed a gun to get somebody	<b>.71</b>	.30	.05
All your friends were carrying guns	.45	.41	<b>.45</b>
All your enemies were carrying guns	.11	<b>.81</b>	.30
It made you feel important	<b>.88</b>	.11	.23
To get respect from others	<b>.88</b>	.11	.09
To frighten or scare other people	<b>.79</b>	.04	.14
In your neighborhood it would be stupid not to carry guns	.04	<b>.79</b>	.37
In your school it would be stupid not to carry guns	.01	.16	<b>.73</b>
When one person starts bringing guns to school, everyone else has to	.30	.06	<b>.73</b>
To protect your family	.08	<b>.65</b>	-.06

Component 1: **Respect/Aggression** (get respect, feel important, to get somebody, frighten or scare others)

Component 2: **Protection/School** (protect yourself, protect family, stupid not to in neighborhood, all my enemies carried guns, to commit a crime)

Component 3: **Peers/School** (at school it would be stupid not to, when one person brings guns to school everyone has to, all my friends carry guns)

Table 16

Frequency of Carrying Guns To Various Locations

	<b>Handguns (<u>N</u> = 140)</b>	<b>Rifles (<u>N</u> = 139)</b>	<b>Shotguns (<u>N</u> = 139)</b>
	<b><u>M</u> (<u>SD</u>)</b>	<b><u>M</u> (<u>SD</u>)</b>	<b><u>M</u> (<u>SD</u>)</b>
<b>School</b>	.64 (1.03)	.03 (.24)	.09 (.40)
<b>Park</b>	1.31 (1.27)	.22 (.65)	.32 (.79)
<b>Friend's house</b>	1.84 (1.31)	.68 (1.10)	.86 (1.18)
<b>Store or mall</b>	.99 (1.23)	.04 (.32)	.10 (.44)
<b>On the street</b>	2.11 (1.25)	.34 (.83)	.73 (1.15)
<b>In a car</b>	1.89 (1.33)	.65 (1.08)	.95 (1.26)

Based on scores of 0-3, where 0 = "never," 1 = "just once," 2 = "a few times," and 3 = "many times"

Table 17

Correlations Among Locations for Carrying a Handgun

	School	Park	Friend's	Store	Street	Car
School	1.00	.50**	.40**	.60**	.40**	.45**
Park		1.00	.57**	.54**	.64**	.59**
Friend's			1.00	.56**	.81**	.78**
Store				1.00	.52**	.57**
Street					1.00	.81**
Car						1.00

\*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

Table 18

Correlations Among Locations for Carrying a Rifle

	School	Park	Friend's	Store	Street	Car
School	1.00	.24**	.09	.56**	.17*	.27**
Park		1.00	.30**	.31**	.49**	.29**
Friend's			1.00	.06	.46**	.60**
Store				1.00	.28*	.30**
Street					1.00	.49**
Car						1.00

\*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

Table 19

Correlations Among Locations for Carrying a Shotgun

	School	Park	Friend's	Store	Street	Car
School	1.00	.18*	.23**	.49**	.18*	.27**
Park		1.00	.37**	.35**	.45*	.37**
Friend's			1.00	.25**	.63**	.73**
Store				1.00	.30**	.36**
Street					1.00	.68**
Car						1.00

\*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

Table 20

Likelihood of Carrying a Gun in Specific Situations in the Year Before Entering DJJ Facility

Situation	Not likely % (n)	Somewhat likely % (n)	Very likely % (n)
Protect myself	12.9 (18)	20.7 (29)	53.6 (75)
Strange part of town	21.4 (30)	16.4 (23)	49.3 (69)
At night	16.4 (23)	22.9 (32)	47.9 (67)
Hanging out with friends	30.7 (43)	25.7 (36)	30.7 (43)
Out drinking	57.1 (80)	11.4 (16)	17.9 (25)
With others carrying guns	33.6 (47)	22.9 (32)	30.7 (43)
Doing a drug deal	37.1 (52)	10.7 (15)	39.3 (55)
Planning to commit crime	41.4 (58)	11.4 (16)	33.6 (47)

