

S I X

Profiling Dangerous Kids And Understanding Normal Ones

WWW.VIOLENTKIDS.COM

I am filling this survey out for my five year old son, even though he is not in the age group you asked for. For years we have been going through the violence and more than temper tantrums. We have been to numerous doctors and tried numerous different medications... we are at the end of our rope and are lost for an answer....

—a mother who filled out my violence survey for her five-year-old son.

The **Violentkids.com** website was set up on April 1st of 1999 as a way to inform parents and teachers and to collect information from kids around the country so that I could find out if there were differences in the way that violent kids and nonviolent kids answered questions about violence and related topics. I did not realize when I put up my website that kids as

young as six would be killing their classmates. But murder was on the mind of a six year old boy in Mount Morris Township, Michigan when he took a .32-caliber gun to school and killed six-year-old Kayla Rolland after a schoolyard scuffle on February 29 of 2000. Younger kids wrote in to tell me about some horrible situations going on at their schools such the following from an eight-year-old boy: *“I had another kid get me on the playground and stomped on my head so I hit him. I was angry enough to hit another time because someone flicked rubber bands at me, another kid got me on the playground and stepped on my head.”* The kids and violence survey asked kids and teens ages ten to nineteen to voice their opinions on such topics as fairness in their environment, anger, curfews and zero tolerance. Sample questions asked were: Do you feel treated fairly by adults?; Are you treated fairly at home and at school? Do you think TV makes kids violent? Have you ever been angry enough to hit someone? And what you do if you are lonely or sad? (To view the entire initial survey, see Appendix B at the back of the book). An anger scale was built into the survey based on one that had been used in Framingham, Massachusetts to evaluate hostility in heart patients.¹ With this brief scale, it is possible to determine if kids who have a tendency toward violence have different anger styles than those who are not violent (the anger scale is shown at the bottom of the survey in Appendix B). This scale will be explained in the section on anger later in this chapter. While the survey was intended to collect only data from kids in the United States, many young people from Canada and around the world filled out the survey. The international results were interesting enough to warrant mention later in this chapter. The length of the initial survey was four pages (which I found out later was too long for younger kids). After seven months, the survey was revised to include race (which the original one did not include) and asked kids to describe incidents involving anger in more detail; also, some questions were omitted to make the survey shorter. Only three weeks after I set up the site, two teens in Littleton, Colorado took an arsenal of weapons and home-made

pipe bombs to Columbine High School where they killed twelve students, a teacher and themselves. Twenty-eight more were injured. In December of 1999, a thirteen-year-old brought a 9mm gun to Fort Gibson Elementary School in Oklahoma and wounded four other students. A six-year-old shot and killed a seven-year-old classmate in Michigan. Unfortunately, my website could have not been more timely.

I hoped this survey would give me some insight into how kids and teens around the country were doing in terms of their mental health, and particularly how they handled angry feelings and what types of things they were angry about. The purpose of this survey was not to gather information about potentially violent kids in order to track “suspicious characters” at school or in communities. Rather, it was meant to allow parents and other adults in positions of authority to understand how violent kids differ from normal ones. It is important to use this knowledge to help potentially violent kids change their path, not to add to their problems by acting as if they are criminals. This research should serve as a tool for those adults wishing to assist kids who may need extra guidance and supervision during their pre-teen and teen-age years. Many of the kids and teens answering my survey were wary about its purpose and made angry comments such as the one made by this boy: *“what can you tell about a person from just answering a bunch of questions? Are we all killers just because we act a little different?”* Another angry boy stated that *“this survey is stupid! You can’t take a kid and lock him up for his answers on a fucking survey.”* But the majority of the kids seemed to feel it was helpful. As one kid stated on his survey, *“This is a really good way for an adult to find out what all of us kids are so angry about.”* According to Jon Katz, the columnist at Slashdot, many kids now see themselves as targets of a new hunt for oddballs—suspects in a bizarre, systematic search for the strange and the alienated. Suddenly, in this tyranny of the normal, to be different wasn’t just to feel unhappy, it was to be dangerous.² Please don’t even think of using the survey information this way. While misuse is certainly something to be

concerned about, it is also important to have some understanding of violent kids.

One profiling system that has kids (and their parents) wary of being branded oddballs is called MOSAIC-2000. This profiling system is currently being used by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to profile dangerous kids in schools across the United States. It was developed by Gavin DeBecker (the author of *The Gift of Fear*) and his company, Gavin DeBecker, Incorporated. MOSAIC-2000 is described as a “computer-assisted method for conducting high-stakes evaluations of persons who might act violently (such as when students make threats to harm others).”³ The students themselves do not answer the questions, but rather a “user” such as a school administrator or principal answers questions about the child. Pilot testing of the Mosaic-2000 started in over twenty schools in December of 1999. Unfortunately, this program has the potential to cast a wide net and pull in a huge number of false positives (kids who come up on the profile as dangerous but are not). This is because the questions asked are so generic, they could apply to the kid with normal teen-age angst or a potentially violent kid. Questions include such things as whether there is a gun in the child’s home or any friend’s home, whether the child is a victim of “abuse,” whether he has any interest in themes of power and violence, whether he shows any social isolation, keeps secrets from adults or has unstable self-esteem. I have heard many responsible adults say they would come up as dangerous and violent according to the program. But there is also strong support for the program (particularly by those involved in the government). “I think it’s a wonderful tool that has a great deal of potential,” says Andrew Vita, associate director for field operations of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. “It’s easy to pick out the gang members with tattoos. It’s these other people that kind of surprise administrators, and these are the ones they really need to identify.”⁴ Certainly a system that brands kids as dangerous and treats them in a manner that will isolate them further can only make things worse. But it is my intention to use the information gathered

from my website to improve our understanding of kids who are violent (as well as to better understand the concerns of kids who are not violent). The best way to do this, I decided early on, was to go directly to the kids themselves.

Initially, I thought of doing the study in schools but there were several problems with this approach. All schools have strict requirements about the types of questions that can be asked of students and the questions had to be reviewed by a research committee to make sure they were “suitable.” But a bigger problem was trust. I was afraid that kids would not be as honest at school because of fear (probably with good reason) that they would get into trouble for answering some of the questions in the affirmative. If kids are being expelled for writing poems or stories about hurting or killing someone, what would happen if they admitted on the survey that they had brought a gun to school or would like to harm someone? Many of the schools I contacted were amenable to sending notes home to parents telling them about the website. In order to reach more kids, I linked the site to various kids’ websites and advertised in newspapers and flyers, mainly to teacher’s groups such as the National Education Association, which I hoped would cut down on the number of unusable forms. The main advantage to using the Internet was that it allowed me to reach kids and teens across the country. I had access to kids from Hawaii, Alaska, California, New York and all states in between. All states eventually participated as well as kids from across the world. But there were certainly drawbacks to using the Internet for research purposes. Kids who have access to the Internet would probably tend to come more from middle-class or upper-middle class homes. I also didn’t know if the respondents were in the age group of ten to nineteen. Some of the surveys were jokes. But there were usually tip-offs, such as “*It’s not my fault I kill people, the voices make me*” or when a kid filled out every question in the most negative light (yes, I have brought a gun, yes, I want to kill people etc.). There was even a kid who stated that when he got angry, he “*whacked people with a dildo.*” There were kids who filled out a name at the top of the

