Journal of Child and Family Studies, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1996, pp. 323-336

Homicide by Juvenile Girls

Ann B. Loper, Ph.D.,[1] and Dewey G. Cornell, Ph.D.[2]

We investigated offense characteristics for a national sample of 38,749 homicide arrestees identified in the FBI Supplemental Homicide Reports for 1984 and 1993. Analyses indicated little change from 1984 to 1993 in the circumstances of homicides committed by adolescent girls; however, there were consistent offense differences between girls and boys, and between girls and women. Homicides by adolescent girls were more likely than those committed by boys to involve interpersonal conflict rather than a criminal motive such as robbery. Girls were more likely than boys to use a knife rather than a firearm and their victims were more likely to be under the age of 13 years. Compared to women (18 years or older), girls were more likely to act with an accomplice and their victims were more likely to be female and between 13 and 20 years of age. Results were inconsistent with a stereotypic masculinization theory of the increase in female violence, but provide indirect support for the importance of domestic stress and relational conflict experienced by adolescent girls. Overall, this study supports the need for differentiated study of violence by juvenile girls, and for preventive interventions which target domestic and interpersonal stress.

KEY WORDS: juvenile; violence; homicide; gender; girls.

Violent behavior by adolescents girls is a controversial and sensitive subject. Violent crimes committed by female offenders receive disproportionate media attention and generate public concern that female adolescent violence

[1]Clinical Assistant Professor, Curry Programs in Clinical and School Psychology, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.
[2]Associate Professor, Curry Programs in Clinical and School Psychology, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.
[3]Correspondence should be directed to Ann Loper, Curry Program in Clinical and School Psychology, University of Virginia, 405 Emmet Street, 147 Ruffner Hall, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903-2495.

1062-1024/96/0900-0323$09.50/0

is increasing (Chesney-Lind, 1993). Critics question reports that violence by adolescent girls is on the rise, and contend that depictions of female violence are routinely biased and exaggerated (Chesney-Lind, 1987; Naffine, 1987). From this perspective, it is noteworthy that national arrest statistics indicate substantial increases in violent crime committed by female juveniles (age 17 or younger) between 1984 and 1993. Of particular interest is a 78% increase in homicide arrests. The purpose of the present study is to investigate the apparent increase in violent crime by adolescent girls, specifically by examining offense characteristics which distinguish homicide committed by adolescent girls from two other groups, boys and adult women.

The Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) contain annual arrest data obtained from over 16,000 police agencies across the United States. Although arrest statistics have well-known limitations in measuring the true incidence of violent crimes, many of which go unreported or fail to result in an arrest (Biderman, 1991), they are useful in indicating major offense trends. To place gender differences in perspective, UCR data indicate that females (juvenile and adult) commit only a small fraction of violent crimes; in 1993 about 13% of all violent crimes and 9% of homicides. Female juveniles commit an even smaller percentage of all violent crimes; only 2% of violent crimes and 1% of homicides.

There is UCR evidence that homicides by female juveniles are increasing, but this increase also must be placed in perspective. Homicide increased 78% for juvenile girls, which is a dramatic increase compared to the 11% *decline* among women, but is dwarfed by the much larger 177% increase for juvenile boys (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1994). In 1993, homicides by boys outnumbered those of the girls by a ratio of about 16 to 1.

What factors are associated with female juvenile homicide? Case studies of homicide by girls frequently describe familial killings, often in association with the subject's history of physical or sexual abuse, parental neglect, and related psychological disturbance (Ewing, 1990; Heide, 1992; Mones, 1991). Ewing noted a pattern of homicide involving unwed teenage mothers and their newborn infants. Typical features included impoverishment, fear of social reprisal, and an inability to identify alternative solutions. Ewing has also observed that girls are more likely than boys to act with an accomplice in an intrafamilial homicide. Although most intrafamilial killings are single-offender incidents, a small proportion involve multiple offenders. In a majority of these cases the victim is related to a female, rather than male offender (Rowley, Ewing, & Singer, 1987).

