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Gender and Violent Victimization, 1973-2005

**FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT
for grant: NIJ 2007-IJ-CX-0026**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to estimate previously unknown long-term trends in violent victimization by gender and various socio-demographic factors. These factors included race and ethnicity, age, type of place (urban, suburban, rural), socio-economic status, marital status (for adults), and family status (for juveniles). We also further disaggregated these violent victimization trends by victim-offender relationship to reveal previously unknown trends in violence committed by strangers, intimate partners, and known/non-intimate offenders. Without basic information about such long-term trends, the scientific understanding of violence against women is seriously hampered. Moreover, our understanding of crime trends in general is incomplete and remains predicated on the assumption that there is no important variation in trends across subgroups. We produced these various trends in violent victimization by pooling and appropriately weighting the only source of national data capable of providing reliable trend estimates – the National Crime Survey and its successor, the National Crime Victimization Survey for the period 1973 to 2005. In total, we developed a series of 135 previously unknown trends in violent victimization.

The trends we produce reveal a great deal of variation across subgroups. They also reveal a great deal of variation according to victim-offender relationship. Each set of trends is in need of additional research designed to better understand the sources of similarity and variation over time. New lines of research to investigate a variety of comparative hypotheses and distinguish the factors associated with short- versus long-run changes in violence are now possible. In addition, these data provide important historical information which can be used to better understand the potential effects that various policies may have had on different forms of violence, such as intimate partner and stranger victimization.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this project was to respond to a recent National Academy of Sciences report on violence against women which demonstrated that current knowledge about trends in women's victimization in the United States, particularly within major socio-demographic risk groups, is inadequate (Kruttschnitt, McLaughlin, and Petrie, 2004). Without basic information about such long-term trends, the scientific understanding of violence against women is seriously hampered. Because existing research on violence against women often focuses on cross-sectional data and, to a lesser extent, on recent short-term trends, we have very little knowledge about long-term trends in victimization and the ways in which these may be different and similar for females and males. Moreover, prior to our research, it was unknown how these trends varied across important socio-demographic groups.

To respond to these gaps in our knowledge about long-term patterns of non-lethal violence against women, our project used the National Crime Survey (NCS) and National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to produce national trends in violent victimization for key socio-demographic subgroups of females and males, for the years 1973 through 2005. These subgroups were determined by the following demographic variables: race and ethnicity, age, type of place (urban, suburban, rural), socioeconomic status, marital status (for adults), and family status (for juveniles). These trends also were disaggregated by victim-offender relationship. Our work has been to produce the trend estimates that can be used in future work and by other investigators to assess possible explanations of female and male violent victimization across socio-demographic subgroups and by victim-offender relationship. The

trends we produce also can be used in future research to examine possible links between women's victimization and changes in policy to address violence against women.

Research Strategy

This research produced previously unknown trends by pooling and appropriately weighting the only source of data capable of providing reliable national trend estimates – the National Crime Survey and its successor, the National Crime Victimization Survey. The NCS/NCVS is a large sample survey representative of persons ages 12 and older, and of households in the United States. Because of the large sample size and excellent response rate, the NCS/NCVS can be used to generate reliable annual estimates of violence.

Our research capitalized on the existence of these data and employed appropriate weighting and estimation procedures to produce female and male trends from 1973 through 2005 for race and ethnicity, marital status (for persons age 18 and above), urban, rural, and suburban place of residence, age, poverty status, and family status (for youths ages 12 to 17) subgroups. The present research also estimated trends for each of these subgroups by victim-offender relationship to distinguish violence committed by strangers, intimate partners, and known/non-intimate offenders. The specific procedures employed to compute and weight the trend data, to ensure that it is comparable over time, are described in detail in the Final Technical Report. These procedures comprise a complex multi-step process, and thus the research involved several verification procedures, also described in the full report.

Violent victimization was defined to include attempted and completed crimes of rape, robbery, aggravated assault and simple assault. The research produced estimates of overall (total) violent victimization rather than specific crime types (such as robbery) because the data cannot support reliable estimates of some types of violence across socio-demographic categories

and victim-offender relationships. Also, to reduce fluctuations associated with sampling error, the data points provided are three-year moving averages for each of the subgroup violent victimization trends, with the exception of the overall trends by gender which are not reported as three-year moving averages. Finally, the trends reported for victim-offender relationship are for 1980 to 2005 only, due to changes in the coding of victim-offender relationship in 1980.

Key Findings

Our research produced data points for 135 trend lines. All trends are presented in figures and described in the full report. The development of these trends lays the foundation for researchers to begin investigating a variety of important research hypotheses, including analyses that distinguish explanations of short- versus long-run changes in violence within and across socio-demographic and victim-offender relationship subgroups. The trend data also provide important historical and contextual information that can serve as the basis for research on national-scope violence reduction policies.

Overall, we find substantial variation in the trends we generate. In this summary, we present four select figures from our final report, to illustrate a subset of the findings. Readers are referred to the final report for trends in other subgroups and further discussion of the data presented here.

We highlight race and ethnicity in this summary because these findings are quite illuminating and offer many potentially fruitful avenues for future research. Our project estimated trends for Latina/o, non-Latina/o black, and non-Latina/o white females and males, separately. This disaggregation proves to be crucial for understanding patterns of non-lethal race, ethnicity and victimization, as is evidenced below. Previous research using the NCS and NCVS has not disentangled ethnicity from race, and as a result, previously reported patterns may have

been somewhat misleading. The two figures below present our estimates for non-Latino black, Latino and non-Latino white females and males, respectively.

----- Insert Executive Summary Figures I and II here -----

The figures show that the female and male violent victimization rates for all three race/ethnic groups are relatively stable during the 1970s and 1980s with some minor increases and decreases. For both females and males, the rates for all three race/ethnicity groups reached a series high between 1992 and 1994, and then dropped dramatically during the crime drop of the late 1990s, to reach a three-decade low in the early years of the 21st century. Moreover, the figures for both females and males show that combining race data across ethnicity would mask potentially important differences. The patterns of victimization for Latino females and males are more similar to those of non-Latino blacks than to non-Latino whites up until the crime peak in the early 1990s. After this point, the Latino rates become closer to those for non-Latino whites, particularly among females. These patterns are clearly important for understanding the role of race and ethnicity in the victimization patterns of women and men, and provide fertile material for subsequent research.

