



# CSPV SCHOOL VIOLENCE FACT SHEET

FS-SV05

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## School Violence and Social Conditions

- Violent behavior is the product of the interaction between individual development and social contexts (e.g., the family, school and neighborhood).
- Within a certain area, factors such as low socioeconomic status, high population turnover, race and ethnicity, and high housing density are strong predictors of violence. These conditions lower a neighborhood's capacity for social organization and its ability to exert informal social control.
- Low socioeconomic conditions do not have a simple direct effect on neighborhood violence. However, residents living in low-income neighborhoods tend to experience more difficulty establishing the formal and informal social ties within the community necessary to control crime and violence.
- Neighborhoods characterized predominately by single-parent households tend to have fewer social resources and networks necessary for developing and maintaining local institutions, and for helping parents acquire the social capital necessary in deterring children from violence and delinquency.
- A community's ability to use informal social controls appears to be the key to understanding local levels of violence and disorder.
- Child rearing and controlling adolescents' behavior in socially disorganized communities are much more difficult than in better-organized communities.
- Participation in **formal** networks such as neighborhood associations, schools, and churches tends to be lower in disorganized communities.
- A community is powerless to influence policy decisions that affect neighborhood conditions and thus further weaken the community when there is a lack of external ties. Without strong formal and informal social ties and networks within a neighborhood, it is unlikely that strong ties to organizations and resources outside the neighborhood will develop.
- Research demonstrates how social disorganization affects neighborhood crime, however, the dynamic can also operate in the opposite direction. Violence in a community can change the population composition of a neighborhood, increasing social disorganization.
- Students attending school bring the problems of their families and neighborhoods with them.
- Although not a simple relationship, the strongest predictors for school violence rates are local neighborhood crime rates.
- Research suggests that school violence is also influenced by school policies regarding discipline, security, and dropping out, and by small group interactions that develop within the school that encourage youths to respond violently to routine provocations.

- The most effective school responses to violence are those that develop the social resources of their students.
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The information for this fact sheet was excerpted from the following book chapter. *Violence in American Schools* was developed by CSPV through a grant from the W.T. Grant Foundation:

Laub, J.H., & Lauritsen, J.L. (1998). The Interdependence of School Violence with Neighborhood and Family Conditions. In D.S. Elliott, B. Hamburg, & K.R. Williams (Editors), *Violence in American Schools: A New Perspective*, (pp. 127-155). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

For more information on how to obtain a copy of this book, please contact Cambridge University Press, 110 Midland Avenue, Port Chester, NY 10573. Telephone: (800) 872-7423, E-mail: [orders@cup.org](mailto:orders@cup.org), or URL: [www.cup.org](http://www.cup.org).