Early theoretical notions concerning gender and violence focused on the inherent link between masculinity and aggression (Naffine, 1987). Based on this view, Adler (1975) predicted -that as women became more "liberated," they would engage in increased crime and masculine-like vio-

lence. Despite criticism on both theoretical and empirical grounds (Campbell, 1981; Chesney-Lind, 1987; Naffine, 1987), this view persists. Headlines such as "Girls are muscling in on the bully act," (Peterson, 1993), "Are girls getting meaner than boys?" (Jones, 1994), and "Girl's violence chillingly familiar," (Kresnak, 1994) highlight the seeming masculinization of female juvenile offenders, and attest that the "masculinity" hypothesis is alive and well. This theory would lead to the hypothesis that homicides by adolescent girls have become increasingly similar to those by boys.

Recently, Campbell (1993) proposed a psychological/developmental origin for gender variation in aggression: men disproportionately commit aggression to satisfy instrumental goal-directed needs, while women aggress to satisfy internal emotional expressive needs. This division resembles a distinction proposed by Cornell, Benedek, and Benedek (1987) between juveniles who commit homicide in reaction to a conflict or dispute (conflict group) and those who commit homicide in conjunction with another crime (crime group). Extrapolating from Campbell's model, girls would be predicted to commit relatively more conflict-related homicide and boys relatively more crime-related homicide.

Comparisons between juvenile and adult offenders indicate that juveniles are more likely than adults to use a handgun, and to act with an accomplice (Cornell, 1993). Rowley et al. (1987) reported that juveniles were more likely than adults to engage in extrafamilial homicides. However, comparisons of juveniles and adults are weighted heavily with males, and it is not clear if such generational distinctions would apply to female offenders.

We investigated homicide patterns associated with juvenile girls by examining the annual Supplemental Homicide Reports collected by the FBI. These data are separate from the Uniform Crime Reports (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1994), and contain demographic and offense information not found in the UCR database. We addressed three major questions: (a) Has there been a change in the characteristics of homicides committed by juvenile girls between 1984 and 1993? (b) Are there characteristic differences between homicides committed by juvenile girls and boys? (c) Are there characteristic differences between homicides committed by juvenile girls and women?

METHOD

We obtained raw data sets of the unpublished Supplemental Homicide Report for 1984 and 1993. These data sets include arrest data for 16,574 and 22,175 murder and non-negligent manslaughter incidents in 1984 and 1993, respectively. Data were organized according to homicide incidents which could include one or more victims and one or more offenders. In-

cidents were reported by law enforcement agencies in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and Guam. Submission of information for the Supplemental Homicide Reports by agencies is voluntary and complete data were not available for every incident.

Data included 36,207 incidents involving a single individual offender and 4510 incidents which included multiple offenders; 39,336 homicides involved a single victim, while 1351 included multiple victims. In order to maintain casewise independence, we used Cornell's (1993) procedure: the first listed victim was included in all cases; for incidents with multiple offenders, the first listed juvenile was selected. Only juveniles between the ages of 10 and 17 were included.

Three comparisons were made: (a) juvenile girls in 1984 versus 1993; (b) juvenile girls versus juvenile boys in 1993; and (c) juvenile girls versus women in 1993. Each analysis examined the race, gender, and age of the victim and offender, presence of accomplices, weapon used by the offender, relationship of the victim to offender (family member, acquaintance, or stranger), and circumstances of the offense (crime-related or conflict-related). Univariate effects were evaluated with the Chi-square statistic to test statistical significance. Contingency coefficients (C) were used to estimate effect size or the magnitude of statistically significant effects. Effect sizes are classified as small if C = .10, medium if C = .287, and large if C = .447 (Cohen, 1988). Cumulative multivariate effects of statistically significant variables were examined by logistic regression.

RESULTS

Comparison of Juvenile Girls in 1984 and 1993

From 1984 to 1993 the annual number of juvenile female homicide offenders reported in the Supplemental Homicide Reports increased from 99 to 121 cases. In contrast, juvenile male offenders increased from 633 to 1939 cases. The association between gender and year was statistically significant, χ^2 (1, N = 2792) = 43.55, p <.001, C = .12. Among juvenile offenders, there were proportionately fewer females in 1993 (6%) than in 1984 (14%).