Another important aspect of gendered victimization, long noted by research on violence against women, is the difference across women and men in relationships between victims and offenders. The data in the next two figures give our NCS-NCVS estimates of trends in intimate partner, stranger, and known/non-intimate non-lethal violent victimization for the period 1980 through 2005, the period for which these rates can be computed accurately. Broadly, these figures show that for both females and males, stranger violence occurred at higher rates than other forms of violence from 1980 through the early 1990s. After the crime peak in the early 1990s, victimization in all victim-offender groups decreased. Unique to female victims,

however, is the fact that violence by known/non-intimates increased at a faster rate than stranger violence in the early 1990s and, in fact, exceeded rates of violence by strangers from 1992 through 2003. Among males, the gap between stranger and known/non-intimate partner victimization is more substantial than among females, although it does appear to close somewhat during the crime decline of the late 1990s and into the 2000s. Another key difference among females and males is that intimate partner violence accounts for a substantial share of all violent victimization among females, and the rates among males are so low that they cannot be estimated reliably. Moreover, the female figure shows that the gap or difference between intimate partner violence and violence by strangers and known non-intimates is smaller in the early 2000s than it was in the earlier years primarily because rates of stranger violence have declined more than rates of violence by intimate partners and by known/non-intimates.

----- Insert Executive Summary Figures III and IV here -----

These figures represent a small sampling of the findings in our full report. These and the other trends in the full report offer data material for future research on patterns over time across subgroups.

Discussion and Recommendations for Future Research and Policy Analysis

The present project has developed a substantial number of trends in violent victimization that can offer the basis for examining a variety of important research and policy questions.

- First, researchers can use these data to describe long term changes in violent victimization among women in high risk groups as compared to lower risk groups. It is often assumed by researchers and policy analysts that differences in risk associated with factors such as race and ethnicity, age, or marital status, and other socio-demographic

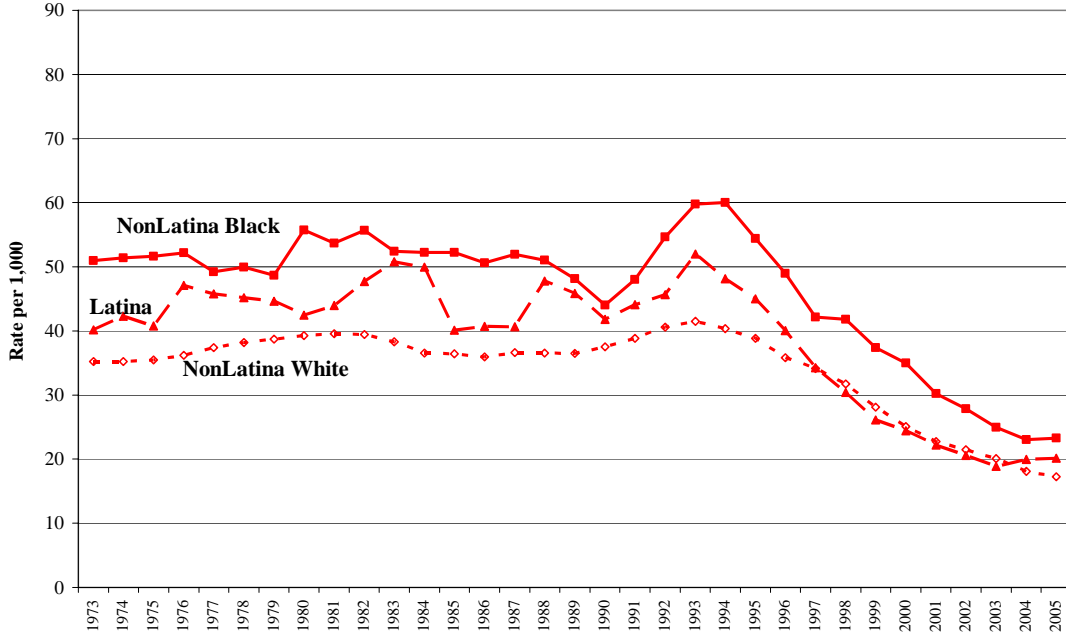
subgroups have remained constant over time. Many of the trends we produced challenge these assumptions.

- Second, the new trend data will allow researchers to compare trends in female victimization to those of males in the same socio-demographic groups. This is essential as the meaning of changes in violence against women depends on whether male victimization is shifting in similar or different ways. For example, researchers can examine in detail whether female violent victimization was affected by increases in violence during the late 1980s and early 1990s to the same extent as was male victimization, and further, whether these similarities and differences were limited to specific subgroups such as race and ethnic minorities.
- Third, the development of these trends will allow future research to isolate the extent to which overall patterns in female and male victimization in socio-demographic groups are driven by changes in different types of violence such as stranger violence or intimate partner violence. This allows research to answer basic questions about which groups experienced the greatest declines, for example, in stranger violence over the past few decades and which female subgroups have experienced the greatest changes in intimate partner violence over time.
- Fourth, long-term trend data can offer useful benchmarks for developing and assessing policies to address various forms of violent victimization. For example, to date, the effect of domestic violence resources on intimate partner violence has been tested by analyzing homicide data only. Whether such resources have had similar effects on non-lethal violence is unknown. Related hypotheses can now also be tested, such as whether the trend in violence against women in rural areas (where domestic violence resources are

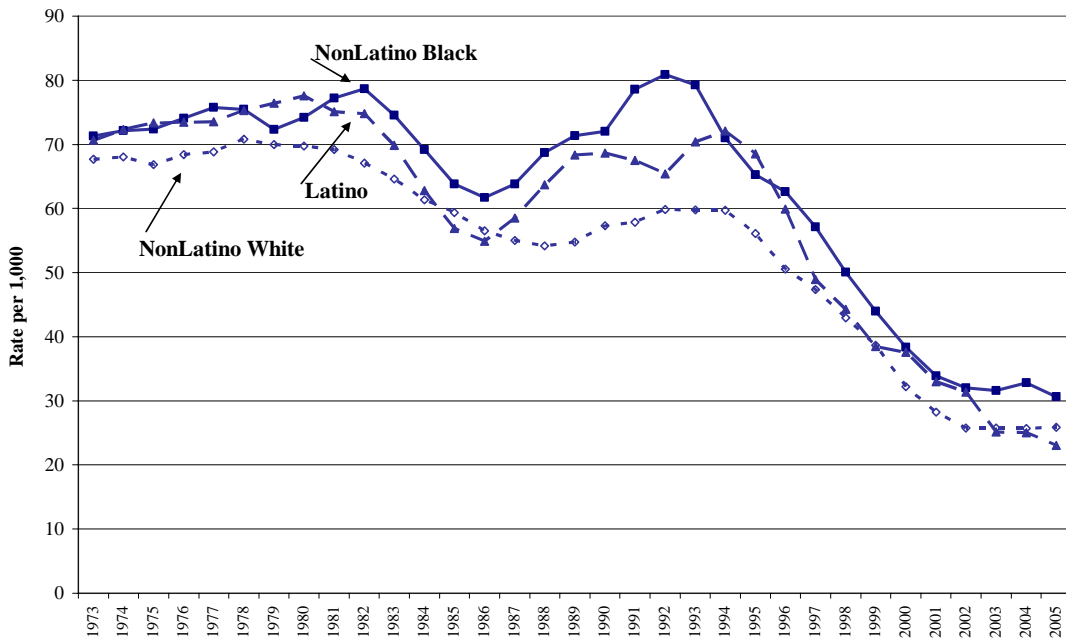
often lacking) is similar to that for women in urban areas. It has been difficult to study these kinds of issues because of concerns about the quality of police-based data in rural areas. By developing estimates of long-term trends in violence based on self-report victimization data, we have provided a foundation for future research on important topics that currently cannot be studied due to the lack of adequate data.