(N = 140; **Note:** Totals do not equal 100% because not all participants answered this set of questions)

Table 21

Correlations Among Situations in which Youths Likely to Carry Guns in Year Before Placement in DJJ

	Protect self	Strange part of town	At night	Hang out with friends	Out drinking	Others carrying guns	Doing drug deal	Plan to commit crime
Protect self	1.00	.670*	.648*	.543*	.378*	.464*	.577*	.375*
Strange part of town		1.00	.711*	.580*	.439*	.525*	.510*	.348*
At night			1.00	.614*	.416*	.520*	.505*	.376*
Hang out with friends				1.00	.503*	.512*	.501*	.331*
Out drinking					1.00	.470*	.523*	.439*
Others carrying guns						1.00	.501*	.330*
Doing drug deal							1.00	.306*
Plan to commit crime								1.00

p < .01(2-tailed)

Table 22

**Principal Components Analysis: Carrying Guns in Multiple Situations**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Loading</b>
Protect myself	.80
Strange part of town	.82
At night	.82
Hanging out with friends	.80
Out drinking	.69
With others carrying guns	.73
Doing a drug deal	.75
Planning to commit a crime	.57



**Table 23**

**How Often Have You Fired A Gun in the Following Situations?  
(N=140)**

	<b>Never % (n)</b>	<b>Just once % (n)</b>	<b>A few times % (n)</b>	<b>Many times</b>
<b>Hunting/target shooting</b>	38.6 (54)	6.4 (9)	14.3 (20)	29.3 (41)
<b>Self-defense</b>	40.7 (57)	5.7 (8)	27.1 (38)	15.0 (21)
<b>Hanging out with friends</b>	15.7 (22)	6.4 (9)	32.9 (46)	33.6 (47)
<b>Just horsing around</b>	37.9 (53)	7.9 (11)	25.0 (35)	17.9 (25)
<b>Drunk or high</b>	45.0 (63)	7.9 (11)	19.3 (27)	16.4 (23)
<b>Scare somebody</b>	48.6 (68)	11.4 (16)	18.6 (26)	10.0 (14)
<b>During a fight</b>	50.7 (71)	5.7 (8)	13.6 (19)	18.6 (26)
<b>During a crime</b>	50.7 (71)	9.3 (13)	15.7 (22)	12.9 (18)
<b>During drug deals</b>	52.1 (73)	7.1 (10)	14.3 (20)	15.0 (21)
<b>Get away from police</b>	72.1 (101)	5.0 (7)	7.1 (10)	4.8 (6)

**NOTE:** 16 youths were not asked this set of questions because they indicated they had no firearms experience. Only 5 youths reported “never” having fired a gun in any situation.

Table 24

How Often Have You Fired a Gun in the Following Situations?  
(N=124)

	Hunting /target	Self-defense	Hanging out	Horsing around	Drunk or high	Scare	During Fight	During Crime	Drug deal	Get away
Hunting/target	1.00	-.045	-.178*	-.128	-.004	-.042	-.107	.011	-.019	-.047
Self-defense		1.00	.398**	.113	.389**	.395**	.592**	.547**	.525**	.433**
Hanging out			1.00	.570**	.474**	.454**	.371**	.270**	.317**	.283**
Horsing around				1.00	.351**	.371**	.145	.241**	.055	.100
Drunk or high					1.00	.525**	.405**	.395**	.414**	.528**
Scare						1.00	.519**	.562**	.271**	.313**
During Fight							1.00	.466**	.503**	.406**
During Crime								1.00	.394**	.405**
Drug deal									1.00	.369**
Get										1.00

<b>away</b>										
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\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$

Table 25

Principal Components Analysis: Frequency of Firing a Gun

Component	Eigenvalue	% Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.15	46.06	46.06
2	1.33	14.77	60.82

Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization

	Component 1	Component 2
During a crime	<b>.673</b>	.282
During drug deals	<b>.747</b>	.038
During a fight	<b>.760</b>	.203
Trying to get away from police	<b>.664</b>	.151
In self-defense	<b>.799</b>	.141
Hanging out with friends	.275	<b>.777</b>
When just horsing around	-.076	<b>.896</b>
To scare somebody	.488	<b>.588</b>
When drunk or high	.532	<b>.535</b>

Component 1: **Illegal/Aggressive Activity** (committing crime, dealing drugs, fighting, running from police, defending oneself)

Component 2: **Socialization/Acceptance** (hanging out with friends, horsing around, to scare somebody, when drunk or high)

**Table 26**

**How Youths Learned to Use Guns**  
(N=121)\*

	<b>Percentage (<u>n</u>)</b>
<b>Taught myself</b>	36.4 (44)
<b>Relative taught me</b>	34.7 (42)
<b>Friend taught me</b>	30.6 (37)
<b>TV/movies</b>	8.3 (10)
<b>Other</b>	5.0 (6)

Note: Total > 100%; 18 youths provided more than 1 response

**Table 27**

**How Youths Learned to Use Guns - By Weapons Referral Category**

	<b>Ever Had Weapons Charges</b> <b>(<u>n</u>=65)</b> <b>% (<u>n</u>)</b>	<b>Never Had Weapons Charges</b> <b>(<u>n</u>=56)</b> <b>% (<u>n</u>)</b>
<b>Taught myself</b>	46.2 (30)	23.2 (13)
<b>Relative taught me</b>	21.5 (14)	39.3 (22)
<b>Friend taught me</b>	26.2 (17)	32.1 (18)
<b>TV/movies</b>	3.1 (2)	0.0 (0)
<b>Other</b>	3.1 (2)	5.4 (3)

<sup>2</sup> (4, n = 121) = 10.11, *p* <.05. Based only on participants' first response.

**Table 28**

**Household Members Owning Guns**  
(N=140)

	<b>% (n)</b>
<b>Father owns gun</b>	30.0 (42)
<b>Mother owns gun</b>	8.6 (12)
<b>Both parents own guns</b>	2.9 (4)
<b>Other relative owns gun</b>	15.0 (21)
<b>Non-relative owns gun</b>	2.9 (4)
<b>Both parents and either relative or non-relative own guns</b>	0.0

Comparison of household relatives by youths' weapons referral status (Ever Weapons vs. Never Weapons):

Fathers:  $\chi^2(1, N = 136) = 3.03, ns$   
 Mothers:  $\chi^2(1, N = 137) = 1.40, ns$   
 Other Relative:  $\chi^2(1, N = 139) = .02, ns$

**Table 29**

**Types of Guns Owned by Relatives in Youth's Household**

	<b>Father</b> ( <u>n</u> =39) <sup>1</sup>  % ( <u>n</u> ) <sup>2</sup>	<b>Mother</b> ( <u>n</u> =13) <sup>1</sup>  % ( <u>n</u> ) <sup>3</sup>	<b>Other Relative</b> ( <u>n</u> =20) <sup>1</sup>  % ( <u>n</u> )	<b>Non-Relative</b> ( <u>n</u> =4)  % ( <u>n</u> )
<b>Type of Gun</b>				
Rifle or Shotgun	24.3 (34)	1.4 (2)	4.3 (6)	2.1 (3)
Handgun	15.7 (22)	8.6 (12)	10.0 (14)	.7 (1)

<sup>1</sup> Number of youths who knew what types of guns each relative owned

<sup>2</sup> 17 youths reported fathers owning at least two guns; numbers reflect a maximum of two responses per youth

<sup>3</sup> 1 youth reported mother owning at least two guns; numbers reflect a maximum of two responses per youth

**Table 30**

**Reasons Household Members Own Guns**

	<b>Fathers</b> ( <u>n</u> =40)	<b>Mothers</b> ( <u>n</u> =12)	<b>Other Relative</b> ( <u>n</u> =16)	<b>Non-relative</b> ( <u>n</u> =4)
	% <sup>1</sup>	%	% <sup>2</sup>	%
Protection	57.5	91.7	93.8	25.0
Hunting/Sport	45.0	0.0	12.5	75.0
Hobby/Collector	15.0	0.0	6.3	0.0
Work/Profession	5.0	8.3	0.0	0.0
Youth doesn't know	2.5	0.0	6.3	0.0