survey and put down all of the violent crimes they were getting away with; I assumed these names were friends or people they did not like whom they were trying to play a joke on. Anything that looked suspicious was discarded. Most of the kids who answered the survey were very open and honest; I was surprised at how seriously most of the kids took the survey. Many of them related experiences and made suggestions to me that were insightful and helpful. One boy suggested *“you should send copies of the survey to all the schools in America for students to fill out so we could understand more about how students felt at the various schools and why so many kids were having problems.”* The angriest kids seemed to be those who had been “forced” to complete the survey by their teachers. Most of those kids were more likely to give hostile answers in the comment section such as *“this survey sucks. My teacher made us fill it out. She is a bitch.”* But they might have been angrier if asked to complete the survey at school. In addition, if I had gone to individual schools and tried to get consent, I would probably still be writing this book for years to come. So knowing the limitations of the survey, let’s look at the results.

The Violence Survey Results

There were over 1200 kids who filled out the violence survey over the Internet between April of 1999 and March of 2000. In addition to the Internet, the violence survey was administered to violent kids by myself (at juvenile detention centers or through my practice) or by a staff member at a wilderness camp; thirty kids in this latter group met the criteria for being placed in the violent group. Kids were categorized as violent if 1) they had brought a weapon to school; 2) they had been in trouble with juvenile detention for a violent offense or if; 3) they had been expelled or suspended for a violent act such a fighting or assault. For example, Tim, the boy in chapter four who threatened to bomb his school, was placed in the violent group for being charged with a violent act through juvenile court. I con-

tacted Dr. Sandra Thomas, the Director of Nursing at the University of Tennessee (as well as a computer and statistical wizard) to input the data into her computer to compare the difference in responses between violent and nonviolent kids. Because they had to be computer scored (which can take some time) we used only that data collected between April of 1999 and November of 1999 to come up with the quantitative data (data for percentages and statistics). However, surveys continued to pour in even after a note was placed at the top of the survey stating that we had finished collecting what we needed for the study. The kids who wrote in after the cutoff date had a great deal to say and many times seemed more interested in venting their feelings than just participating in a research study. Many of them wrote in to sound off about how angry they were about the crackdowns at school after the Columbine massacre. There were a total of 567 questionnaires used in the final tabulation of results. However, a number of surveys had to be discarded for: not filling the form out properly, being too old or too young or looking like they were not taking the survey seriously. A kid had to fill out at least one-half of the survey for it to be used; if it was less than half filled out, it was discarded. I found that many of the kids fifteen and under did not have the patience to fill out the survey completely. Those sixteen and older were mostly able to complete it and to give wordier answers. I used only the completed or nearly completed surveys to get the following results from 411 kids. The other 800 or so surveys will be used only as a source of comments from kids who summarized their experiences of being a young person in today’s society.

I thought when I started this project that I would be comparing “normal kids” from the Internet to actual violent kids that I had interviewed. However as the surveys came pouring in, many of the kids who had legitimately filled out the form turned out to be violent themselves and therefore could not be categorized as nonviolent. Because I had only personally interviewed six violent girls with the survey, I placed them in with the violent Internet girls.

There were two groups for the girls:

1. **violent girls**—both Internet and those I personally interviewed who filled out the survey and;
2. **nonviolent** girls who were girls who filled out the survey on the Internet.

For the boys, I set up three groups:

1. **juvenile delinquents** that I personally interviewed;
2. **violent survey boys** who were categorized as violent after filling out the Internet survey and finally;
3. **nonviolent survey boys** who were found to be nonviolent based on the Internet survey.

In reviewing the data, I came to the conclusion that it is the **violent survey boys who show the greatest probability for acting out violently at school**. But in order to understand them, we must understand how they are different from the juvenile delinquent boys and nonviolent survey boys. So now, let us turn to the striking findings.

Who Are These Kids?

I was amazed at how many violent kids there were in the total survey. There were a total of 177 girls and 234 boys who were analyzed by the computer. Out of these, roughly 55% of the boys were violent and 25.4% of the girls were violent. It is interesting that the violent girls' percentage is similar to the percentage of girls reported by the Office of Juvenile Justice who had been arrested for the year 1997 (26% of all juvenile arrests).⁵ The most violent girls came from the states of Minnesota and Tennessee whereas the most violent boys came from the states of California, Texas and New York. While it is possible that these particular states have higher numbers of violent kids for whatever reason, it is just as likely that this is where the greatest number of kids happened to have filled out the form and were represented in larger numbers in the survey. The states with the most nonviolent girls were California, Florida, New York, and Minnesota while the states with the highest per-

centages of nonviolent boys were California and Minnesota. The average age of the violent girls was 15.5 years old while the average age for the juvenile delinquents (boys) was 14.8; it was 15.9 for the violent survey boys. There were two age-peaks for violent girls. The most violent girls were those were in the 8th grade; this grade contributed 28.89% of the sample of violent girls. This would put the most violent girls at around the age of 13-14. The second most violent grade for girls was the 12th which made up 20% of the sample. Girls became less violent as they got past the age of 14-15 with the most girls in the sample in the nonviolent group being in the 12th grade or in the first year of college. In contrast, 45.83% of the juvenile delinquent boys were most violent in the 9th grade which would put them in the 14-15 year old age group. The violent survey boys tended to be older with the majority in 10th grade (20%), 11th grade (18%) and 12th grade (18%). This would put the violent survey boys at their most violent between the ages of 15-18.

The majority of the kids were in regular classrooms with some in special education. The violent girls made up roughly 91% of kids in regular classrooms and about 95% of the nonviolent girls were in regular classrooms. The juvenile delinquent boys by comparison made up about 70% of regular education with 30% in some kind of special education. The violent survey boys were mainly in regular classrooms (91%) with 9% in special education and the nonviolent survey boys made up 89% of regular education with 11% in special education.

It makes sense that the violent boys who were seen by me in juvenile detention were more likely to be in special education. This group is made up mainly of ordinary juvenile delinquents, many of whom have learning problems and ongoing behavioral problems that come to the attention of school authorities or parents at an early age. The violent survey boys seem to be a different group of kids—they tend to be smarter, they care more about school, and fewer of them are in special education. They also have less frequency of acting out behavior that lands them in juvenile detention compared to the juve-

nile delinquent boys. Ninety-two percent of the juvenile delinquents had been charged with a juvenile offense compared to 52% of the violent survey boys and zero percent of the nonviolent survey boys. The offenses varied in their severity with 4.17% of the juvenile delinquents being charged with murder or attempted murder, 4.17% with a bomb threat, 25% with assault, 12.5% with carrying a weapon and 58.33% with a nonviolent offense such as theft. Fifty-two percent of the violent survey boys had been charged with a juvenile offense with 2% charged with murder or attempted murder, 9% for assault, 1% for carrying a weapon, 1% for verbal abuse and 21% for a nonviolent offense. (The percentages do not always total 100% because some kids did not answer all questions). The violent survey boys have other different characteristics as well which we will discuss in future sections. Violent girls have also seen their fair share of time in juvenile detention. Forty-six percent of violent girls have been charged with a juvenile offense as compared to 98.48% of nonviolent girls who have never seen the inside of juvenile court. The charges for the violent girls were broken down into assault at 8.89%, carrying a weapon, 2.22%, verbal abuse, 2.22% and nonviolent offenses, 26.67%.