Among female offenders, the association between age (adult/juvenile) and year (1984/1993) also was significant, χ^2 (1, N = 3119) = 7.21, p < .01, C = .05. Homicides by female adults declined from 1576 to 1323. Relative to women, girls committed a slightly greater proportion of homicide offenses in 1993 (8%) than in 1984 (6%).

There were no significant changes between 1984 and 1993 in the distribution of offense characteristics, offender characteristics, or victim

characteristics, with one exception. Homicide victims of adolescent girls were more likely to be of a different race in 1993 (12%) than in 1984 (4%), χ^2 (1, N = 220) = 4.11, $p < .05$, C = .14.

Inspection of the 1993 data revealed several common offense patterns among adolescent girls. Approximately one-third of the homicide incidents were directed toward family members. These intrafamilial killings most frequently targeted infant offspring of the offender (20 of 37 incidents) or a parent (4 matricides, 5 patricides). Formal weapons (e.g. a knife, handgun) were not used in infanticides: all of the infant victims were killed either by overpowerment (e.g. beating, strangulation, drowning) or by unknown means. Parents, by contrast, were killed either by a firearm (4 of 9 incidents) or a knife (5 incidents).

There was a noteworthy association between homicide weapon and victim age. When girls used a firearm, the most likely target was someone older: an adult over 20 years (23 of 39 firearm incidents) or a young adult between 18 and 21 (9 incidents). In contrast, when girls used physical overpowerment or unknown means, the most likely victim was under 1 year of age (29 of 34 incidents), χ^2 (20, N = 119) = 117.73, $p < .001$; C = .71.

Another offense pattern involved homicides of peers, i.e., acquaintance victims ages 13 to 20. In these 1008 cases (49% of the total juvenile homicides) boys were the predominant offender (94%). Most of the 65 homicides in which girls targeted adolescent peers were committed as a result of an interpersonal conflict (89%) rather than in conjunction with a crime (11%). Girls involved an accomplice in approximately 26% of the peer-victim cases. Typically girls used either a firearm (37%) or a knife (48%) to overcome a peer victim. Using the SHR typology, victims were predominately classified as acquaintances (54%), friends (17%), or boyfriends (14%).

Comparison of Juvenile Girls and Boys in 1993

Univariate Analyses

Homicide offense characteristics of 121 girls and 1939 boys were contrasted in a series of Chi-square analyses, summarized in Table 1. There were moderate effect size differences between boys and girls for weapon type and age of victim. Small, but significant effect size differences were found for the race of offender, type of homicide, offender relationship to the victim, and whether the victim was of the same gender as the offender.

The association between gender and racial/ethnic status was significant; χ^2 (3, N = 2060) = 35.26, $p < .001$, C = .13. Approximately 65% of the boy offenders were African-Americans, compared to 55% of the girls.

Table 1. Homicide Arrests of Girls, Boys, and Women in 1993

	Girls		Boys		Women		Comparison of Girls and Boys		Comparison of Girls and Women	
	No. of Arrests	%	No. of Arrests	%	No. of Arrests	%	χ^2 Value	C Value[a]	χ^2 Value	C Value[a]
Accomplice status							12.91**	0.8	32.82***	.15
No accomplice	91	(75.2)	1138	(58.7)	1210	(91.5)				
Accomplice	30	(24.8)	801	(41.3)	113	(8.5)				
Number of victims							.31	—	1.6	—
Single victim	116	(95.9)	1877	(96.8)	1293	(97.7)				
Multiple victims	5	(4.1)	62	(3.2)	30	(2.3)				
Racial/ethnic status							35.26***	.13	.55	—
White (non-Hispanic)	46	(38.0)	358	(18.5)	506	(38.2)				
African-American	66	(54.5)	1258	(64.9)	725	(54.8)				
Hispanic	4	(3.3)	275	(14.2)	52	(3.9)				
Other	5	(4.1)	48	(2.5)	40	(3.1)				
Weapon type							222.26***	.31	14.57*	.10
Handgun	28	(23.1)	1296	(66.8)	525	(39.7)				
Other firearm	11	(9.1)	301	(15.5)	91	(6.9)				
Knife/stabbing	42	(34.7)	147	(7.6)	406	(30.7)				
Blunt object	5	(4.1)	85	(4.4)	45	(3.4)				
Hands only	15	(12.4)	62	(3.2)	104	(7.9)				
Other weapon	20	(16.5)	48	(2.5)	152	(11.5)				
Homicide type							41.93***	.16	3.81*	.06
Crime-Related	17	(20.7)	835	(57.3)	119	(13.0)				
Conflict-related	65	(79.3)	623	(42.7)	796	(87.0)				