<sup>1</sup> Total > 100% – 10 youths gave two reasons for fathers

<sup>2</sup> Total > 100% – 3 youths gave two reasons for other household relatives



**Table 31**

**Victimization Experience**

	<b>Total Sample (<u>N</u> = 140)</b>
<b>Ever had this experience...</b>	<b>%</b>
Been threatened with a gun	67.9
Been shot at	63.6
Been shot	13.6
Witness serious wounding or killing by a weapon	71.4
Family member been shot at	51.4
Friends been shot at	79.3
Family member been shot and killed	25.0
Friends been shot and killed	54.3

**Table 32**

**Frequency of Family and Friends Victimization**

	Number of Victims		Number of Victims
	Minimum (# youths reporting)	Maximum (# youths reporting)	Mode
<b>Family members shot at</b>	1 (36)	25 (1)	1
<b>Friends shot at</b>	1 (8)	40 (2)	2
<b>Family members shot and killed</b>	1 (24)	4 (1)	1
<b>Friends shot and killed</b>	1 (39)	8 (1)	1

**Note:** Caution should be taken in interpreting individual items in this table. The number of times various events are reported to have happened may be subject to estimation and/or exaggeration. Ranges for individual items are reported so that the reader may assess the likelihood of occurrence

**Table 33**

**Youth's Sense of Future**

	<b>Not Likely</b>	<b>Somewhat Likely</b>	<b>Very Likely</b>
<b>How likely that this will happen to you by the time you are 25?</b>	<b>%<sup>1</sup> (n)</b>	<b>%<sup>1</sup> (n)</b>	<b>%<sup>1</sup> (n)</b>
Be shot with a gun	58.6 (82)	30.0 (42)	10.0 (14)
Be stabbed with a knife	76.4 (107)	14.3 (20)	7.1 (10)
Be dead	73.6 (103)	20.7 (29)	2.9 (4)

<sup>1</sup>Totals are less than 100% because of missing responses from some participants.

**Table 34**

**Correlations for Sense of Future Variables**

	<b>Shot by 25</b>	<b>Stabbed by 25</b>	<b>Dead by 25</b>
<b>Shot by 25</b>	1.00	.503**	.535**
<b>Stabbed by 25</b>		1.00	.417**
<b>Dead by 25</b>			1.00

\*\*p < .01 (2-tailed)

Table 35

Have These Things Happened To You While On School Grounds or at a School Activity?

	At least once %	At least once <u>n</u>
Been threatened with a gun	35.3	49
Been threatened with a knife	33.8	47
Been threatened with another weapon	32.6	45
Been beaten up	46.8	65
Been shot at	10.1	14
Been stabbed or injured with a knife	9.3	13
Been injured with another weapon	22.3	31

Valid N = 139

Table 36

Correlations Among School Victimization Items

	Threatened w/ a gun	Threatened w/ a knife	Threatened w/ another weapon	Beaten up	Shot at	Stabbed w/ a knife	Injured w/ another weapon
Threatened w/ a gun	1.00	.57**	.57**	.28**	.27**	.25**	.40**
Threatened w/ a knife		1.00	.59**	.21*	.22*	.41**	.40**
Threatened w/ another weapon			1.00	.40**	.17*	.18*	.58**
Beaten up				1.00	.06	.12	.35**
Shot at					1.00	.32**	.23**
Stabbed w/ a knife						1.00	.20**
Injured w/ another weapon							1.00

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

\*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

**Table 37**

**In the Year Before You Came Here, Did You Know Anyone Who Carried a Gun With Them To Your School?**

	<b>%</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>
<b>No one</b>	34.3	48
<b>One person</b>	13.6	19
<b>A few people</b>	35.7	50
<b>Many people</b>	15.7	22