Feelings About School

*You're lost, in a teenage jail,
So young, so vicious, and so frail.*

—The Eagles, “Teenage Jail”

“I feel like I’m in jail,” say 23% of all violent survey boys as compared to 14.5% of nonviolent survey boys and only 12.5% of the juvenile delinquents when asked how they feel about school. Surprisingly, the highest number of boys who think school is “ok” came from the juvenile delinquents—about one third of the sample agreed that school was “alright.” Roughly equal numbers of juvenile delinquents and nonviolent survey boys admitted to liking school, 25% and 27% respectively. A

total of 46% of the violent survey boys either felt like they were in jail or that school could be better. The violent survey boys were most likely to perceive unfair treatment at school with about 56 % answering yes to the question, “have you been treated unfairly regarding discipline at your school?” Forty-three percent of the juvenile delinquents and 35% of nonviolent survey boys also felt treated unfairly regarding discipline at school. Perhaps school is not that important to the juvenile delinquent boys. Many of them were in juvenile detention for truancy and seemed to have attitudes of indifference or an actual liking for school. The violent survey boys may care more about school and it seems to play a more important role in their lives then it does for the juvenile delinquents. Probably the juvenile delinquents rarely attend school and if they do, they pay little attention to what is happening there. Their identity is wrapped up in being a “bad boy.” They often come from single parent homes and have little supervision and are many times left to their own devices. In contrast, the violent survey boys typically come from middle to upper-middle class homes; they care very much about what is going on in school and how they are treated there is more highly tied to how they identify themselves. The violent survey boys may attend school more often and are more affected by what happens there. They care more what their peers and school authorities think of them; they take it very personally if they are teased or ridiculed at school. The negative comments from the juvenile delinquents regarding school show their lack of interest in academics or a feeling that school is not an the correct environment for them. “*It is boring, I fall asleep in class, I don’t listen,*” says one delinquent sixteen-year-old. Another stated. “*I can’t get any help from the teacher and I have bad grades.*” “*I feel stupid at school,*” says another delinquent boy. Violent survey boys see themselves as smarter than the average student. They don’t like school for different reasons—usually unfair restrictions and a feeling that they are picked on:

“They don’t understand my perspective.” “I was trying to defend myself in a fight and got in trouble.” “I was singled out because of my appearance (mohawk, leather jacket, chains and such). The things that I would do right would be called wrong and everything I did was questioned.” “When people make fun of me, I get angry, they’re always talking trash to me” “Damn school sucks.” “I feel I—and nearly all of my classmates are victims of the incessant demonizing of youth that occurs at the hands of the media and through the ignorance and interference of special interest groups—I am sick of being harassed by school officials and police officers solely because of my age. The ‘unruly teenage hoodlum’ stereotype is as detrimental to human rights as racial profiling is.” Some violent survey boys even commented on the lack of discipline as a problem for them at school. One violent survey boy stated, *“What discipline? My dad said they spanked him at school, me they just send home. Too good to be true.”* Even the nonviolent boys are treated unfairly at school. *“My principal is a little crazy. She thinks the slightest touch (not sexually) of another person is against any discipline rules of the school. I tripped over my friend who was tying her shoe, and almost got suspended.”*

Violent girls are even more likely to dislike school than violent boys. Nearly one third of all violent girls say that school “feels like I’m in jail.” Nonviolent girls like school the best: 74% say that they like school or at least think it is ok. Only 6.06% feel like they’re in jail. Almost 56% of the violent girls feel treated unfairly at school compared to only 18% of the nonviolent girls. Many violent girls feel falsely accused of doing things they did not do at school. *“The teachers knew I did not do anything but they punished me anyway in an effort to get me kicked out of school. This is the reality of what is happening in high schools today,”* says one violent girl. Another violent girl felt expelled unfairly: *“I went mental... I am a manic depressive and I also have a morbid kinda humor as do lots of my friend.... I wrote a threatening message on the*

chalkboard... hey, yo ya’ll, I’m gonna kill ya all with my gun... haha just joking and I got kicked out... the school faculty knew I was just joking, but the headmaster of my prep-school didn’t like me because of my depression and how I treated myself... I’m a cutter and suicidal.” Both violent girls and nonviolent girls stated that schools have too many rules. But nonviolent girls tend to have less venom in their responses when describing what they perceive to be injustices at school. A nonviolent girl would tend to respond more directly about her frustrations. *“There are many restrictions in my school, and although I understand the purposes of the many regulations, I really don’t think that it’s fair to penalize the good students like myself because of the actions of others.”* Violent girls expressed their opinions in a more global manner, suggesting that rather than thinking through their responses, they simply say whatever comes to mind. For example, when talking about school authorities, one violent girl stated *“they’re gay and they treat us like babies.”*

What Is All The Anger About?

When you’re angry, anything can happen

—a 15-year-old girl answering the violence survey.

Violent girls and boys are both angrier than their nonviolent peers. A full 91% of violent girls are angry enough to hit someone compared to 49% of their nonviolent peers. One hundred percent of the juvenile delinquent boys are angry enough to hit someone compared to 89% of the violent survey boys and 70% of the nonviolent survey boys. Why are so many of these kids so angry? Girls and boys have different reasons for their anger. Both violent girls and nonviolent girls said they became angry when in specific situations: when picked on, put down, or disrespected; but violent girls were much more likely to describe a global or generalized anger at others (31% of the violent girls). People in general were described in derogatory terms

(e.g. “assholes”), and profanity was frequently used. When asked why they were angry enough to harm someone, violent girls are more likely to say: “*Everyone makes me mad,*” “*Just for the usual reasons,*” “*People can be assholes,*” “*They were pissing me off,*” “*Many things,*” “*bad days,*” “*various insults.*” In contrast, nonviolent girls were more likely to speak of a specific reason of injustice: “*A girl tried to beat up my friend,*” “*my brother hit me one time in the face,*” “*This girl got me kicked out of the Beta Club by reporting me to the assistant principal for nothing because she didn’t like me,*” “*My Mom accused me of having intercourse. I was still a virgin and still am.*”

What are the main reasons that girls feel angry enough to hit or hurt someone? The reasons that correlate with being angry enough to hit or hurt someone were loneliness, unfair treatment by adults, numbers of hours of television watching and bodily symptoms of anger. So girls who are lonely, who feel that adults treat them unfairly, who watch a lot of television and experience nervousness, shakiness, headaches and other symptoms of anger are more likely to strike out at other people. The Framingham Anger Scale measured the different way that violent and nonviolent kids handled anger. On the survey, the kids answered how they were likely to behave when they were really angry or annoyed. The anger scale then measures four different types of anger. The most healthy way of managing anger involves talking to another person such as a friend or relative (anger-discuss). The anger-in scale measures the suppression of angry feelings. In other words, does the child try to hold his or her anger inside? The anger-out subscale measures anger that is vented outwardly to other people in an attacking or blaming way. Finally, the last subscale is called anger-symptoms which measures rather intense physical symptoms experienced in reaction to anger arousal, such as severe headache, tension and shakiness. High scorers on anger-symptoms will “feel” their anger more intensely than other people. It used to be thought that women who scored high on anger symptoms tended to hold their anger in rather than venting it outwardly.