Executive Summary Figures I and II

Female Violent Victimization by Race/Ethnicity: NCVS 1973-2005

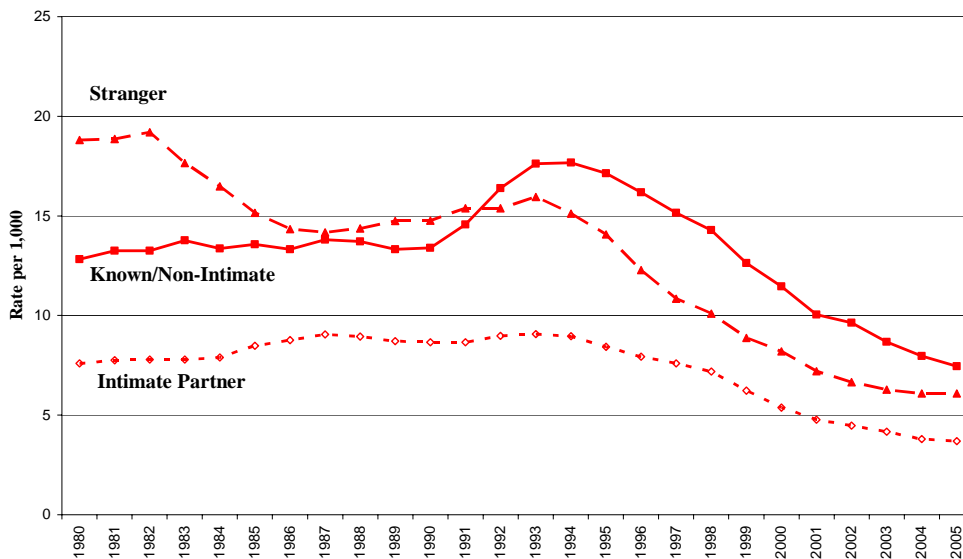


Male Violent Victimization by Race/Ethnicity: NCVS 1973-2005

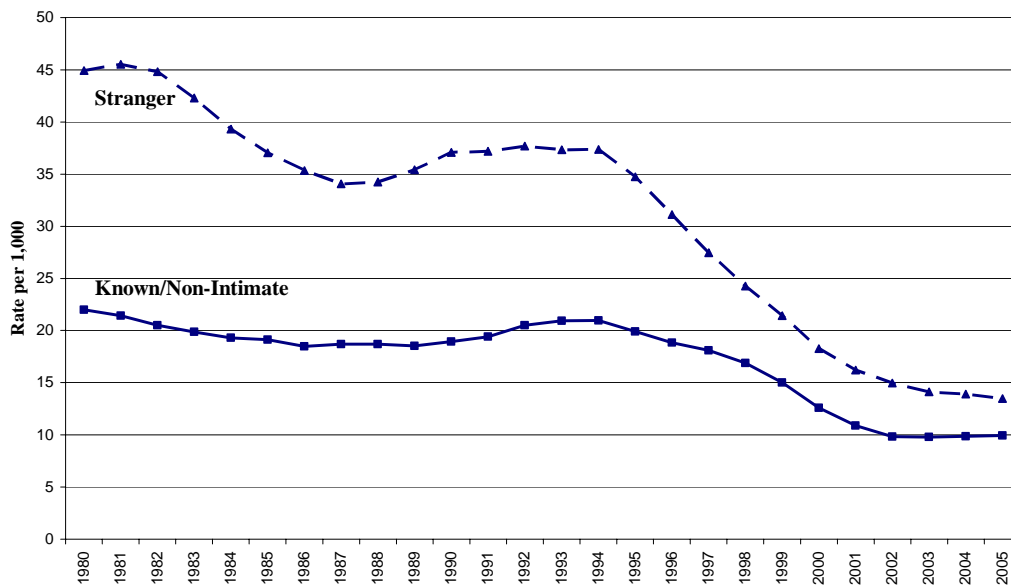


Executive Summary Figures III and IV

**Female Violent Victimization by Victim-Offender Relationship:
NCVS 1980-2005**



**Male Violent Victimization by Victim-Offender Relationship:
NCVS 1980-2005**



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project was to create estimates of long-term trends in non-lethal violent victimization of females and males. Research has not attended to these patterns, and this is an important limitation of research on violence against women, according to a recent National Academy of Sciences report (Kruttschnitt, McLaughlin, and Petrie, 2004). To respond to this gap in knowledge, we estimated long-term trends in violent victimization for females and males by various socio-demographic factors including race and ethnicity, age, type of place (urban, suburban, rural), socio-economic status, marital status (for adults), and family status (for juveniles) for the period 1973 to 2005. We also disaggregated these same violent victimization trends by victim-offender relationship to distinguish violence committed by strangers, intimate partners, and known/non-intimate offenders. We produced these previously unknown trends by pooling and appropriately weighting the only source of national data capable of providing reliable trend estimates – the National Crime Survey and its successor, the National Crime Victimization Survey.

Background Literature

The National Academy of Sciences' report on violence against women notes that the United States lacks valid and reliable indicators to examine shifts in specific patterns of violence against women over time (Kruttschnitt, et al., 2004). Rather, existing research on violence against women often focuses on cross-sectional data and, to a lesser extent, on more recent, short term trends that cannot tell us about long term trends. However, without information on long term trends, it is impossible to identify when recent patterns began. As a result, we cannot determine whether current patterns may be the result of recent policy efforts to bring about

declines in violence or alternatively, whether current patterns are continuations of long-term trends generated by other social factors.

The NAS report also notes other limitations of existing research. Some of this work has been based on non-systematic samples that cannot be generalized to the larger population. Most of this work focuses exclusively on intimate partner homicide and rape, and does not address other forms of violent victimization, such as robbery, aggravated assaults, or simple assaults. There are a few existing studies of gender and long-term victimization trends, but these also are limited to intimate partner homicide and the findings may not be generalizable to other forms of violence against women.¹ In fact, in recently published paper, we concluded that homicide trends, and the trends in the *gender gap* in homicide differ from those for aggravated and simple assault victimization (Lauritsen and Heimer, 2008). The current project focused on long term trends in non-lethal violent victimization by gender, socio-demographic subgroup, and victim-offender relationship, and by producing estimates that have not been published to date allows researchers to compare results from homicide research to those for non-lethal violence.