Offender-victim relation							89.51***	.22	9.38**	.08
Family member	37	(32.2)	132	(7.8)	555	(43.6)				
Acquaintance	66	(57.4)	948	(55.9)	653	(51.3)				
Stranger	12	(10.4)	616	(36.3)	65	(5.1)				
Offender-victim gender							151.48***	.26	23.52**	.13
Same gender	51	(42.1)	1658	(85.5)	297	(22.4)				
Opposite gender	70	(57.9)	281	(14.5)	1026	(77.6)				
Offender-victim race							6.39*	.06	.83	—
Same race	107	(88.4)	1529	(78.9)	1203	(90.9)				
Differenmt race	14	(11.6)	410	(21.1)	120	(9.1)				
Victim age							274.90***	.34	135.62***	.29
Under 3 years	29	(24.4)	18	(0.9)	149	(11.4)				
3-12 years	3	(2.5)	46	(2.4)	50	(3.8)				
13-20 years	35	(29.4)	806	(41.8)	60	(4.6)				
21 ↑ years	52	(43.7)	1058	(54.9)	1053	(80.3)				

Note. Girls and boys were under the age of 18 at the time of offense.
[a]C is the contingency coefficient, a measure of effect size (Cohen, 1988).
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .00001$.

Proportionately more boys (14%) than girls (3%) were Hispanic, and more girls (39%) than boys (19%) were non-Hispanic white.

Boys were more likely to kill victims of the same gender (86%) than were girls (42%), an association which was statistically significant, χ^2 (1, N = 2060) = 151.48, $p < .001$, C = .26. There were also substantial differences in victim age, χ^2 (3, N = 2047) = 274.90, $p < .001$, C = .34. Most notably, 24% of the girls' victims were under the age of 3, in contrast to less than 1% of the boys' victims. The association between gender and offender-victim relationship also was significant, χ^2 (2, N = 1811) = 89.51, $p < .001$, C = .22. Victims of homicides by girls were more often family members (32%) than strangers (10%). In contrast, 8% of the boys' victims were family members and 36% were strangers. The association between weapon choice and gender was statistically significant, χ^2 (5, N = 2060) = 222.26, $p < .001$, with a moderate effect size of .31. Boys used firearms in 83% of their homicide incidents (67% used a handgun); in contrast, 32% of girls used a firearm (23% handgun). Somewhat surprisingly, girls were relatively more likely than boys to use a knife—35% for girls versus 8% for boys.

The association between gender and accomplice status (presence or absence of another offender) was significant, χ^2 (1, N = 2060) = 12.91, $p <$ .01, C = .08. Boys acted with an accomplice in 41% of their homicides, whereas girls acted with an accomplice in only 25% of cases.

Circumstances of the homicide were classified as crime-related (e.g. burglary, robbery) or as conflict-related (dispute with the victim). Most of the homicides committed by girls were conflict-related (79%); however, most homicides by boys were crime-related (57%). These gender differences were statistically significant, χ^2 (1, N = 1540) = 41.93, $p < .001$, C = .16.

Data were inspected to determine whether girls were more frequently involved in intrafamilial multiple-offender homicides, as reported by others (Ewing, 1990; Rowley et. al., 1987). There were 14 incidents in which a juvenile had an accomplice in an intrafamilial killing. In 11 incidents, the accomplices were exclusively other family members. Juvenile boys were more frequently related to the victim (10 incidents) than were the girls (4 incidents).