Valid N = 139

**Table 38**

**How Many Of The Other Kids In Your School Carry A Weapon To School, At Least Occasionally?**

	<b>%</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>
<b>None</b>	13.6	19
<b>Only a few</b>	36.4	51
<b>Many do, but most don't</b>	21.4	30
<b>Most</b>	25.0	35

Valid N = 136

**Table 39**

**In The Year Before You Came Here, How Often Would You Carry A Gun To School?**

	<b>%</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>
<b>Never</b>	73.2	101
<b>Now and then</b>	17.4	24
<b>Most of the time</b>	6.5	9
<b>All of the time</b>	2.9	4

Valid N = 138

**Table 40**

**Frequency With Which Youth Have...**

	<b>At least once %</b>	<b>At least once <u>n</u></b>
<b>Asked others in school to carry a gun for them</b>	12.9	18
<b>Kept a gun hidden in their school locker</b>	11.5	16
<b>Kept a gun hidden somewhere else at school</b>	10.1	14
<b>Had a gun taken away by school officials</b>	7.2	10

Valid N = 139

**Table 41**

**In The Year Before You Came Here, How Often Would You Carry A Weapon Other Than A Gun When You Were at School?**

	<u>n</u>	%
<b>Never</b>	50.3	69
<b>Now and then</b>	30.2	42
<b>Most of the time</b>	10.8	15
<b>All of the time</b>	8.6	12

Valid N = 139



**Table 42**

**Have You Done These Things While on School Grounds?**

	<b>Never % (n)</b>	<b>At least once % (n)</b>	<b>More than once % (n)</b>
<b>Threatened someone with a gun</b>	74.8 (104)	25.2 (35)	15.8 (22)
<b>Threatened someone with a knife</b>	82.7 (115)	17.3 (24)	9.4 (13)
<b>Threatened someone with another weapon</b>	75.5 (105)	24.5 (34)	17.3 (24)
<b>Beaten someone up</b>	17.3 (24)	82.7 (115)	73.4 (102)
<b>Shot at someone</b>	91.4 (127)	8.6 (12)	5.0 (7)
<b>Stabbed or injured someone with a knife</b>	92.8 (129)	7.2 (10)	2.2 (3)
<b>Injured someone with another weapon</b>	80.6 (112)	19.4 (27)	13.7 (19)

Valid N = 139

**Table 43**  
**Correlations Among “Victimization of Others At School” Items**

	Threatened someone w/ a gun	Threatened someone w/ a knife	Threatened someone w/ another weapon	Beat someone up	Shot at someone w/a gun	Stabbed someone w/ a knife	Injured someone w/ another weapon
Threatened someone w/ a gun	1.00	.20	.49**	.29**	.47**	.29**	.35**
Threatened someone w/ a knife		1.00	.42**	.27**	.18**	.52**	.31**
Threatened someone w/ another weapon			1.00	.29**	.21*	.34**	.64**
Beat someone up				1.00	.06	.08	.29**
Shot at someone w/ a gun					1.00	.48**	.28**
Stabbed someone w/ a knife						1.00	.37**
Injured someone w/ another weapon							

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)  
\*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

**Table 44**

**Percentage of Youth Who Reported Having Ever...**

	<b>Never % (<u>n</u>)</b>	<b>Once % (<u>n</u>)</b>	<b>A few times % (<u>n</u>)</b>	<b>Many times % (<u>n</u>)</b>
<b>Hit a teacher or other school official</b>	79.1 (110)	15.1 (21)	5.0 (7)	.7 (1)
<b>Been suspended from school</b>	3.6 (5)	5.0 (7)	24.5 (34)	66.9 (93)
<b>Been expelled from school</b>	24.5 (34)	33.8 (47)	36.7 (51)	5.0 (7)

Valid N = 139

**Table 45**

**Reasons for Expulsion From School**

	<b>%</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>
<b>Fighting</b>	40.6	41
<b>Having a weapon at school</b>	12.9	13
<b>Being tardy/truant</b>	9.9	10
<b>Assaulting a teacher/school official</b>	8.9	9
<b>Possession or use of drugs</b>	8.9	9
<b>Verbally assaulting a teacher</b>	6.9	7
<b>Selling drugs</b>	5.0	5
<b>Disrupting class</b>	4.0	4
<b>Smoking</b>	4.0	4
<b>Assaulting a student</b>	4.0	4
<b>Arbitrary or unfair reason</b>	2.0	2
<b>Other reason</b>	20.8	21

