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## Children are Slain by their Parents and Teenagers by their Peers

James Alan Fox  
College of Criminal Justice  
Northeastern University

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## **Children are Slain by their Parents and Teenagers by their Peers**

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Several sources of data exist on the extent and nature of homicide in the United States, including the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports* of "Offenses Known to the Police" and "Persons Arrested" for homicide, or even correctional data on persons incarcerated for murder. By far the most complete and detailed source of information about patterns and trends in homicide, however, is the *Supplementary Homicide Reports* (SHR), a part of the FBI's crime reporting program.

On nearly every homicide known to the police, a special Supplementary Homicide Report form is completed which includes the age, race, sex, and ethnicity of victims and offenders, victim-offender relationship, weapon, and circumstance, as well as the month, year and place of the crime. The SHR provides an extraordinary ability to examine patterns and trends in juvenile homicide in the United States by selecting reports of victims (or offenders) under the age of eighteen.

The SHR data are incident-based, rather than monthly aggregates like the usual FBI Crime Index. Thus, counts of various categories of victim (or offender) can be combined with the Bureau of the Census population counts in order to generate age, race, sex-specific victimization (or offending) rates.

### **The rate of victimization of juveniles is on the rise**

From 1976 to 1991, nearly 29,000 juveniles were murdered in the United States, an average of 1,800 per year, 150 per month, or 5 per day. In terms of rate per 100,000 persons, the risk of being murdered has increased since the mid-1980s for whites and blacks, as well as for boys and girls.

The growth in juvenile homicide has been most pronounced in the larger cities, those over one-quarter million in population. Further, while the prevalence of juvenile homicide has increased in all parts of the country, the growth has by far been the smallest in the South.

The risk of homicide victimization decreases until age six, remains low and stable until age ten, and then increases throughout adolescence. This is true for both boys and girls, but the increased risk during adolescence is particularly sharp for boys.

Overall, most children are killed by adults. Only twenty-four percent of juvenile victims are murdered by other juveniles. Eighty percent of perpetrators are male, twenty percent female.

**Murders involving young children as victims are very different from those involving teenaged victims**

Victims under the age of ten are slightly more likely to be male (54%) and typically are killed by parents (more often the father) with brute force. Fifty-nine percent of the child-slayers are parents of the victims. Brute force is involved in 45 percent of child slayings, compared to only 18 percent for firearm use. Given that firearms tend to be far more lethal than beatings, the predominance of physical beatings in assaults directed against young children is probably understated. On the other hand, given the small physical stature of these victims, it can be assumed that many of these killings with physical force were unpremeditated.

Teenage victims, those aged 10 through 17, are overwhelmingly male (73%) and typically killed by a friend or other acquaintance (but not family-member) with a firearm. Sixty-one percent of juvenile victims are slain by friends and acquaintances, while only 16 percent are killed by family members. More than 70% of teenage victims are shot to death.

Finally, the trends in homicides involving young children as victims and those claiming the lives of teenagers are dramatically divergent. The prevalence of homicides of children under age 10 has been stable over the past decade and one-half, whereas the prevalence of teen homicide has doubled since the mid-1980s.

**There are large differences in victimization rates by race and sex**

Slightly over half (54%) of juveniles killed are white. In terms of rate per 100,000 persons, however, black juveniles are over 4 times more likely than white juveniles to be the victim of homicide. Among teenagers, aged 14-17, the risk for blacks grows to more than five times that for whites.

Almost all homicides are intra-racial. Fully 93 percent of those who kill white juveniles are also white, and 92 percent of those who kill black juveniles are also black.

Nearly two-thirds of homicide victims under age 18 are male. In terms of rate, boys are almost twice as likely to be murdered than girls. The likelihood of being murdered among black males is more than twice that for black females, five times that for white males, and almost eight times that for white females.

## *Juvenile Victims*

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The race and sex differences are even more pronounced among teenage victims, aged 14-17. Black teens are over five times as likely to be murdered as white teens; teenage boys are three times as likely to be killed as teenage girls. The risk of being murdered for black male teenagers is more than four times that for black girls, more than six times that for white boys and more than fourteen times that for white girls.