But this is not the case. Women who are high scorers on anger symptoms are more likely to vent anger outwardly.⁶ This means that girls who are violent feel their anger more intensely than nonviolent girls and are more likely to strike out. The bodily sensations of anger are described by one of the violent girls who took the Internet survey:

“When I was in sixth grade a boy stood in front of me and insulted me to my face. I got really angry because I wasn’t allowed to do anything to him. I remember that my face got hot and all I could picture for a few seconds was my fist punching the kid, William, in his nose, or eye. Next, my eyes flashed just total and solid red. And when he finally finished, I realized that my hands were clenched into fists so hard that my hands were starting to fall asleep and there were nail marks left. I hadn’t hit him because I knew I would get in trouble. It was like my mind was split into two halves, and they were arguing with each other whether to punch William or not to. It turned out later that year I wouldn’t need to punch William at all. Another kid in our class did that. He hit William so hard that his nose bled right into the snow.”

Boys report getting angry for different reasons than girls. Among the boys, there are differences between why juvenile delinquents, violent survey boys and nonviolent survey boys get angry. The most popular reason juvenile delinquent boys get angry is because they “got hit themselves” (25% of the juvenile delinquents gave this response) and almost 21% of the juvenile delinquent boys felt angry enough to hit if “people speak to me or look at me in a manner I don’t like such as curse at me.” About 13% of the boys were angry enough to hurt others because they felt others were making fun of them; another 13% felt generalized anger towards people in general. None of the juvenile delinquents reported being angry enough to harm others because of male/female relationships (e.g. if their girlfriend cheated on them). Eight percent would harm others for making fun of friends or family. In contrast, the violent survey boys were most likely to strike out if they felt other people were making fun of them (26% of all violent sur-

vey boys), 18% if they got hit themselves, 17% because of generalized anger, only 4% because of people looking at them or speaking in a manner they did not like such as cursing, 1% because someone made fun of their family and 2% for problems with male/female relationships. A relatively high percentage of nonviolent boys felt angry enough to harm others if they were picked on or made fun of (21.82%). Other reasons for nonviolent survey boys being angry enough to hit were generalized anger (16%), getting hit themselves (10%), people looking or speaking at them in a manner they did not like (1.82%), people making fun of friends or family (1.82%) or male/female relationships (less than 1%).

In summary, the majority of violent girls are provoked to anger because they feel angry and “pissed off” about life in general. They walk around in a general state of anger-arousal and can be set off easily. Nonviolent girls need a reason to get angry such as someone doing something directly to them such as treating them in a bad manner or hurting them. Juvenile delinquent boys are most likely to hurt others if someone throws the first punch or if others speak or look at them the wrong way. People speaking (cursing) or looking at them the wrong way does not seem to bother violent survey boys as much. They are most sensitive to being personally picked on or made fun of. Many of the school killers were described this way, as basically nonviolent kids who struck out only when they were ridiculed or teased at school. Apparently, teasing and being considered as different is enough to set off the violent survey boys. Nonviolent boys also do not like being picked on but they have some coping mechanisms for not lashing out (since they are not in the violent group). When comparing the bodily sensations of anger (anger-symptoms) girls score much higher on this scale and therefore feel anger much more intensely than boys. However, girls also score higher on the anger-discuss scale which means they are more likely than boys to turn to someone to talk to when they do get upset or angry. This may account in part for why girls do not act out as violently as boys; they are more willing to seek help.

“Mean” Classmates And Loneliness : A Recipe For Disaster?

Violent survey boys and violent girls are a lonely lot: 91% of violent girls are lonely as compared to 72% of violent survey boys. This is in comparison to juvenile delinquent boys who report being lonely only 47.83% of the time; nonviolent boys—lonely 47% of the time—and 60% of nonviolent girls feeling lonely. How do these kids handle being lonely? If juvenile delinquent boys are lonely, they tend to do nothing (8.7%), sleep (8.7%), talk to someone (21.74%), sit in their room alone and think (17.39%) or do other things, such as writing, poetry, running or drinking (17.39%). Typical responses to loneliness from juvenile delinquent boys were: “*I sleep it off,*” “*I sit in my room,*” “*I just sit there and ignore it,*” or “*I talk to mom.*” The nonviolent survey boys rarely do nothing when lonely (less than 1%). Twenty-six percent of them write, do poetry, drink, eat or play computer games; 17% talk to someone or go online; 6% sleep; 7% go in their room alone and think; 1.82% cry; 7% listen to music. Nonviolent boys were likely to take a constructive approach to being lonely such as talking to others. Common responses from nonviolent boys were, “*I usually just relax and listen to music or a read a book or watch TV*” or “*I give my girlfriend a call*” or “*I give my friends a call.*” Some of the nonviolent boys did admit to drinking when lonely but still were not violent. “*I drink and listen to music when I’m lonely. People my age always say ‘I drink socially.’ Well, I say I drink antisocially.*” In contrast, the violent survey boys were the least likely of the three groups to talk to someone or go online when they are lonely (only 6%). They are most likely to write, do poetry, drink, eat or play computer games (41%); go to their room alone (11%), cry (2%) or listen to music (10%). Violent survey boys usually do something solitary when lonely or do something destructive, “*I talk to myself or watch TV,*” says one violent survey boy. Others say, “*I cry and go some-*

where to be alone.” “I sit by myself.” “I get mad at people.” “I hurt someone and get angry.” The violent survey boys seemed most isolated in their loneliness, as if it were their burden alone, with no one available to help. “Does it really matter?” asks one violent boy in response to what he does when lonely. Thirty-three percent of the violent survey boys feel disliked by their classmates compared to 25% of the juvenile delinquents and 27% of the nonviolent boys. The main reason the violent survey boys feel disliked is that they are “seen as different.” The juvenile delinquents feel more liked than the nonviolent boys at school, probably because they are an exciting bunch. Juvenile delinquent boys can be quite charming; they are usually bad boys that girls like and boys find exciting to hang around. If they feel disliked by peers, it is usually because they are viewed as “mean.” Nonviolent boys seemed to have little clue about why they were not liked. One nonviolent boy stated sadly, “I have no idea why my classmates don’t like me. It’s like they got together and decided not to. I wish I’d been in on the meeting.”