The substantive analysis of the trends we produced has focused, and will continue to focus on different types of research questions. Research that has assessed how socio-demographic factors have been related to violence against women over the past three decades does not exist, and we are in the process of determining whether there have been significant shifts in women's victimization within these factors over time by comparing trends across groups of women. For example, we are currently assessing whether there have been significant changes in violent victimization among black, Latina, and white women. We are also studying these

¹ The trends that we produce are for females and males, as identified by the NCS/NCVS interviewers. We recognize that for the most part these trends are specific to the biological sexes, rather than to socially constructed gender categories.

patterns among urban women, and comparatively, whether there have been similar or different changes among rural and suburban women. This kind of analyses will help determine whether some groups of women have benefited from declining rates of violence while others experienced little change or increases. We are also conducting similar substantive analyses with the trends in male violence.

In addition, we now have trend data that allows us to compare trends in the victimization risks of females with those of males in the same socio-demographic groups. As the NAS report emphasizes, this comparative approach is critical for situating findings about violence against women within the context of research on violence more generally. The meaning of increases in female victimization is quite different when male victimization is decreasing (or stable) rather than when male victimization is also decreasing. These are empirical patterns that can be uncovered by our trend estimates so that we can better understand patterns of violence against women over time. We are also examining changes over time in the gender gap in violence within the various subgroups by conducting across gender analysis. For example, now that the trends are completed, we have started to assess whether the gender gap in violence among blacks has increased, decreased, or remained the same over time, and whether there are similar patterns among whites and Latinos. This kind of analysis can help assess whether the significance of gender and race/ethnicity for violent victimization has changed over time.

The victimization estimates that we produced provide important detailed data on patterns of violence against women and men over the past three decades. These estimates provide fundamental information about the differences in the *level* of violent victimization between- and within- groups of women and men in the United States and basic knowledge about the *trends* in risk over the past three decades for these groups. Equally important, long-term trends can now

be distinguished from shorter-term fluctuations. These trends can be useful for guiding policy decisions about provisions of services for violent crime victims because the patterns identify the groups in most need of assistance. The findings also provide important baselines for contextualizing the outcomes of specific interventions aimed at reducing violence against women or against men or other subgroups, or for reducing particular forms of victimization such as stranger or intimate partner violence. For instance, an evaluation of an intervention based in a particular city or state may reveal a decrease or increase in rates of violence against women overall or in particular subgroups. Yet, it is almost impossible to evaluate the meaning of such a change without information about corresponding levels and patterns of change at the national level or in other urban, suburban, or rural areas. In other words, finding that a particular intervention is linked to a decrease in violence against women in a particular city would be most compelling if regional or national violence against women showed a different pattern. The lack of comparable or baseline data is a common challenge in assessments of crime trends. The decline in crime in New York City was initially credited almost fully to policing strategies until comparative trend analyses showed that similar declines were occurring in areas without such changes in policing (e.g., Rosenfeld, Fornango and Baumer 2005).

In addition, beyond responding to important gaps in the violence against women literature, our trends are relevant for further understanding the “crime drop” in America. Analyses of the recent U.S. crime decline are silent on the issue of gender. In one of the most visible references on the decline in crime rates, Blumstein and Wallman (2000:10) argue that there is little need to disaggregate crime rates by gender, because the gender composition of the population does not change rapidly enough to affect on aggregate rates substantially. While this assumption may be reasonable for studies of short-term trends in homicide and robbery, we

found that it is untenable for other forms of violence or longer-term trends (Lauritsen and Heimer, 2008). Our trend estimates also show that there are some groups for whom the decline in crime appears to have ended in the early 2000's, and others for whom the decline continued (for further details, see the trend figures provided in a subsequent section of this report). These types of descriptive findings add to the literature on the crime drop by showing, for example, whether victimization rates have decreased in similar or different ways among black women as compared to black men, poor women as compared to poor men, urban women as compared to urban men, and so on. Such comparisons are not possible with official Uniform Crime Report data (the data that nearly all crime trend analyses have been based thus far) because they lack detailed information about the characteristics of victims. UCR data also exclude violent crimes not reported to the police. Our trends show substantial variations in the impact of violence on socio-demographic subgroups over time, and provide important information to begin fully understanding the face of crime in the United States.

As noted above, to produce these trends we used data from the National Crime Victimization Survey and the National Crime Survey for the years 1973 through 2005. Our methodology is discussed in detail in the next section of this report. Briefly put, we produced pooled NCS-NCVS estimates of the risks for violent victimization among women and men across a variety of socio-demographic groups, including: race and ethnicity, age, type of place (urban, suburban, rural), poverty status, marital status (for adults) and family status (for youth), as well as trends by these same factors and by victim-offender relationship. The key reason why these trends had not been developed previously is the labor intensiveness of the project. We used the public-use NCS/NCVS data to create the annual estimates and trends. We conducted additional analyses to determine how best to weight the estimates for the NCS years to make

them comparable to the estimates we created from the NCVS years prior to splicing the two series together. As we were producing the trend estimates, we were simultaneously conducting research that combined some of the victimization trend data with other data to statistically analyze the correlates of changes over time. Because we found important variations in the trends across gender, socio-demographic factors, and victim-offender relationship, the amount of future additional research that is necessary to understand the patterns is greatly expanded. If all of the subgroup trends had been similar, there would be little need to further analyze each of the subgroup trends separately. Consequently, we expect to be conducting research using these trend data for several years to come. Following the presentation and description of the trends, we outline the substantive research that we are currently engaged in, as well as our plans for future analyses in the concluding section of this report.

METHODOLOGY

The National Crime Survey (NCS) and its successor, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) have been used to gather self-report data about persons' experiences with violence and other forms of victimization continuously since 1973. The NCS/NCVS is a large sample survey designed to be representative of persons ages 12 and older, and households in the United States. The sample size has varied over the years, but generally speaking, more than 100,000 persons have been interviewed every six months about victimizations they may have experienced over the previous six-month period. Because the annual occurrence of violence is a relatively rare event in random samples of the population, the large sample size is a key advantage of the survey. Equally important, households are selected for participation on the basis of Census information (rather than random digit dialing procedures which may produce

biased samples); and participation rates are very high (more than 90% on average). Interviews are conducted with each person age 12 and older in the selected household, and participants are asked about their victimization experiences using a series of common language cues and questions. The answers to these questions are used to determine whether respondents have been the victim of an attempted or completed violent (or personal theft) crime. Aside from the 1992 redesign described below, there have been no other changes in the survey that would affect the comparability of overall rates of violence over time. Together, these methodological features help produce reliable annual estimates of victimization that can be used to study long-term trends in risk for violence. For the most recent and thorough summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the NCS/NCVS research design over the past four decades, see Groves and Cork (2008).

In 1992, the survey phased-in the use of a redesigned questionnaire and henceforth became known as the NCVS. Key reasons for the changes in the survey were the difficulties of obtaining estimates of events that were not commonly thought of as “crimes” and discoveries about the extent of family, intimate partner, and sexual violence from other surveys about violence against women (Kindermann et al. 1997). As expected, the introduction of new cues and prompts in the redesigned NCVS resulted in significantly higher rates of rape and sexual assault, as well as aggravated and simple assault. Levels of non-stranger violence and incidents not reported to the police were also higher using the NCVS instrument. In order to use the NCS and NCVS together to study victimization rates from 1973 to the present, it is necessary to take into account the break in the series in 1992 and weight the earlier NCS data in ways that are informed by research on the effects of methodological and content changes to the survey. To produce our sets of estimates, we assessed the need for additional weighting beyond the use of crime-specific weights as developed in Kindermann et al. (1997) and Rand et al. (1997).