### **Most juvenile victims know their attacker, usually very well**

In 22% of homicides involving a juvenile victim, the victim-offender relationship is unknown because the case is unsolved. For the remaining cases in which the relationship of the offender to the victim can be discerned, many involve a close personal relationship.

Forty percent of juveniles were killed by family members, most of them parents. Of these parent-child killings, slightly more than half of the boys (53%) were killed by their fathers and slightly more than half of the girls (51%) were murdered by their mothers.

Forty-five percent of juvenile victims were murdered by friends, neighbors, or acquaintances. These incidents generally involved boys (70%) being killed by males (94%).

Fifteen percent of the juvenile victims were killed by strangers. In murders at the hands of strangers, nearly a third (32%) resulted from the commission of some other felony, such as rape or robbery.

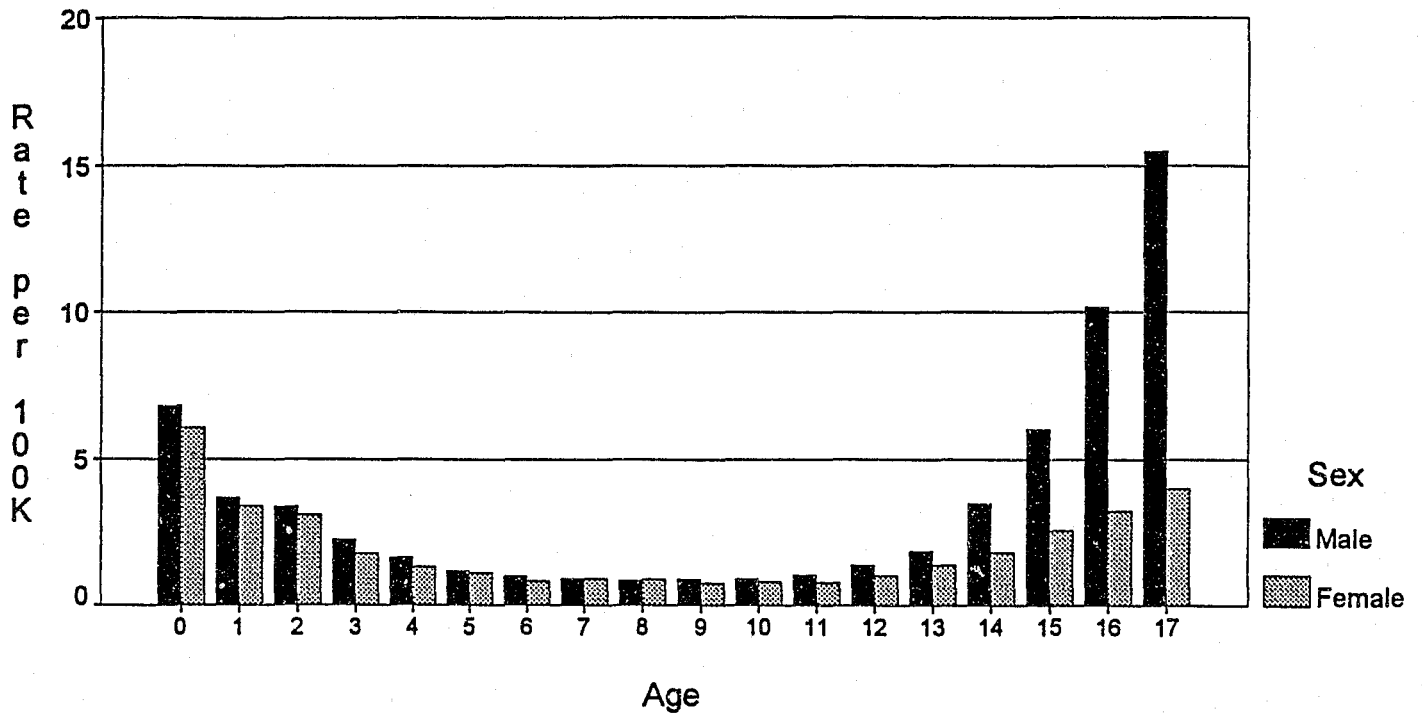
Trends in Juvenile Victimization Rates by Age, Race, and Sex  
(Rates per 100,000 Population)