Valid n = 101

Up to two responses were coded for each participant

**Table 46**

**Self-Reported Delinquency**

	<b>Total Sample (N=139)</b>
<b>How frequently youth has done each of these...<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>M (SD)</b>
Broken into someone else's locked house or car to steal something	1.25 (1.18)
Taken someone's car without permission	1.11 (1.18)
Fired a gun at another person	1.21 (1.21)
Carried a razor, switchblade, or gun with intention of using it in a fight	.96 (1.18)
Pulled a knife, gun, or other weapon on someone just to let them know you meant business	1.19 (1.20)
Beat up someone so badly they probably needed a doctor <sup>2</sup>	1.19 (1.12)
Cursed or threatened an adult in a loud and mean way	1.90 (1.16)
Hit one of his parents	.22 (.61)
Gone to school drunk, high or on drugs	1.74 (1.25)
Stolen something worth more than \$50	1.63 (1.25)
Been arrested or picked up police	2.06 (.81)
Stolen something specifically because needed money for alcohol or drugs	.41 (.92)
Been involved in dealing drugs, as either a buyer, seller, or worker	1.78 (1.32)

<sup>1</sup> 0=Never, 1=Just Once, 2=A Few Times, 3=Many Times

<sup>2</sup> N = 138

Table 47

Correlations Among Various Types of Self-Reported Delinquency

	Broke in to steal	Car theft	Fired gun at person	Carried weapon to fight	Pulled weapon on someone	Beat up someone	Threatened adult	Hit parent	Drunk/ drugs at school	Stole > \$50	Picked up by police	Stole for drug money	Dealt drugs
Broke in to steal	1.00	.598**	.378**	.399**	.367**	.508**	.316**	.085	.414**	.646**	.256**	.284**	.209*
Car theft		1.00	.403**	.403**	.452**	.499**	.341**	-.073	.402**	.518**	.362**	.191*	.280**
Fired gun at person			1.00	.599**	.673**	.634**	.289**	.027	.505**	.239**	.399**	.052	.559**
Carried weapon to fight				1.00	.561**	.605**	.252**	.124	.377**	.280**	.282**	.123	.315**
Pulled weapon on someone					1.00	.597**	.381**	.063	.495**	.339**	.413**	.081	.463**
Beat up someone						1.00	.389**	.099	.493**	.362**	.386**	.058	.387**
Threatened adult							1.00	.133	.429**	.396**	.275**	.168*	.256**

<b>Hit parent</b>								1.00	-.107	.059	-.040	.022	-.012
<b>Drunk/ drugs at school</b>									1.00	.394**	.329**	.282**	.550**
<b>Stole &gt; \$50</b>										1.00	.285**	.373**	.156
<b>Picked up by police</b>											1.00	.151	.437**
<b>Stole for drug money</b>												1.00	.242**
<b>Dealt drugs</b>													1.00

\*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)



Table 48

Principal Components Analysis: \* Self-Reported Delinquency

Component	Eigenvalue	% Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.01	25.12	25.12
2	2.61	21.71	46.83
3	2.12	17.68	64.50

Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization

	Comp 1	Comp 2	Comp 3
Fired a gun at some other person	<b>.78</b>	.02	.39
Carried a razor, switchblade, or gun to use in a fight	<b>.72</b>	.26	.13
Beat up somebody so badly they probably needed a doctor	<b>.75</b>	.35	.19
Pulled knife, gun, or other weapon on someone just to let them know you meant business	<b>.72</b>	.21	.35
Stolen something worth > \$50	.08	<b>.86</b>	.15
Broken into locked house or car to steal something	.31	<b>.80</b>	.05
Taken someone's car without permission	.42	<b>.66</b>	.11
Stolen something specifically because needed money for alcohol or drugs	-.38	.48	<b>.58</b>
Cursed or threatened an adult in a loud and mean way	.23	<b>.43</b>	.32
Been involved in dealing drugs, as either a buyer, seller, or worker	.34	-.04	<b>.81</b>
Gone to school drunk, high or on drugs	.34	.33	<b>.62</b>
Been arrested or picked up by police	.33	.15	<b>.53</b>