Following a series of weighting assessment analyses, which are described in greater detail below, we made the decision to use crime-specific weighting and applied no additional weights to splice the NCS series estimates with those from the NCVS.

Annual estimates from the weighted NCS data and the NCVS data were combined to produce trends in violent victimization by gender and various socio-demographic factors for the period 1973 to 2005. We estimated disaggregated trends for groups categorized by the following factors; race and ethnicity, marital status (for persons age 18 and above), type of place, age, poverty status, and family status (for youths ages 12 to 17). In addition, we also estimated male and female violent victimization by these socio-demographic factors and victim-offender relationship. For female victimization trends, we disaggregated violent incidents into three categories; stranger, known/non-intimate, and intimate partner offenders. We also disaggregated male violent victimization by socio-demographic factors and victim-offender relationship. However for males we had to rely on two categories (stranger, and known/non-intimate) because there were insufficient numbers of intimate partner violence against males to provide reliable subgroup trend estimates. Violent victimization rates were defined to include attempted and completed crimes of rape, robbery, aggravated assault and simple assault. Certain forms of sexual assault that were not recorded in the NCS instrument were excluded from the NCVS trend estimates to ensure that the rates remained comparable over time. We estimated a measure of overall violent victimization for the trends and do not provide trends for specific crime types (such as robbery) because the data cannot support reliable estimates of some types of violence across socio-demographic categories and victim-offender relationships. Also, with the exception of the overall trends by gender, the data points we are providing as a result of this project are three-year moving averages for each of the subgroup violent victimization trends. This was done

to increase the sample size used for each estimate and reduce fluctuations associated with sampling error, making it easier to see the underlying pattern in the disaggregated trend estimates. Finally, we limited the trends that were disaggregated by victim-offender relationship to the 1980 to 2005 period. This decision was necessary due to changes in the coding of victim-offender relationship in 1980, discussed in more detail below.

Data Files

To estimate the long-term trends in violent crime by gender and other socio-demographic correlates, we used data from the National Crime Survey (NCS) and its successor, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). These rates were estimated using the public-use data files that are available through the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data at ICPSR (U.S. Department of Justice). These files are archived under several study numbers including: 1) Study# 7635, National Crime Survey, National Sample, 1973-1983; 2) Study# 8608, National Crime Survey, National Sample, 1979-1983 [Revised Questionnaire]; 3) Study# 8864, National Crime Survey, National Sample, 1986-1992 [Near-Term Data]; 4) Study# 3995, National Crime Victimization Survey 1992-2003; 5) Study#4276, National Crime Victimization Survey 2004; 6) Study#4451, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2005; and 7) Study# 4699, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1992-2005: Concatenated Incident-Level Files. The victimization rates for each year from 1973 to 2005 were estimated by using information available in the incident- and person-level files. For many of the NCVS rates, we were able to rely on the concatenated incident-level file to produce the sample weighted incident counts. However, estimation of some of the rates required the use of annual incident-level and person-level files. More specifically, we used annual incident files for the estimates for the 1970s, and we used annual person-level

files to create the denominators for all years. The estimation procedure we used is described in detail below.

Rate Estimation Procedures

To create annual rates and trends, we followed the methodology used by the Bureau of Justice Statistics to produce their annual statistical tables. *Annual violent victimization rates* (per 1,000) are estimated by taking the number of violent victimizations reported by a subgroup in that year and dividing by the total number of persons in that category. Sampling weights provided by the Census Bureau to account for non-response by age, race, and sex are used to weight the victimization and person estimates. For the period 1993 to 2005, our estimate of the NCVS victimization rate is:

$$\text{Violent Victimization Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of violent incidents}_{(t)}}{\text{Population at risk}_{(t)}},$$

where violent incidents include the number of attempted and completed rapes, robberies, aggravated assaults and simple assaults, and t is the year in which the interview occurred. We used the same incident characteristics to define these crimes as is used by BJS. For all of the years, we define “year” to be the year in which the interview occurred. BJS published reports typically define “year” as the incident in which the incident occurred, though this practice changed in 1995 when BJS began to issue an annual bulletin in which interview year was used to define “year.” In addition, we include “series victimizations” in our estimates, counting each series incident as one incident. BJS published reports of annual victimization rates do not include series incidents. For these reasons, our estimates of annual violence rates will vary some from those in published BJS reports (see Figure 1). To estimate rates for the 1973-1992 NCS

period, we include additional crime-specific weights to adjust for the effects of the NCVS redesign phased-in from January 1992 through June 1993:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Violent} & & \text{Number of rapes}_{(t)} & & \text{Number of robberies}_{(t)} \\ \text{Victimization} & = & (w_1) \frac{\text{-----}}{\text{Population at risk}_{(t)}} & + & (w_2) \frac{\text{-----}}{\text{Population at risk}_{(t)}} & + \\ \text{Rate} & & & & & \\ & & \text{Number of aggravated assaults}_{(t)} & & \text{Number of simple assaults}_{(t)} \\ & & (w_3) \frac{\text{-----}}{\text{Population at risk}_{(t)}} & + & (w_4) \frac{\text{-----}}{\text{Population at risk}_{(t)}}, \end{aligned}$$

where w_1 , w_2 , w_3 , and w_4 , refer to the crime-specific weights of 2.57, 1.00, 1.23, and 1.75, respectively. Thus, the final weights for our existing gender-specific victimization rate estimates for the NCS period consists of the crime-specific ratios developed in earlier analyses of the design change and used by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Lynch and Cantor 1996; Kindermann et al. 1997; Rand et al. 1997). The decision to use crime-specific weights was determined following an assessment of alternative weighting procedures described below.

NCS Weighting

The weights to adjust estimates from the NCS years so that they are comparable to those from the NCVS years can be produced because changes to the survey instrument were phased into the data collection process in a way that makes it possible to assess the effects of the new format on victimization estimates (Lynch and Cantor 1996; Kindermann et al. 1997; Rand et al. 1997). Prior analyses of data from the phase-in period showed that the new questionnaire significantly increased the reporting of victimization and that the magnitude of the change varied according to crime type. Because the trends that we created involved new subgroup estimates, we assessed whether it was necessary to make additional adjustments to the NCS violence rates

for each of the subgroups under consideration. To do so, we followed the same strategy used in the work sponsored by BJS to investigate this issue (Lynch and Cantor 1996; see also Lynch 2002). More specifically, we assessed the need for adjustments for each of the subgroups by using data from the 18-month NCS-NCVS overlap period and comparing the estimates obtained for the subgroups under both designs. Although prior research suggests that additional adjustments beyond crime type may not be necessary (e.g., Lynch and Cantor 1996), we proceeded to examine whether this is the case for each of our subgroup trend estimates.