	AGE							
	10-13				14-17			
	SEX				SEX			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	RACE		RACE		RACE		RACE	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
YEAR								
1976	1.0	3.5	.8	1.3	3.9	24.3	1.9	5.4
1977	1.0	3.1	.7	2.4	4.5	23.3	2.3	8.1
1978	.9	2.8	.9	2.7	4.8	20.8	2.4	7.0
1979	1.0	2.9	.7	1.8	5.4	25.8	2.3	7.4
1980	1.0	2.5	.8	2.5	5.6	29.1	2.6	6.4
1981	.9	3.4	.9	2.1	4.5	24.7	2.2	5.8
1982	.9	2.2	1.1	1.4	4.4	24.2	2.0	7.3
1983	1.0	3.2	.8	1.2	4.3	23.6	2.1	5.1
1984	.8	2.3	.8	1.7	3.9	19.2	2.1	6.2
1985	1.2	2.9	.7	1.1	4.3	23.9	1.8	6.8
1986	.8	3.1	1.0	1.5	4.4	27.0	2.3	6.3
1987	.7	3.3	.8	1.8	3.7	33.7	2.1	6.8
1988	.9	3.4	.9	3.6	4.2	39.5	2.1	6.4
1989	1.1	3.7	.9	2.6	5.4	52.1	2.1	8.2
1990	1.1	4.4	.6	3.8	7.5	54.1	2.3	9.1
1991	1.2	3.7	.6	1.7	8.5	65.9	2.3	8.8

Offender/Offense Characteristics by Characteristics of  
Juvenile Victims for 1976-1991 Combined