Despite more girls than boys admitting feeling lonely, girls also reach out more often to other people for help. Twenty-two percent of the violent girls talk to others when lonely or go online compared to 24% of the nonviolent girls. Fifty-one percent of the violent girls write, do poetry, go running, eat, drink or play computer games, others listen to music (16%), cry (16%) or sit alone and think (16%). Nonviolent girls do not sit alone as often (7.58%) and do not cry as often (10%) and fewer of them engage in writing, running, drinking eating or playing computer games when lonely (28%). Loneliness is very destructive for both violent and nonviolent girls. Violent girls were more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors, such as punching walls and both violent and nonviolent girls admitted to cutting themselves. Solutions for feeling lonely from both violent and nonviolent girls were quite disturbing. “I set crap on fire and DESTROY,” says one violent girl. One nonviolent girl says, “I get depressed when lonely, then I take something sharp and slice myself.”

A slightly higher percentage of violent girls feel disliked by classmates (36%) than the violent survey boys (33%). The most popular reason for not being liked by girls was being viewed as “different.” In fact, correlates of feeling angry enough to hurt others for girls mainly had to do with feeling alienated: loneliness, unfair treatment by adults, not liked by classmates, number of hours of television watching and somatic anger symptoms caused angry girls to strike out. The nonviolent girls feel more accepted by classmates, only 18% feel disliked.

Life At Home: Not So Bad?

What about their home life? Isn’t that really where all the problems are coming from, at least according to the media and school systems? This turns out not to be the case. The majority of the kids reported that they were treated fairly at home. The juvenile delinquent boys felt treated the most fairly of all the groups regarding discipline at home (83% felt treated fairly). Of the 17% who are treated unfairly, unfair punishment was the reason given most often by the juvenile delinquent boys. The violent survey boys felt treated the most unfairly with almost one-third saying that they were treated unfairly, but this still leaves 67% who felt their parents handled discipline fairly. It is interesting that the reason given most often for unfair treatment at home by the violent survey boys was that their parents were too strict. Seventy-eight percent of nonviolent survey boys felt treated fairly regarding discipline at home and 22% unfairly. The reason nonviolent boys give for feeling that they are treated unfairly is that their siblings get away with everything. Among the nonviolent girls, 25% felt treated unfairly and 75% felt treated fairly; this is in contrast to 40% of the violent girls who felt treated unfairly and 60% saying they were treated fairly. Just like the violent survey boys, the violent girls give the reason for unfairness as overly strict parents. The most popular answer with the nonviolent girls was that their siblings got away with everything. What do these

answers mean in terms of whether discipline at home reduces or increases violence? The answer appears clear for some of the groups. Many of the juvenile delinquent boys are being raised by single mothers or relatives who have little control over what these kids are doing. They feel they are treated “fairly” because there is little, if any supervision. To the juvenile delinquents, no discipline constitutes fair treatment since they have difficulty tolerating others telling them what to do. They are free to roam the neighborhood to commit various crimes for which they spend time in juvenile detention (or not). The nonviolent boys and girls in the United States (much like the nonviolent kids in other countries) feel that their parents favoring their other siblings constitutes unfair treatment.

These problems seem to be an indication that parents of nonviolent children are more involved in disciplining their children and setting rules (at least for the child complaining that their siblings are getting away with everything). Yet it is interesting that the *most* violent kids (both boys and girls) feel their parents are “too strict.” This could be for a number of reasons. It may be that violent kids have the hardest time following any rules at all and perceive their parents to be too strict when in reality they are not. Or it could be that their parents are strict but they see their friends’ parents as lenient and therefore react by becoming increasingly rebellious. Still, the majority of violent survey boys say they are treated fairly at home. Probably what they consider to be fair discipline at home is being ignored and left to their own devices. It is apparent that American kids do not respond well to discipline. Discipline of any kind at home was seen as unfair even by the nonviolent survey kids. “*I have to do chores and my dad doesn’t and I don’t even get paid for it!*” says one nonviolent boy. At the same time their parents are providing little discipline, violent survey boys feel most treated like babies and overprotected by parents. Many of them felt that the discipline administered at home reflected their parents’ idea that they were babies as well as a lack of understanding about what happens in their daily lives at school. “*My parents have an unrealistic idea of the mental age of chil-*

dren and they have NO IDEA of the real substance of my daily life,” says one violent boy. Even many of the nonviolent survey boys felt that their parents did not understand the realities of their lives. “*I was grounded for being bisexual, how fucking fair is that?*” says one angry nonviolent boy.

None of the kids in the survey sample mentioned directly being abused at home, either verbally or physically. The survey did not ask the kids direct questions about abuse since doing so would not be deemed ethical when there could be no followup with the kids who responded. When I questioned my colleagues as to why they thought there was so little mention of parental abuse, most of them felt that kids would not say anything (despite the survey being anonymous) for fear the Child Protective Services would come after them or their parents. However, the kids told me other things that were equally disturbing and equally likely to get them into trouble, such as confessing that they had brought a gun or weapon to school. Possibly it is true that not many of these middle to upper-middle class kids are being abused. I frequently see violent kids who think the world is unfair to them and who are angry whenever someone imposes rules or regulations on them. But it seems that the violent kids would have been consistent in their responses to discipline at home and at school, feeling that it was unfair at both. However, the majority felt treated fairly at home and unfairly at school. Perhaps we have to take their criticisms seriously and see what it is in our school systems that may be causing kids to become violent. This will be discussed in the next chapter. Next, we will look at the numbers of kids who carry weapons.

Weapons, Zero Tolerance And Curfews

Despite all of the zero tolerance laws, kids admit that they are carrying a number of weapons. Surprisingly, 54% of the violent girls have carried a weapon to school including knives (36%), guns (7%), and other weapons (11%) which include box cutters, razors, brass knuckles, chains, bats, clubs, machetes and garrotes. The majority of violent girls also know others who bring weapons to school (71%), including knives (31%), guns (22%), bats (2%), and bombs, ice picks and brass knuckles (7%). Although none of the nonviolent girls had brought weapons to school, almost one-half knew kids who did (49%). These other weapons include knives (27%), guns (9%), razors and box cutters (2%), and other weapons (4%). Violent survey boys are the group most likely to bring a weapon to school as 65% reported having done so. These weapons include knives (46%), guns (8%), and other weapons such as bombs, pipe bombs and brass knuckles (11%).