Logistic Regression Analysis

All statistically significant univariate effects were included in a logistic regression analysis predicting offender gender. The purpose of this analysis was to determine the nonredundant predictive information contained in the previous univariate gender analyses. Categorical variables were collapsed to eliminate small cell sizes. Race/ethnic status was reduced to white and non-white categories. Weapon type included firearm, knife, and other

Table 2. Logistic Regression Analysis: Prediction of Gender in Jvenile Homicide Offenders in 1993

Predictor	B	Wald (B/SE)[a]	Odds Ratio[b]
Use of firearm	−.87	20.23**	.42
Use of knife	1.19	34.88**	3.29
Crime-related homicide	−.76	19.85**	.47
Victim under 13 years	.78	4.47*	2.19
Same-sezx victim	−1.01	52.16**	.36

[a]For all effects, df = 1.
[b]Odds ratios represent the likelihood of a female offender.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .00001$.

weapon (blunt object, hands, other weapon). Victim age was divided into three categories: under 13 years, 13-20 years, and 21 years and over.

Logistic regression analysis requires complete data for each variable, which reduced the sample from 2063 to 1403 cases. Comparison of the included and excluded cases revealed that boys had more missing information than girls on offender-victim relationship and homicide type. In order to investigate potential sampling bias associated with these two variables, three follow-up logistic regression models were conducted in addition to the full model which employed all variables. Each follow-up model eliminated one or both of the variables in question. These follow-up analyses were highly consistent and produced similar patterns of significant findings. Copies of the follow-up models are available from the authors upon request.

Results of the full model logistic regression are presented in Table 2. For variables with more than two values, each category was contrasted with all other categories (deviation contrast procedure). Type of weapon, age of victim, and offender-victim gender were significant predictors of gender; race of the offender, offender-victim race, and accomplice status were not significant in this model.

The use of a firearm reduced the odds to .42 that the offender was a girl, $p < .001$; use of a knife, by contrast, increased odds by a factor of 3.29, $p < .001$. Involvement in a crime-related homicide, rather than a conflict-related incident, reduced the odds that the offender was female to .47, $p < .001$. The odds that the offender was a girl were increased by a factor of 2.19 if the victim was under 13 years of age, $p < .05$. A victim of the same sex reduced the odds that the offender was female by nearly one-third, odds ratio = .36, $p < .001$.

In summary, offenses committed by girls were more likely than those committed by boys to be characterized by the use of a knife, involvement in conflict (rather than crime), a victim under the age of 13, and a victim

of the opposite gender. Conversely, offenses committed by boys were more likely to be characterized by the use of a firearm, crime-involvement, and a victim of the same gender.

Comparison of Girls and Women in 1993

Univariate Analyses

A comparison of homicide offense characteristics of 121 girls and 1323 women (over 17 years) is summarized in Table 1. There were no significant differences in the number of victims, the race of the offender, or the combination of victim and offender race.

There was a substantial difference between the ages of the victims of girls and women, χ^2 (3, N = 1431) = 135.62, $p < .001$, C = 0.29. The vast majority of women's victims were at least 21 years of age (80%), but only 44% of the girls' victims were this old. Twenty-nine percent of the girls' victims, in contrast to 5% of the women's victims, were between 13 and 20 years. The relationships of girls and women to their victims also differed, χ^2 (2, N = 1388) = 9.38, $p < .01$, C = .08. Victims of women were family members and strangers in 44% and 5% of the incidents, respectively; victims of girls were family members and strangers in 32% and 10% of the homicides, respectively. There were significant differences in victim gender, χ^2 (1, N = 1444) = 23.52, $p < .001$, C = .13. There were female victims in 22% of the adult offenses and in 42% of the homicides committed by girls.

Although the vast majority of homicide cases involved a single offender, girls (25%) were more likely than women (9%) to act with an accomplice, χ^2 (1, N = 1444) = 32.82, $p < .001$), C = .15. Girls (23%) were less likely than women (40%) to use a handgun, χ^2 (5, N = 1444) = 14.57, $p < .05$, C = .10. The majority of homicides committed by both

Table 3. Logistic Regression Analysis: Prediction of Age Status (juvenile or adult) in Female Homicide Offenders in 1993

Predictor	B	Wald (B/SE)[a]	Odds Ratio[b]
Single offender	−.94	31.57***	.39
Victim 13-20 years	1.14	17.53**	3.12
Victim 21 years or more	−1.28	29.92***	.28
Same-sex victim	.43	9.35*	1.54

[a]For all effects, df = 1.
[b]Odds ratios represent the likelihood of a female offender.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .00001$. ***$p < .00001$.

women and girls were conflict-related; however, girls (21%) were more likely than women (13%) to commit crime-related homicides, χ^2 (1, N = 997) = 3.81, $p < .05$, C = .06.