We began by estimating and assessing the NCVS/NCS ratio for each of the socio-demographic factors. For example, we compared the number of violent incidents reported by urban females, suburban females, and rural females who were administered the NCVS instrument during the 18-month overlap period to the number of violent incidents reported by females in these groups who received the NCS instrument. We examined whether the NCVS/NCS ratio of the incident counts differed significantly across the groups, and also whether these ratios were significantly different from the male ratios. In this example, there were a total of six ratios available for comparison (2 genders x 3 types of places). But because each ratio can be compared to each other ratio, a large number of potential comparisons are possible.

We did these comparisons for each of the socio-demographic factors and gender, thus obtaining a very large set of ratios for comparison. Using the above factor as an example, we examined: 1) whether the NCVS/NCS ratio for urban females (UF) was significantly different from the NCVS/NCS ratio for suburban females (SF); 2) whether the UF ratio differed from the RF ratio (for rural females); and 3) whether the SF ratio was different from the RF ratio. Three similar comparisons (4 through 6) were also made for males. In addition, we examined the data for differences in ratios for: 7) UF and UM; 8) SF and SM; and 9) RF and RM, as well as other

additional combinations (such as UF versus RM). For this particular factor (type of place), we found that none of the above comparisons showed statistically significant differences in the ratios at $p < .05$. However, as we continued to work our way through the list of socio-demographic factors under investigation, it became apparent that we were conducting a large number of multiple comparisons using the same data and as a result we were risking the possibility of concluding that there were meaningful significant differences (and hence a need for a different weighting adjustment for a particular subgroup) when in fact, a number of differences were to be expected to be statistically significant simply on the basis of chance given the number of comparisons we were making.

To minimize this risk, we subsequently decided to compare each of the subgroup NCVS/NCS ratios to the overall NCVS/NCS ratio (and not to each other ratio) thus reducing the possible number of comparisons (e.g., there were now just 40 comparisons for the overall violence trends, not including those that were disaggregated by victim-offender relationship). Using the above example, the UF ratio was compared to the overall ratio, as were the SF, RF, UM, SM, and RM ratios. Using this approach across the full set of ratios, we also found very few to be significantly different. In other words, across the total set of ratios, we found no consistent systematic pattern in the data suggesting that certain subgroups were disproportionately affected by the NCVS redesign. These findings suggested that for a summary measure of violent victimization, it is the relative balance of the component crime types (e.g., simple assault, aggravated assault) within groups that was driving any observed differences in the NCVS/NCS ratio across subgroups.

We also used this same strategy to examine whether ratios for stranger, known/non-intimate, and intimate partner violence differed for each subgroup compared to the overall ratios

for these crime types. Here we found variation in the ratios, but none that obtained statistical significance in large part because the NCS and NCVS redesign phase-in sample sizes are relatively small and can detect only very large differences in disaggregated types of crime across subgroups and NCS and NCVS instrumentation. Thus we found little systematic patterning in these ratio differences.²

In sum, for the overall violent victimization trends and for the trends disaggregated by victim-offender relationship, we found that once the NCS rates were weighted by crime type, little trend information was gained by making any further adjustments for any of the socio-demographic groups, or for stranger versus known/non-intimate versus intimate partner violence. Consistent with the results of Lynch and Cantor's (1996) multivariate analysis then, we found that the parsimonious strategy of weighting the estimates by crime type does not result in mischaracterization of any of the subgroup trends. It does, however, simplify the NCS weighting procedure, and the substantive comparisons of the violence trends across these subgroups.

Measuring Victim-Offender Relationship

The victim-offender relationship for each violent crime incident was coded using three categories: "stranger", "known/non-intimate", and "intimate partner." Incidents involving one

² The largest NCVS/NCS ratio for violence disaggregated by victim-offender relationship was apparent in male reporting of intimate partner violence which appears to have been affected much more by the NCVS design than was female reporting of intimate partner violence, although levels of reporting among both groups increased. Even if an additional adjustment weight were to be applied to NCS levels of male intimate partner victimization, the rates would continue to be too low to be reliable. In addition, we suspect that levels of reporting intimate partner violence to interviewers among females and males did not remain constant throughout the NCS years, and this source of potential error is not something that can be detected with studies of the NCVS redesign phase-in. Studies of trends in victimization rates, particularly intimate violence rates, should be careful not to assume a constant rate of willingness to report victimization to interviewers. We suspect that persons may be more willing to report intimate partner violence to interviewers now than in the past, and if so, the effect of this change would be to show greater declines in such violence than are apparent in our figures.

offender were coded as “stranger” if the victim reported that the offender was “a stranger you had never seen before” or someone “known by sight only.” They were coded as “known/non-intimate” if the offender was a “casual acquaintance” or “well known” but not a spouse, ex-spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend, or ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend. They were coded as “intimate partner” if the offender was any one of these latter categories (i.e., spouse, ex-boyfriend).

Incidents involving multiple offenders were coded according to the most intimate relationship between the victim and any of the offenders. For example, if an incident involved a stranger and an acquaintance (who was not an intimate partner), it was coded as “known/non-intimate.” If the incident involved an intimate partner and an acquaintance, it was coded as “intimate partner.” Incidents in which the victim reported that all of the offenders in a multiple offender incident were “strangers” or “known by sight only” were coded as “stranger.”

In the earliest years of the NCS (1973 to 1979), the offender categories of “boyfriend,” “ex-boyfriend,” “girlfriend,” and “ex-girlfriend” were not used in the survey. Consequently, incidents involving such offenders would be treated in this scheme as “known/non-intimate” for those years, and not as victims of “intimate partner” violence which would only be classified as such if the offender was reported to be a “spouse” or “ex-spouse”. We investigated whether it would be possible to produce reliable estimates of intimate partner violence for the 1970s without the availability of these non-marital relationship categories by relying solely on the categories of spouse and ex-spouse. Investigations of these trends indicated no marked change in 1980 in male victimization rates disaggregated by victim-offender relationship because, as noted above, they reported relatively little intimate partner violence victimization in all years. However, the inclusion of the additional categories had a marked effect on the female intimate partner and known/non-intimate trends once implemented in 1980 as intimate partner violence

increased and known/non-intimate violence decreased correspondingly. We found it difficult to produce any sort of crude statistical “adjustment” for this change in methodology (e.g., by up-weighting the estimates of intimate partner violence during the 1970s using the ratio of estimates before and after the change) because we also found that the addition of these categories had disproportionate effects on some subgroups. For instance, intimate partner violence rates increased much more among (non-Latina) black females than among Latina and (non-Latina) white females when these categories were added, perhaps in part because of differences in marriage rates across the groups. Because of such findings, and the fact that the changes to the categories were abrupt rather than phased-in, we have limited confidence in the intimate partner violence estimates for females for the 1973 to 1979 period. Thus the decision was made to restrict our estimates of the trends disaggregated by victim-offender relationship to the period 1980 to 2005.