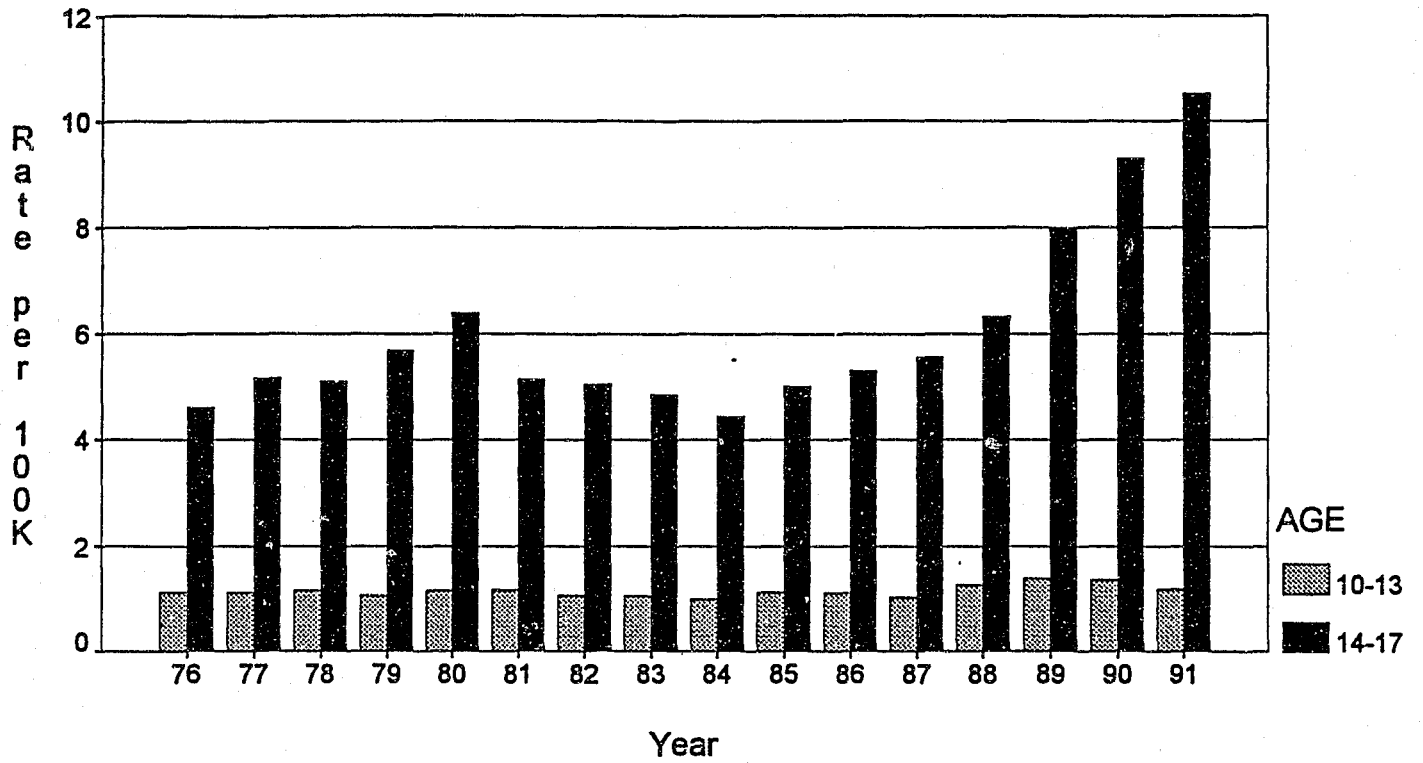
	Total	SEX OF VICTIM		RACE OF VICTIM		SEX OF VICTIM			
		Male	Female	White	Black	RACE OF VICTIM		RACE OF VICTIM	
						Male	Female	White	Black
		White	Black	White	Black				
AGE OF OFFENDER									
Under 18	24.4%	28.6%	16.3%	23.9%	25.2%	28.6%	29.0%	16.1%	16.6%
18-29	52.4%	49.3%	58.2%	51.1%	54.3%	47.8%	51.2%	56.7%	61.2%
30-49	20.5%	19.2%	23.0%	22.2%	17.8%	20.6%	17.0%	24.8%	19.6%
50+	2.8%	2.9%	2.5%	2.8%	2.7%	3.0%	2.8%	2.4%	2.7%
RACE OF OFFENDER									
White	54.2%	52.9%	56.8%	93.2%	7.3%	92.8%	9.0%	93.8%	3.6%
Black	43.5%	45.1%	40.5%	5.9%	92.4%	6.3%	90.8%	5.1%	96.1%
Other	2.2%	2.0%	2.7%	1.0%	.3%	.9%	.3%	1.1%	.3%
SEX OF OFFENDER									
Male	80.5%	84.2%	73.2%	80.9%	80.1%	83.6%	85.1%	76.3%	68.6%
Female	19.5%	15.8%	26.8%	19.1%	19.9%	16.4%	14.9%	23.7%	31.4%
WEAPON									
Firearm	50.0%	58.9%	32.2%	46.1%	54.8%	54.5%	63.9%	31.8%	32.6%
Knife	12.8%	12.6%	13.1%	13.5%	11.8%	13.5%	11.6%	13.4%	12.4%
Blunt Object	5.1%	4.0%	7.3%	5.4%	4.7%	4.2%	3.7%	7.4%	7.2%
Personal Weapon	19.6%	15.5%	27.9%	20.7%	18.5%	17.1%	13.8%	26.8%	29.7%
Other	12.5%	9.0%	19.5%	14.3%	10.2%	10.6%	7.0%	20.5%	18.1%
RELATIONSHIP									
Family	40.1%	34.1%	51.4%	43.5%	35.1%	38.3%	28.6%	52.4%	49.5%
Other Known	45.3%	48.7%	38.8%	42.3%	49.6%	45.5%	52.9%	36.9%	42.2%
Stranger	14.6%	17.2%	9.8%	14.1%	15.3%	16.1%	18.5%	10.7%	8.2%
CIRCUMSTANCES									
Felony	19.8%	16.8%	25.5%	20.7%	18.7%	16.5%	17.4%	28.0%	21.5%
Argument	24.8%	28.0%	18.7%	20.5%	30.4%	23.3%	33.7%	15.8%	22.9%
Other	55.4%	55.2%	55.9%	58.8%	50.9%	60.3%	48.9%	56.2%	55.6%