The juvenile delinquent boys were the most likely to bring a gun to school. Fifty percent brought weapons to school but 25% brought guns (as opposed to only 8% of the violent survey boys) and 25% brought knives. None of the nonviolent boys brought weapons to school. However, they were likely to know someone who did: 60% answered yes to the question, “do you know someone who has brought a weapon to school?” Seventy-nine percent of the juvenile delinquents and 73% of the violent survey boys knew others who brought weapons to school. The juvenile delinquents were the group most likely to know others who had brought a gun (54%) and the violent survey boys were most likely to know others who had brought knives (32%). Bombs and pipe bombs were only mentioned by the violent survey boys. Probably the juvenile delinquents and nonviolent boys have no reason for bombs at school as opposed to the violent survey boys who are the most likely to strike out at “random” (or at any rate large) groups at school. It

should be noted, however, that bombs were rarely mentioned as a weapon they had brought or knew others to have brought.

Zero tolerance laws and curfews were given a thumbs down as being ineffective in reducing teen violence. The juvenile delinquent boys were the most likely to think that zero tolerance worked— 57% said it was effective in keeping weapons out of schools. The violent survey boys were the least enthusiastic about zero tolerance with 76% saying it is ineffective compared to 54% of the nonviolent boys. Violent girls also found zero tolerance to be ineffective with 73% saying it does not work compared to only 44% of the nonviolent girls saying it does not work. Many of the violent kids mentioned that they had gotten away with bringing weapons to school despite the zero tolerance rules, so obviously they have first hand knowledge of whether or not this approach works.

Finally, curfews were seen by the majority of all groups as ineffective for reducing teen crime. Fifty-eight percent of the juvenile delinquents, 78% of the violent survey boys and 62% of the nonviolent boys said curfews are ineffective. Similarly, sixty-nine percent of violent girls and 55% of nonviolent girls found them to be ineffective. Many of the teens were upset by curfews, stating that they were all punished for the misdeeds of a few bad kids. The following lists will summarize the differences between the various groups of boys and girls.

Comparison Of Juvenile Delinquents, Violent Survey Boys And Nonviolent Survey Boys

Juvenile Delinquents (boys only)

- on average, are fourteen and in 9th grade
- will often state that they like school (58% like it or at least think it is “okay”)
- have more chance of being in special education with 30% being in some type of special classes
- 50% bring weapons to school and are equally likely to bring a gun or knife (50% bring knives, 50% bring guns)

- typically have a juvenile record, usually for assault
- have been expelled from school, the majority of the time for assault
- tend to feel liked by their classmates
- *always* answer “yes” to the question, “Are you angry enough to hit someone?” (100%)
- are most likely to strike out because people look at them the wrong way or someone hits them (21%)
- are more likely to know other kids who have brought a gun to school (79%)
- typically say that they get along “good” or ok with their family (92%)
- are more likely than not to say zero tolerance is effective (57% say it is effective)
- 61% of them watch wrestling on TV
- are more likely to say that TV does not make kids violent (61%) though 17% of those who believe TV causes kids to be violent believe it does so because kids model what they see
- typically watch three or more hours of television a day
- feel other people care for them, most likely their mother or other adult such as a teacher or parole officer or relatives
- are about equally likely to feel lonely as not lonely (52% feel lonely)
- most likely to do nothing, sleep or talk to someone if feeling lonely
- 43% feel treated unfairly at school, mainly because they feel they were punished for something that other kids got away with
- The majority feel treated fairly regarding discipline at home (83%) and most deny any physical or verbal abuse
- the majority feel treated fairly by adults and 0% feel treated like babies
- the majority feel that curfews do not cut down on teen crime
- are most likely to feel bodily sensations of anger such as headaches, shakiness and tension

Violent Survey Boys

- are typically 15-18 years old
- are probably smarter than the average kid
- almost one-fourth say that school is “like a jail sentence”
- are the most likely of the groups to dislike school (46%)
- are not likely to be in special education
- will most likely strike out if peers make fun of them
- about one-third feel disliked by peers, mainly because they are “different”
- are the most likely of all boys to bring a weapon to school (65%), mainly knives but 8% bring guns
- 50% have been expelled from school, 20% of the time for assault
- most likely of the groups to feel disliked by peers (33% feel disliked)
- 89% say they are angry enough to hit or harm others
- roughly half of the time have been charged with a juvenile offense but mainly for nonviolent offenses such as theft
- are the most likely to say that they do not get along with their families (18%), mainly because they feel too sheltered
- feel that zero tolerance does not work to keep weapons out of school (76%)
- 46% watch wrestling on television
- one-half of them feel television does not make kids violent but of those who do, 35% of them say that television desensitizes kids to violence
- the majority of them watch one to two hours of television per day
- they are the most lonely group with 72% saying they are lonely
- in response to loneliness, they are most likely to write, do poetry, run, drink, eat or play computer games; they are the least likely to talk to others or go online when lonely; they are the least likely in general to talk to others when upset or angry

- they are the group most likely to feel treated unfairly regarding discipline at school (56%), mainly because they feel blamed for things they did not do and that the rules that are supposed to apply to everyone are applied unfairly
- they are the most likely of the groups to feel treated unfairly at home, mainly because their parents are too strict but some complained of a lack of discipline
- 60% feel treated unfairly by adults, mainly because they feel treated like babies; some said adults don't discipline enough and others said they overreact with stringent discipline
- do not think curfews are helpful in reducing teen crime (78% say no, not helpful)

Nonviolent Survey Boys

- are usually in 10th or 11th grade and 15-17 years old
- 43% of the students dislike school, with 14% saying "it feels like jail"
- are usually in regular classroom (89%)
- the majority have not been expelled (78%), if they have it is for a nonviolent offense
- most feel liked by classmates (73%)
- 70% are angry enough to hit or harm someone, usually for people making fun of them or because of generalized anger (much like the violent girls). They are unlikely to strike out angrily if others hit them first
- none admit to bringing weapons to school
- 60% know others who have brought weapons to school, mainly knives (31%) or guns (21%)
- have not been charged with a juvenile offense
- most get along with their families (93%), few do not get along (7%)
- the majority feel zero tolerance is ineffective (54%)
- over one-half do not watch wrestling (58% do not)
- 54% think television makes kids violent, mainly because kids model what they see

- The majority watch one to two hours of television per day (48%), 13% say they watch no TV at all (compared to 4% of juvenile delinquents and 5% of violent survey boys)
- 95% have people who care for them: peers, mom, dad and teachers
- 47% feel lonely, but 17% of them talk to someone and 26% write, do poetry, run, eat, drink or play computer games
- 65% feel treated fairly at school
- 78% feel treated fairly at home; if treated unfairly it is usually because their siblings get away with everything
- 54% feel treated unfairly by adults, mainly because adults stereotype kids and treat them like criminals (60%), they don't discipline enough and at the same time overreact with stringent rules
- 61% say curfews are not helpful in reducing teen crime

Comparison Of Violent Girls and Nonviolent Girls

Violent Girls:

- are typically in 8th grade and 13-14 years old
- 51% dislike school and one-third say school "feels like a jail sentence"
- are typically in regular classrooms (91%) with 9% in special education
- about one-half have been expelled or suspended (48%), mainly for assault (22%)
- are more likely than nonviolent girls to feel disliked by classmates (36% feel disliked)
- 91% are angry enough to harm others, mainly because of generalized anger (a global feeling of anger)
- 53% had brought a weapon to school, mainly a knife (36%) but almost 7% had brought a gun
- the majority knew others who had brought weapons to school (71%)