Even though the addition of these categories had little effect on male rates, we also restrict their estimates of victimization by victim-offender relationship to the 1980 to 2005 period to maintain the comparability of the trends across gender. Also, the low male rates of intimate partner victimization meant that it would be impossible to further disaggregate these trends by subgroup. As a result, we provide estimates of trends in “stranger” and “known/non-intimate” violence for males, but we do not provide estimates of male intimate partner violence.

Measuring Socio-Demographic Factors

We produced estimates of trends in violence by gender and race/ethnicity, marital status (for persons ages 18 and above), type of place (i.e., urban, suburban, and rural), age, household poverty status, and family status (for youth ages 12 to 17), as well as trends disaggregated by victim-offender relationship for these same factors. Our original proposal stated that we had

planned to develop trends by level of education, however after examining the NCS/NCVS education data across years in closer detail, we determined that such trends would be plagued by too much measurement error because of the ways in which the coding of education changed over time. Also, because the meaning of different levels of education (such as a high school diploma) also changed over time, the education trends would be difficult to interpret and of limited value. Thus they are not provided. We also planned to study socio-economic status using quartile categories of household income. We encountered similar difficulties developing these quartile measures because the income categories and their widths changed over time. Both income and education were originally intended to be used as indicators of socio-economic status. However, we were able to produce what we believe is a superior measure to that originally proposed – an indicator of household poverty status (discussed in detail below).

We had hoped to be able to estimate trends in victimization that would isolate the experiences of single women with children. As we suggested in our proposal, this is possible for the 1993-2005 NCVS period due to the availability of an indicator of household composition, but we had hoped that it might also be possible for the NCS years. After detailed investigation, we do not believe it is possible to develop a comparable measure for the earlier years because the available alternative measures of household composition were not adequate proxies for single women with children if there were other persons living as heads of household (such as the single mother's parent) or if the woman's children were above age 12. In sum, although we were unable to produce long-term trends for this specific subgroup, we were able to develop a total of 135 distinct and previously unknown long-term trends in violent victimization by subgroup and victim-offender relationship.

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are measured using self-reports to questions created and used by the Census Bureau. Following Census practices, NCVS items on race and ethnicity have changed over time. To create a set of consistent categories, we combined responses to the “race” questions with responses to the “ethnicity” question and coded for the three largest racial and ethnic groups in the nation: 1) **non-Latino black**, 2) **non-Latino white**, and 3) **Latino** (persons of Hispanic origin or descent who may be of any race). There are insufficient numbers of subjects of other race and ethnic groups to provide reliable annual estimates. The measure of “race” changed over time in the following ways. Prior to 2003, respondents designated their race by selecting one of the following five categories: “white, black, American Indian/Aleut/Eskimo, Asian/Pacific Islander, or other.” Beginning in 2003, respondents were permitted to select more than one race category, and the single race options included five categories now distinguishing Asians from Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders: “white, black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.” Because the proportion choosing more than one race category in the 2003-2005 NCVS is small (approximately 1% of respondents), we were also unable to provide estimates for subjects who selected more than one race category.

Like the race question, the ethnicity questions also have changed over time. Prior to 1986, multiple categories were available for the ethnicity item including “German, Italian, Irish, French, Polish, Russian, English, Scottish, Welsh, Mexican-American, Puerto-Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, Other Spanish, Afro-American, and Another Group Not Listed.” Beginning in 1986, the ethnicity categories were defined as “Hispanic” and “non-Hispanic.” To create a consistent definition of “Hispanic” or “Latina/Latino” ethnicity over time, we coded persons who selected “Mexican-American, Puerto-Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or

Other Spanish” as “Hispanic” or “Latina/Latino.” We compared our population estimates throughout the definitional change period and found that our 1985 estimate of the Latino/Latina population was just slightly lower than the 1986 estimate based on the “Hispanic” versus “non-Hispanic” question, a finding consistent with known population trends. Consequently, we are confident that this coding for comparability is reasonably reliable.

Marital Status (Adults)

For persons ages 18 and above, we created a measure of marital status that consisted of three categories: 1) **married**, 2) **never married**, and 3) **divorced or separated**. There are insufficient numbers of widowed persons to provide annual estimates for that subgroup. Marital status is a self-reported measure, and there is no separate category for cohabitating adults. We excluded persons under age 18 from these estimates because the vast majority of them are never married. For all practical purposes then, their marital status is a constant and including them would confound age with the never married category. Youth family status is treated separately and discussed below.

Type of Place

Type of place is coded by the Census Bureau at the time of the interview under the “MSA status” variable into one of three categories: 1) city of (S)MSA, which we refer to as **urban**, 2) (S)MSA not city, which we refer to as **suburban**, and 3) not (S)MSA, which we refer to as **rural**. This variable was found to be unavailable in the public use files for 1977, 1978, and 1979. We contacted Michael Rand at the Bureau of Justice Statistics to verify this matter and he confirmed that these variables are lost from the files and that it is not possible to recover this variable for those years. Therefore, our estimates for type of place are limited to 1973 to 1976, and 1980 to 2005.

Age

Respondent age is self-reported and we use these values to create five categories of age groups for purposes of estimating age-specific violent victimization trends: **1) 12-17 years, 2) 18-34 years, 3) 35-49 years, 4) 50-64 years, and 5) 65 years and above.** However, for purposes of estimating age-specific trends in stranger, known/non-intimate, and intimate partner violence, we found that the data could not support reliable estimates of these subtypes of victimization for persons ages 65 and above, even with the use of 3-year moving averages. Therefore, for victimization trends disaggregated by victim-offender relationship, we use four age categories: **1) 12-17 years; 2) 18-34 years; 3) 35-49 years; and 4) 50 years and above.**

Poverty Status

To assess trends by socio-economic status, we created a measure of household poverty for each respondent by using the family income data reported by the key household respondent (reference person), the number of persons per household, and the federal definition of poverty for each year (Census Bureau, no date). Household income in the NCVS is reported in categories of dollar amounts (e.g., \$7,500-9,999) and not in the detail needed to precisely match federal poverty thresholds. We created three categories of poverty status. Persons were coded as living **1) at or below poverty** if their household income category was lower than or included the federal threshold amount for a household of their particular size. Persons were coded as **2) above poverty** if their household income category was higher than, or did not include the federal threshold amount for a household of their particular size. An additional category was used to classify persons as **3) missing on poverty** if their household income was missing. To assess the external reliability of our poverty measure, we compared our estimates of percent of persons living below the poverty line based on the NCVS data to those produced by using the Current

Population Survey and available on-line through the Census Bureau website. The two sets of estimates were close in magnitude and highly correlated over time ($r = .75$) (see Appendix A). However, it should be noted that the amount of missing income data in the NCVS has increased in recent years. Unlike the CPS poverty estimates, we cannot use the NCVS data to impute household poverty because the NCVS data lack additional indicators, such as receipt of public assistance, which make such imputations possible.