Component 1: **Offenses Against Persons/Aggressive** (fired weapon, carried weapon for fighting, beat up another person, pulled weapon on someone)

Component 2: **Property Offenses/Nonaggressive** (stealing, breaking into homes and cars, curse adults)

Component 3:

**Drug Involvement/Nonaggressive** (drug dealing, substance abuse, stole money for drugs, arrested by police)

**Table 49**

**Involvement in Dealing Guns  
(buying, selling, trading)  
(19.3%, N = 27)**

<b>Youth's Part in Dealing Guns</b>	
	<b>% (<u>n</u>)<sup>1</sup></b>
Obtained and sold	25.9 (7)
Obtained only	37.0 (10)
Sold only	25.9 (7)
Other	11.1 (3)

**Table 50**

<b>Where Do Guns Come From? (<u>N</u> = 25)</b>	
	<b>% (<u>n</u>)</b>
Out -of-state	36.0 (9)
People's houses or cars	24.0 (6)
In-state, source not specified	20.0 (5)
Pawnshops or other stores	16.0 (4)
Both in-state and out-of-state	4.0 (1)

**Table 51**

**Youths' Attitudes Towards Carrying and Using Weapons  
(N = 139)**

	<b>Strongly Disagree %</b>	<b>Disagree %</b>	<b>Agree %</b>	<b>Strongly Agree %</b>
In my crowd, if you don't have a gun, you don't get respect	45.3	41.0	12.9	.7
It is OK to shoot someone to get something you really want	59.7	31.7	7.9	.7
It is OK to shoot someone who doesn't belong in your neighborhood	58.3	31.7	8.6	1.4
My friends would look down on me if I did not carry a gun	61.9	30.2	7.2	.7
It is OK to shoot someone who does something to insult you	44.6	33.8	17.3	4.3
It is OK to shoot someone who has stolen something from you	31.7	30.9	24.5	12.9
Carrying weapons to school is no big deal	54.7	26.6	14.4	4.3

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

**Table 52**

**Pearson Correlations Among Attitude Variables**

	In my crowd-gun=respect	OK to shoot-get what you want	OK to shoot-doesn't belong in neighborhood	Friends look down on you	OK to shoot-insults	OK to shoot-someone who steals from you	Weapons to school-no big deal
In my crowd-gun=respect	1.00	.244**	.195*	.487**	.264*	.226**	.176*
OK to shoot-get what you want		1.00	.725**	.255**	.590**	.462**	.268**
OK to shoot-doesn't belong in neighborhood			1.00	.220**	.637**	.575**	.294**
Friends look down on you				1.00	.253**	.190*	.169*
OK to shoot-insults					1.00	.598**	.159
OK to shoot-someone who steals from you						1.00	.195*
Weapons to school-no big deal							1.00

\*\* p < .01 (2-tailed)

\* p < .05 (2-tailed)

Table 53

Principal Components Analysis: Attitudes Towards Carrying and Using Weapons

Component	Eigenvalue	% Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.76	46.04	46.04
2	1.53	25.45	71.49

Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization

	Component 1	Component 2
It is OK to shoot someone who doesn't belong in your neighborhood	<b>.88</b>	.09
It is OK to shoot someone who does something to insult you	<b>.83</b>	.18
It is OK to shoot someone to get something you really want	<b>.82</b>	.17
It is OK to shoot someone who has stolen something from you	<b>.77</b>	.11
In my crowd, if you don't have a gun, you don't get respect	.14	<b>.85</b>
My friends would look down on me if I did not carry a gun	.14	<b>.85</b>

Component 1: **Acceptability of Using Guns** (OK to shoot because: person doesn't belong in neighborhood, someone insults you, get something you want, someone has stolen from you)