- 47% have been charged with a juvenile offense, most frequently a nonviolent offense such as theft or shoplifting but the second most common charge was assault
- they are more likely than nonviolent girls to report not getting along well with their families (24%), mainly because they do not get along with their parents and/or feel too sheltered at home. None admitted any verbal or physical abuse and none reported problems with siblings.
- the majority thought zero tolerance was ineffective (73%)
- 44% watch wrestling
- watch more television than nonviolent girls—almost one-third of the sample watched 3 or more hours of television
- 59% think television makes kids more violent, mainly because kids model what they see and it desensitizes them to violence
- 93% of the violent girls feel they have others who care for them including friends or peers, their mom, dad, teachers, parole officer or minister
- but they feel very lonely: 91% of them; when lonely they mainly talk to someone or go online, cry or sit in their room and think, or write, do poetry, go running, drinking, eat, or play computer games
- the majority feel treated unfairly regarding discipline at school (56%)
- 40% feel treated unfairly regarding discipline at home, mainly because they feel their parents are too strict
- the majority feel treated unfairly by adults (76%); 16% of them say adults treat them like babies
- 69% feel that curfews are ineffective in cutting down on teen crime
- have more intense bodily sensations than nonviolent girls when angry including tension, headaches, nervousness and shakiness

Nonviolent Girls

- the majority are in 12th grade and first year of college (ages 17-18)
- generally say they like school or it is at least “okay” (74%)
- are in regular classrooms
- rarely are expelled or suspended (over 90% are not)
- most feel liked by classmates (81%)
- almost half feel angry enough to harm others (49%), mainly angry because others make fun of them or disrespect them
- never carry a weapon to school but almost one-half of them know someone who does, mainly a knife
- do not have juvenile charges against them, even for nonviolent crimes
- get along “good” or okay with their family (84%)
- over half think that zero tolerance is effective for keeping weapons out of schools (55%)
- do not typically watch wrestling (83% do not)
- the majority watch one to two hours of television per day (48%)
- the majority think television makes kids more violent (64%) because it desensitizes kids to violence (39%)
- most feel that other people care about them (95%), most often teachers, their family, friends or their mom
- often feel lonely (60%) but have good coping skills—24% of them talk to someone or go online
- most feel treated fairly regarding discipline at school (82%)
- the majority feel treated fairly regarding discipline at home (75%), of the 25% who feel treated unfairly, the main reason is that their siblings get away with everything
- over half feel treated unfairly by adults (54%), the main reasons being because adults see teens as criminals or stereotype them (14%) and they are treated like babies (14%)
- over one-half think curfews are ineffective for reducing teen crime (55%)

International Results

I became so angry once that I nearly cut my own wrists, my Dad walked in and I put the knife down and pretended I'd just had a sandwich. Then it occurred to me that I shouldn't be doing this, I put the knife in my school bag and went to bed. The next morning I realized I was being stupid and put the knife away.

– 14-year-old girl from Kent, England.

There were over 70 surveys submitted from kids and teens in other countries including England, Ireland, Indonesia, Australia, Mexico, Sweden, Guam, Scotland and New Zealand with the majority of non-American surveys coming from Canada. Because there were only 32 surveys from kids from other countries besides Canada, the results I will present will be mainly impressionistic but are highly interesting. I will first discuss the results of all other countries with the exception of Canada. The Canadian kids seem to have their own unique set of characteristics that will be presented separately. Although many of the non-American kids felt treated unfairly at school (26%) they did not consider school to be as oppressive as their American peers. In all countries other than Canada, fewer than 1% of kids felt that school was like a jail sentence for them. There was a lower percentage of violent kids among the non-American students—only 16%, with 80% of the violent kids being boys and 20% girls. Thirteen percent said they had brought a weapon to school (either a knife or other weapon). Apparently, the United States is not the only country where kids feel angry and frustrated. Fifty-six percent of the non-American kids felt angry enough to hit or harm someone. Many of the kids were angry about being bullied or teased at school. *“These girls were bitching at me behind my back but loud enough for me to hear. I felt like killing them,”* said a nonviolent fourteen-year-old girl from England. The non-American students spent

very little time in juvenile detention with fewer than 2% having been charged with a juvenile offense. Despite the media's constant message that American children are abused and do not have good family relations, even violent American kids admitted to getting along better with their families than did kids from other countries. Of all the violent American kids surveyed, only 19% answered “not so good” when asked how they got along with their families followed by only 7% of non-violent American kids answering “not so good.” Only 14% of the violent American kids felt treated unfairly regarding discipline at home and 24% of the nonviolent kids felt treated unfairly at home. Compare these percentages with the non-American kids: about 20% of the non-American students considered themselves to get along poorly with their families and 43% felt treated unfairly at home. The kids who did not get along well with their families mentioned problems getting along with parents and siblings as the main reasons. *“I had a fight with my parents when they were fighting about getting a divorce and it was like they were asking me to tell them who I loved more and I couldn't handle it so I hit the walls and stuff,”* said one Australian 14-year-old girl. *“Mum sometimes takes her bad moods out on me at certain times of the month, if you know what I mean,”* says another Australian teen. *“My sister will wind me up and then I'll retaliate and get all the blame,”* says a girl from England. Unlike the American kids, some of the non-American kids directly mentioned being in abusive home environment, *“I'm being treated unfairly because I still live in an abusive household,”* says a sixteen-year-old boy in Australia.

Teens in other countries still suffer from normal teenage angst and loneliness but not to the extent that American teens do. Sixty percent of the violent non-American students felt sad and lonely compared to 54% of their nonviolent peers. In the United States, 72% of the violent survey boys and 91% of violent girls feel lonely. However, more of the violent non-American kids felt disliked by peers: 61% of the non-American violent kids felt their classmates did not like them com-

pared to 21% of their nonviolent peers. This is in contrast to 34% of violent American kids who feel disliked by their classmates and 24% of the nonviolent kids feel disliked by peers. Non-American students watch quite a bit of television with 100% stating that they watch at least some television with the average being two to three hours per day. Most of the kids mentioned watching American shows such as *SouthPark*, *Buffy*, *the Vampire Slayer*, *World Wide Wrestling* and *Friends*. Despite watching a great deal of television and having a low percentage of violent kids, the non-American kids mainly agreed that television caused kids to become violent. One boy from New Zealand said that the survey was “too TV oriented.” *“I feel the problem is in society and the way it allocates blame. Very rarely are those who committed the crime, their parents (if kids) or those who pushed them over the edge at fault. Instead it is one removed—the gun industry that supplied the weapons, for example. With reference to the Columbine shootings, and most other violence occurring at schools—people tend to lash out at those who have taunted them.”*