Family Status (Youth)

For youth ages 12-17, we estimated rates of victimization according to their family status. We use two categories to classify the family status of youth: 1) **living with two married parents**, and 2) **living with a single parent or in some other family arrangement**. Further specifications, such as living with a parent who is single but cohabitating with an intimate partner, were not possible because such household information is not available.

Trend Estimation Process

Estimating victimization trends using the NCS and NCVS is a complex, labor intensive, and multi-step process in which the possibility of human error must be carefully guarded against. To help ensure the accuracy and consistency of our results we undertook several verification procedures. The general process we used to create the rates is as follows.

We proceeded through the trend estimation process by beginning with the factors that could be verified against published reports produced by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. We began by estimating the gender-specific total violent victimization rates to verify the accuracy of our procedure for producing the numerators and denominators for each year. Once we were able to match the printed reports for male and female rates of violence, we proceeded to address the other factors. We were also able to use printed reports to verify our estimates of violence for

some of our age-specific rates because some of our categories used similar definitions of age as found in the published reports. The only other factor for which it was feasible to verify our estimates against printed reports was type of place.

However, the remaining factors (race/ethnicity, marital status among adults only, family status among youth, and poverty) could not be verified in this same manner because published reports using these subgroup definitions do not exist. Race/ethnicity was a partial exception because BJS has produced subgroup rates for non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, and Hispanics using NCVS data for some of the later years of our trends. For marital status categories, we verified our estimates by using the full NCVS sample (i.e., including youth) and matched printed reports, therefore suggesting that our estimates using adults only are valid and reliable.

For youth family status and poverty we used a different approach. To determine whether our youth family status measure was valid and reliable, we began by estimating the annual denominators (that is, the number of youth ages 12 to 17 that lived in married parent households versus single parent and other households). We were able to match our estimates of the size of these groups to those produced by the Census Bureau for the decennial censuses, giving us confidence that our estimates of these subgroup victimization rates are reliable and valid. Finally, for poverty, we used a similar approach. As noted above, we compared our estimates of the population living at or below poverty to estimates from the Current Population Survey (CPS) to assess our operational definitions. We found sufficient similarity in the levels of poverty, though we note that with the NCVS data, we are concerned about missing income data in later years and we use cruder categories of income than are available in data sets like the CPS which

are designed for such purposes. In addition, the CPS estimates are for total population while the NCVS-based poverty estimates are necessarily limited to persons ages 12 and above.

Our findings, which consist of the figures depicting each of the trends, appear in the next section of this report. We offer brief descriptive commentary for each of the figures, though it should be noted that much more could have been said about each of the patterns either alone, as well as in comparison to many of the other related patterns. We have begun formal analyses of various sets of these trends (see the subsequent section on remaining tasks and future research), and once these trend data are made public, we expect other researchers to analyze these data as well. Indeed, the purpose of this project was to help develop the basic infrastructure that would allow extensive future research by many researchers.

RESULTS: TRENDS AND FIGURES

SECTION 1. GENDER BY SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Figure 1. Comparison of Lauritsen and Heimer Trends in Total Violence by Gender with BJS Trends in Total Violence by Gender: NCVS 1973-2005.

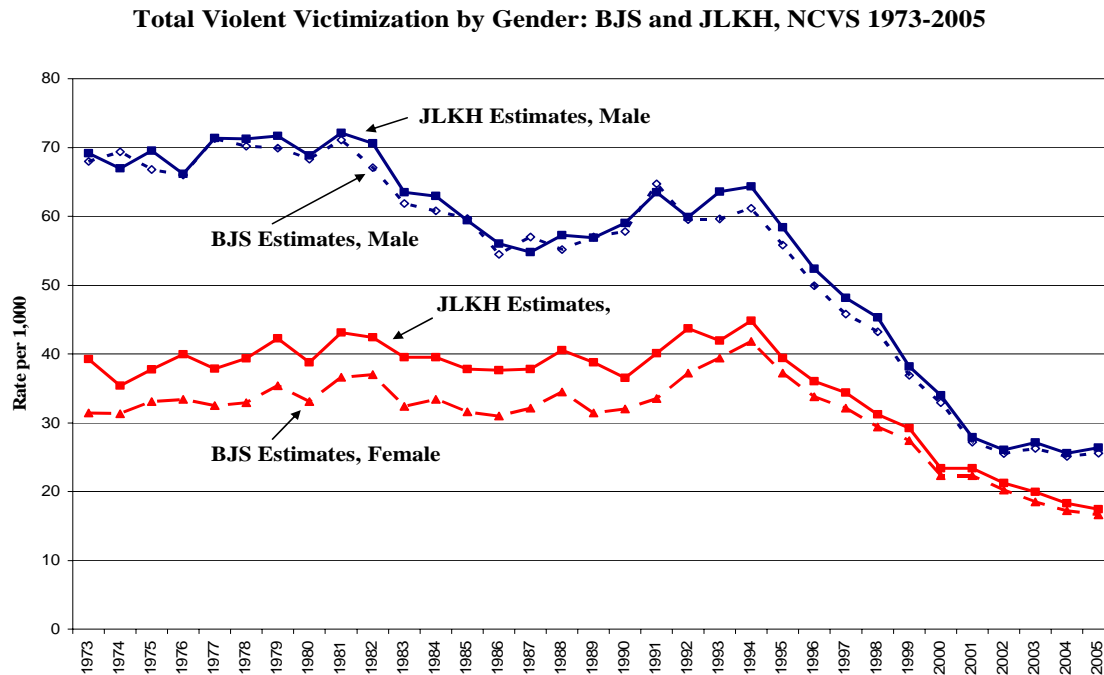


Figure 1 shows our estimates for the long-term trends in male and female violent victimization, as well as the corresponding BJS estimates. As can be seen, our estimates for males are very close to the BJS estimates throughout the series. Our estimates for female victimization also show a similar pattern over time to the corresponding BJS estimates, however, our estimates are somewhat higher during the NCS years, before the redesign. As discussed in the methodology section, these differences are primarily the result of our decision to include series victimizations in our estimates.

The trend lines show, first, that regardless of year, males were more likely to be victimized than females, by a factor of about 1.8 in 1973, about 1.4 in 1994, and about 1.5 in 2005. This also shows that there was some decrease in the gender gap in violent victimization between 1973 and 2005. Part of this seems to stem from the fact that when male violent victimization declined during the 1980s, female violent victimization showed less change. Indeed, the early 1990s “peak” in male violent victimization (about 65 per 1000 in 1994) was lower than the rates of violence against males throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s. This was not the case for females: The rates of violence against females were only slightly higher in 1994 than they were in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Thus, in terms of this measure of violent victimization, the gender gap narrowed in part because male violent victimization decreased proportionately more than female violent victimization during the 1980s.