Component 2: **Social Value of Carrying Guns** (Youth's friends would not respect him and would look down on him if he didn't carry a gun)

**Table 54**

**Youths' Gang Involvement**

<b>Number of Youths Who Have Ever Belonged to a Gang</b>	$\underline{n} = 45$ (32.1%)
<b>Age when first joined a gang</b>	range: 7-17
<b>Average age when first joined a gang</b>	12.7 years (SD = 2.22)

**Table 55**

**Organization of Gangs**

<b>Degree of Organization<sup>1</sup></b>	
<b>Just a bunch of people</b>	22.2% ( $\underline{n} = 10$ )
<b>An organized gang</b>	77.8% ( $\underline{n} = 35$ )
<b>Size of Gang<sup>2</sup></b>	
<b>Mean</b>	113.3
<b>Median</b>	35
<b>Range</b>	3-1,000

<sup>1</sup> Valid  $\underline{n} = 45$

<sup>2</sup> Valid  $\underline{n} = 43$

**Table 56**

**Characteristics of Gangs**

<b>Gang had...</b>	<b>%</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>
<b>A name</b>	84.4	38
<b>An official leader</b>	75.6	34
<b>Stash of guns for members' use</b>	64.4	29
<b>Special jackets, symbols, shoes, etc., that only members could wear</b>	77.8	35
<b>Its own territory or turf</b>	68.9	31

Valid n =45



**Table 57**

**Activities of Youths' Gang or Group**

<b>Was gang/group ever involved in...</b>	<b>Involvement in Activity <u>M (SD)</u></b>	<b>Involved in Activity at Least Once % (<u>n</u>)</b>
<b>Stealing cars</b>	1.53 (1.38)	60.0 (27)
<b>Doing drugs</b>	2.44 (1.10)	84.4 (38)
<b>Selling drugs</b>	2.36 (1.15)	82.2 (37)
<b>Stealing guns</b>	1.78 (1.22)	71.1 (32)
<b>Buying &amp; selling guns</b>	1.71 (1.29)	66.7 (45)
<b>Shooting guns</b>	2.40 (1.10)	84.4 (38)
<b>Breaking into houses</b>	1.67 (1.24)	68.9 (31)
<b>Robbing stores/people</b>	1.76 (1.23)	71.1 (32)
<b>Fighting other gangs</b>	2.31 (1.06)	86.7 (39)
<b>Beating up people</b>	2.33 (.93)	91.1 (41)

Valid n =45

0=Never, 1=Just Once, 2=A Few Times, 3=Many Times

**Table 58**

**Violent Activity/Experiences of Gang Members and Nonmembers Friends and Families**

	<b>% (<u>n</u>) Gang Members saying “yes”</b>	<b>% (<u>n</u>) Non-member saying “yes”</b>
<b>Friend has been shot at</b>	90.9 (40)	76.1 (70)*
<b>Friend has shot someone</b>	72.7 (32)	49.5 (45)**
<b>Friend has been shot and killed</b>	68.9 (31)	47.8 (44)*
<b>Family member has been shot at</b>	37.5 (27)	27.0 (17)
<b>Family member has shot someone</b>	32.3 (10)	31.7 (33)
<b>Family member shot and killed</b>	41.2 (14)	30.1 (31)

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

Table 59

What Do You Think Could Be Done To Keep Kids From Using Weapons?

	% (n)
Early intervention/prevention programs	28.6 (40)
Stricter regulation of weapons/access to weapons	20.7 (29)
Nothing can be done	16.4 (23)
More parental involvement/supervision	12.9 (18)
Stricter punishment for weapons violations	7.1 (10)
I don't know	5.7 (8)
Increased surveillance at school	5.0 (7)
Neighborhood improvement/increase safety in neighborhood	4.3 (6)
Stricter regulation of other illegal/antisocial behavior (e.g., drugs, gangs)	2.9 (4)
Teach kids self defense	.7 (1)
Other	5.7 (8)

Up to 4 responses were coded for each participant.

N = 140

## Appendix A

## Appendix B