# Victimization Rate by Age and Sex



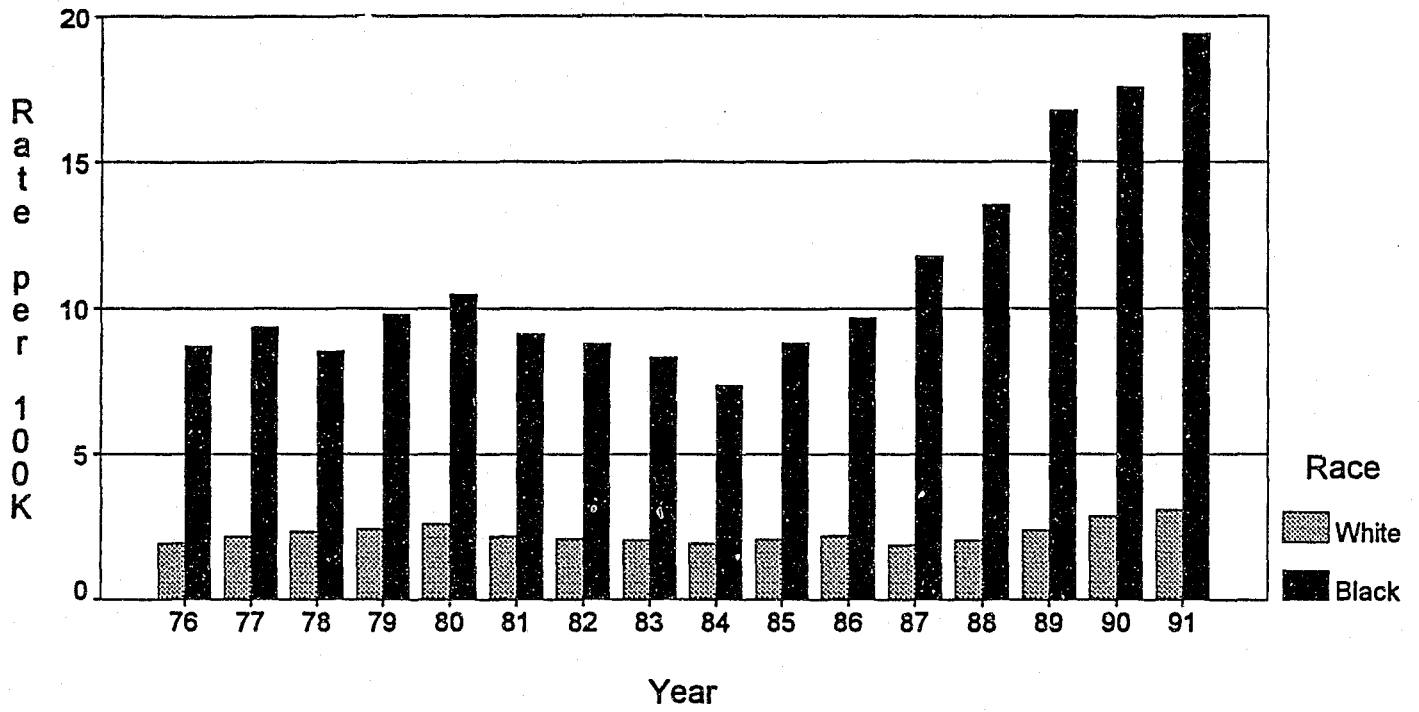
1976-1991 combined

# Victimization Rate by Year and Age





# Victimization Rate by Year and Race



Ages 10-17