Logistical Regression Analysis

Once again, all significant univariate effects were included in a logistical regression analysis. Inspection of the data revealed more incomplete information for the girls than for the women on homicide-type and offender-victim relationship. As was the case in the comparison of the girls and boys, this prompted an analysis of multiple models, each of which eliminated one or both variables. As no substantial differences were detected, the full model with all variables is presented here (see Table 3).

Age of the victim, the presence of an accomplice, and the gender of the victim showed a significant relationship to juvenile status (juvenile or adult). Weapon type, homicide type, and offender-victim relationship, though significant in univariate analyses, were not significant at the multivariate level. Likelihood odds were reduced by nearly one-third (.39) that the offender was a girl if a homicide involved a single offender rather than an accomplice ($p < .001$). If the victim was over 20 years, the odds that the offender was a girl rather than a woman were reduced by nearly one-fourth, odds ratio = .28, $p < .001$. If the victim was between 13 and 20 years, however, the odds increased that the offender was a girl by a factor of 3.12, $p < .001$. A slight increase in the odds that the offender was a girl was observed if the victim was another female, odds ratio = 1.56, $p < .05$. Taken together, these results indicate that the likelihood that an offender was a girl are substantially increased if the incident involved multiple-offenders, included victims between 13 and 20 years, or involved female victims. In contrast, the odds that an offender was a woman were substantially enhanced in events which involved a single-offender, male victim, or victim over 20 years old.

DISCUSSION

Homicides committed by girls differed systematically from those committed by boys. Contrary to the masculinization theory of female violence, girls who killed did not resemble their male counterparts. Boys were distinguished by their predominant use of a firearm, greater involvement in criminal activity, and tendency to target individuals like themselves—other adolescent boys. In contrast, girls were far less likely to use a firearm and more often used a knife. Nearly 80% of the homicides by girls reflected

interpersonal conflict, often with family members, rather than the commission of some other crime such as robbery. In addition, a substantial portion of the victims were infants under 3 years old. These findings provide indirect support for Campbell's (1993) notion that aggression by boys is more strongly related to instrumental needs, while girls are motivated by emotional and expressive needs. Results are also consistent with Sommers and Baskin's (1993) conclusion that violent assaults by female offenders tend to be impulsive rather than planned, and are often committed in retaliation for perceived injustice.

Contrary to the pattern noted by Rowley et al. (1987) in their inspection of 1984 Supplemental Homicide Data, girls did not outnumber boys in including an accomplice in homicide of a family member. In 10 of the 14 intrafamilial multiple offender homicides committed by juveniles, the family member perpetrator was a boy. The majority of intrafamilial homicides by girls were single-offender incidents which almost exclusively victimized either the offender's parents or children. These results accent the potency of parent-child relational stress in intrafamilial homicides by girls.

Contrary to the boys, girls used a firearm in less than one third of their offenses. Inspection of patterns suggests that firearms are chosen as "equalizers" against more powerful antagonists. In over 80% of the instances in which girls used a firearm, the victim was an older individual. A firearm was used in 4 of the 9 parental homicides. By contrast, there were no instances of a firearm being used by a girl to kill a child under 10 years old.

Comparisons of girls in 1984 and 1993 revealed no substantial change in the pattern of crimes committed. Contrary to some media stereotypes of a new female offender, girls who committed homicides in 1993 and 1984 did not differ in their use of weapons, involvement in other crimes, or victimization of strangers. The stereotype of girls becoming gun-toting robbers was not supported. The dramatic increase in gun-related homicides by juveniles reported by Cornell (1993) applies to boys but not girls.

There were noteworthy differences between girls and women. Compared to their adult counterparts, girls more frequently acted with an accomplice and targeted other adolescent girls. However, girls and women were similar in that their homicides primarily involved interpersonal conflicts with familiar victims. The pattern of homicides for girls was essentially distinct from both boys and women, not easily lumped with either group.