The majority of the non-American kids said that curfews did not work and many stated that they had no such governmental restrictions. *“Here in Ireland, we don’t have such laws;” “We do as we like;” “Curfews don’t help. They don’t give children the responsibility to look out for themselves.” “The authorities over there just have another excuse to arrest teenagers.” “You can’t stop crimes with locks. It can only be stopped by a change of mentality.”* Many of the non-American kids thought that zero tolerance would not work to keep weapons out of schools. Reasons were numerous: *“it doesn’t give children an outlet to vent unexpressed anger.” “It just gives teens another chance to rebel.” “It doesn’t find out the reason that kids need to kill.”* Still others did not know what zero tolerance was since they had no such laws in their country. *“I’m not sure about zero tolerance, schooling in Australia is so different. I have never known or heard of someone bringing a weapon to school.”*

We can learn a lot from the data on non-American kids

about the young people in our own country. Many non-American students feel angry, but do not become violent to the extent that American (and Canadian) kids do. Almost half of the non-American students felt treated unfairly regarding discipline at home. This is probably because they actually have discipline instilled in them at home as compared to the average American kid, who rarely gets more than a time out for acting poorly. Although the non-American students probably get more discipline at home, the foreign schools don’t seem to have the numerous restrictions such as zero tolerance and curfews that American schools have imposed on the students. They don’t need it as much. If parents are providing more discipline in non-American homes, chances are their kids have internalized more self-control and a sense of responsibility. On the other hand, American kids get less discipline at home yet more and more restrictions are placed on them at school.

It could be that this discrepancy between their home and school life is what sets off the violent kids (some to the point of murder) and makes the nonviolent ones angry but not to the point of harming others. Unfortunately, American society and its schools have usurped parental power a little bit at a time. But the government did not just one day take away the power of parents—baby-boomer parents surrendered their rights as they bought into the nostrums of their mental health gurus. They were brainwashed into believing that to tell their children that they are “bad” or to discipline them using corporal punishment was evil. As the government became more involved in child raising, parents relinquished their rights for “the good of the children.” Time-outs and being “non-judgmental” have become the rage since parents were discouraged (or threatened with lawsuits, jail time or having their children taken away) from using verbal or physical reprimands as a means of discipline. But the former methods have done little to instill responsibility and a sense of duty in our children and now we are all paying the ultimate price. We are in fear of our children and our children are losing their freedoms on a daily basis.

Parents made the mistake of thinking that they were doing

their kids a favor not to discipline them in direct ways and by equating leniency with kindness. But kids get their expectations about the world from the way their parents have treated and disciplined them. What are kids—especially violent ones—learning about the outside world from the way they are disciplined at home? They expect the same lenient treatment in the greater society and are often scared and shocked to find out they must deal with a system at school very unlike the one their parents have taught them. There is a dichotomy between the leniency of their home life and the strictness of their school life: combine this with little inner self-control and high expectations that things will go their way and many kids find themselves angry and resentful at school. It is little wonder that we now are facing problems of the magnitude we saw at Columbine High School. In Chapter Seven, we will look more in depth at discipline issues at home and at school to find some ways to help reduce this dichotomy. But first, let's turn to the Canadian kids.

The Canadian Kids

What about Canadian kids and teens? How are they different from the kids from other countries in their attitudes about violence? First of all, there was a much higher percentage of Canadian kids who were violent as compared to other international kids—32% of the Canadian kids were violent compared to 16% of the international kids. There were 41 surveys from Canadian teens and kids. Most interesting was the composition of those kids who were violent—there was a high percentage of violent girls: 42% of the violent Canadian kids were girls and 58% were boys. The majority of violent kids in Canada do not like school with 58% of them responding that school “feels like jail or could be better.” However, 44% of the non-violent kids had the same negative feelings toward school. Canadian kids are angry—overall, 75% of the violent kids were angry enough to hit or harm someone as compared to 72% of

the nonviolent kids. Eighty-eight percent of the violent Canadian boys were angry enough to harm someone compared to 71% of the nonviolent Canadian boys. Both violent and non-violent boys voiced anger because of negative experiences with being teased or upset at school. Violent Canadian boys were angry about a number of things: “*I am angry about hypocrites, religion, pressure and frustration;*” “*people that annoy me or disturb me make me angry as well as stupid people who’s IQ is not even above 90 [sic] and don’t mind their business piss me off.*” “*I am angry enough to hurt someone when I am being teased because I am more cerebral than the other children and as a result have next to no friends.*” “*They were laughing at me and making fun of my mom,*” said one violent 18-year-old boy from Nova Scotia.” Nonviolent boys voiced more global concerns such as “*I’m angry because everyone at school is stupid,*” “*little arguments that escalate,*” “*a lot of stuff makes me angry.*” Eighty percent of the violent girls were angry enough to hit or hurt someone. Just like the American girls, the violent Canadian girls’ responses showed generalized anger. “*I am angry about lots of things*” and “*I was having a bad day*” were typical responses. Nonviolent Canadian girls are angrier than their American counterparts—68% of the nonviolent Canadian girls were angry enough to hit or harm someone compared to 49% of nonviolent American girls. The nonviolent Canadian girls made angry statements about their peers and school, sometimes to the point of murderous fantasies. “*They made me feel like I was worth nothing and couldn’t do anything right,*” says one nonviolent girl. “*People talking behind my back and starting rumors make me mad.*” “*Once my best friend kicked me in the stomach so hard I could not breathe. I broke her nose.*” “*I just get sick and tired of all the ridicule I receive from all the other students. I often fantasize about murderous rampages. It makes me feel satisfied when I dream of them suffering.*”

Do violent Canadian kids carry weapons to school like so many of the American kids do? The answer is yes, but mainly they carry knives instead of guns. Forty-six percent of the vio-

lent kids carried a weapon to school; all mentioned knives except one who brought a “paint ball gun.” Despite the tight gun-control laws that Canada has implemented in recent years, 87% of the violent kids admitted they knew other students who carried weapons to school. These weapons included guns (50%), knives (42%) and swords (less than 1%). The types of guns mentioned were a sawed-off shotgun, a 9 mm Beretta and other semi-automatic pistols. There were responses from kids that indicated that certain Canadian schools had kids who brought guns and knives on a regular basis. For example, one violent boy stated, “*there are stupid idiots who would bring knives and semi-automatic pistols in my old school.*”

It is important that researchers in Canada look into the reasons that so many of their students are angry and have such negative feelings about the Canadian school system. Canada, like the United States, has also had its share of school shootings. Last year, a fourteen-year-old boy shot two students at a high school in Alberta, killing one. In February of 2000, there were three teenage boys at a Toronto high school who were injured in a schoolyard shooting over a minor dispute. If the kids who filled out my violence survey are any indication of how kids in Canada feel about school, peers and their lives in general, there is a serious need to explore why kids there are so angry (especially the girls) and what can be done to improve their situation.

* * * * *

So now that we have a better understanding of why kids in America (and non-American kids) are so angry, some to the point of harming others, what can we do to improve the lives of kids in our own country? The next chapter will present some suggestions for schools, teachers and parents to use in order to protect our children from the dangerous influences that are rampant in our American society.

Notes

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