There were few race differences. Offender race was not a significant predictor of either gender or juvenile status. In the comparison of girls and women, race was not significantly associated with juvenile status at either a univariate or multivariate level. A significant association between gender

and race observed in one univariate comparison was not maintained in the multivariate analysis.

Arrest data for homicide are not equivalent to the actual incidence of homicide, but they are useful in indicating general trends. Homicide arrests are more reliable than arrests for other crimes because homicides are more likely to be detected and have higher clearance rates than other violent crimes (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1994). In addition, there is less latitude in deciding whether to charge homicide offenders.

Arrest data from Supplemental Homicide Reports are not as complete a national record as the Uniform Crime Reports, but UCR data are collected in summary form and are not amenable to casewise analysis. Agencies may fail to submit Supplemental Homicide Reports because of time and financial constraints. Nonetheless, the Supplemental Homicide Reports provide the largest available source of information on homicide cases.

In addition to statistical significance, it is important to evaluate the effect size of group differences. Most of the findings in this study were of moderate magnitude, using Cohen's (1988) classification. Although these effects were moderate from a statistical vantage point, their social implications can be important. Prevention and treatment programs for juvenile violence usually are predicated on the most likely offenders—boys. Such programs, however, may not be appropriate for girls whose violence disproportionately reflects disputes and domestic stress. For example, the disproportionate killing of young children, principally infants under 3 years, is likely linked to the burden of teenage pregnancies and pressures of parenting.

The present results support research aimed specifically at better understanding violence by girls. For example, why are girls so much less likely to use a firearm and more likely to use a knife than boys? Is the lower homicide rate among girls attributable in part to their use of less lethal weapons? If, as Campbell (1993) suggests, violence in girls represents expressive emotional turmoil, prevention programs for girls should be geared to teach coping skills or to alter stress-producing life circumstances, such as teenage parenting or familial conflict.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors obtained the 1984 and 1993 Supplemental Homicide Report data tape from the Uniform Crime Reporting Program of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice. We thank Bennie Brewer and Chris Waskiewicz of the Program Support Section for their assistance.

REFERENCES

Adler, F. (1975). *Sisters in crime.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Biderman, A. D. (1991). *Understanding crime incidence statistics: Why the UCR diverges from the NCS.* New York: Springer-Verlag.

Campbell, A. (1981). *Girl delinquents.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Campbell, A. (1993). *Men, women, and aggression.* New York: Basic Books.

Chesney-Lind, M. (1987). Girls and violence: An exploration of the gender gap in serious delinquent behavior. In D. H. Crowell, I. M. Evans, & C. R. O'Donnell (Eds.) *Childhood aggression and violence: Sources of influence, prevention, and control* (pp. 207-229). New York: Plenum.

Chesney-Lind, M. (1993). Girls, gangs and violence: Anatomy of a backlash. *Humanity & Society, 17,* 321-344.

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical Dower analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Cornell, D. G. (1993). Juvenile homicide: A growing national problem. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law, 11,* 389-396.

Cornell, D., Benedek, E., & Benedek, D. (1987). Juvenile homicide: Prior adjustment and a proposed typology. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 57,* 383-393.

Ewing, C. P. (1990). *When children kill: The dynamics of juvenile homicide.* Federal Bureau of Investigation (1994). *Uniform crime reports: Crime in the United States.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Printing Office.

Heide, K. M. (1992). *Why kids kill parents: Child abuse and adolescent homicide.* Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press.

Jones, A. N. (1993, April 11). Are girls getting meaner than boys? *San Francisco Chronicle,* p. D3.

Kresnak, J. (1994, March 12). Girls violence chillingly familiar. *Detroit News and Free Press,* p. A3.

Mones, P. (1991). *When a child kills: Abused children who kill their parents.* New York: Pocket Books.

Naffine, N. (1987). *Female crime: The construction of women in criminology.* Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Peterson, K. S. (1993, August 11). Girls are muscling in on the bully act. *USA Today.* D5.

Rowley, J. C., Ewing, C. P., & Singer, S. I. (1987). Juvenile homicide: The need for an interdisciplinary approach. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law, 5,* 1-10.

Sommers, I., & Baskin, D. (1993). The situational context of violent female offending. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 30,* 136-162.