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Levels of Violence in the United States

(An edited excerpt from *Becoming Trauma-Informed* training curriculum written by Dr. Stephanie Covington)

Childhood

- By 2005, 15.5 million children in the U.S. lived in families in which partner violence occurred at least once in the previous year (*McDonald, Jouriles, Ramisetty-Mikler, Caetano, & Green, 2006*).
- In homes in which domestic violence occurs, children are seriously abused or neglected at a rate that is 1,500 percent higher than the average for the general population (*Children's Defense Fund Ohio, 2009*).
- Every thirty-five seconds, a child is abused or neglected in the United States (*Children's Defense Fund, 2011*).
- Children born into poverty are at greater risk of experiencing violence (*Children's Defense Fund, 2011*).
- Children from violent homes have a higher tendency to commit suicide, abuse drugs and/or alcohol, and continue the cycle of domestic violence by committing violence against their own partners or children (*Whitfield, Anda, Dube, & Felitti, 2003*).
- At least 50 percent of child abuse and neglect cases are associated with alcohol or drug abuse by parents (*Every Child Matters Education Fund, 2008*).
- Every six hours, a child dies from either abuse or neglect (*Children's Defense Fund, 2011*).
- In 2007, one or more parents were responsible for 70 percent of the child fatalities caused by abuse or neglect (*United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2008*).
 - In 27 percent of these cases, the mother was the lone perpetrator.
 - 41.1 percent were Caucasian children.
 - 26.1 percent were African-American children.
 - 16.9 percent were Hispanic children.
 - 15.9 percent were children of all other races combined.
- Studies show that one in four women and one in six men have been sexually abused before the age of eighteen (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005*).
- Juveniles are a high proportion of victims of sexual assault (*Snyder, 2000*).
 - For victims under age twelve, four-year-olds are at greatest risk of being victims of sexual assault.
 - There are more victims in each individual age group between three and seventeen than in any individual age group over age seventeen.

Adolescence

- Approximately one in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner (*Davis, 2008*).
- More than 60 percent of children between the ages of ten and seventeen in a U.S. survey reported that they had been exposed to violence within the past year (*Child Trends DataBank, 2010*).
 - 50 percent of the respondents said they were assaulted at least once in the past year.
 - Among adolescents aged fourteen to seventeen, more than one third had seen a parent assaulted.
 - One out of five girls experienced sexual assault or attempted sexual assault.
 - 23 percent of students aged twelve to eighteen reported that there were gangs at their schools.
 - 32 percent reported having been bullied during the past school year.
- In 1996, the age with the greatest proportion of sexual-assault victims reported to law enforcement was fourteen (*Snyder, 2000*).
- More children between the ages of ten and nineteen die from gunshot wounds than from any other cause (*Children's Defense Fund, 2011*).
- In 2007, juveniles accounted for 16 percent of all violent-crime arrests and 26 percent of all property-crime arrests (*Puzzanchera, 2009*).
 - 1,350 juveniles were arrested for murder.
 - 3,580 were arrested for forcible rape.
 - 57,650 were arrested for aggravated assault.

- In 2010, more than 26,000 youths were incarcerated in juvenile facilities nationwide (*Child Trends DataBank, 2010*).
 - 91 percent were male.
 - 12 percent of these juveniles experienced sexual victimization by another youth or staff member within twelve months.
- From 2007 to 2009, there was a 600 percent increase in calls to the National Teen Dating Abuse helpline, with 29 percent of teens reporting that they were victims of emotional, sexual, or physical abuse by their dating partners (*CBS Evening News, 2009*).
- Girls aged sixteen to nineteen are four times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault (*United States Department of Justice, 2004*).
- Among high school students surveyed nationwide, about 8 percent reported being forced to have sex (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008b*).
- 20 percent of teen mothers become pregnant as a direct result of rape (*Saar, 2008*).
- Adolescent girls who are victims of physical dating violence are more likely to smoke; use drugs; engage in risky sexual behaviors; use diet pills, laxatives, or vomiting to lose weight; and either consider or attempt suicide (*Silverman, Raj, Mucci, & Hathaway, 2001*).
- Adolescent girls involved in physically abusive relationships are three times more likely to become pregnant than non-abused girls (*Roberts, Auinger, & Klein, 2005*).
- In 2007, more than 668,000 youths between the ages of ten and twenty-four were treated in emergency departments for injuries sustained from violence (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009a*).
- In 2007, students between the ages of twelve and eighteen were victims of nearly 1.5 million nonfatal crimes (theft and simple assault) while attending school, compared to about 1.1 million nonfatal crimes while they were away from school (*Dinkes, Kemp, & Baum, 2009*).

Adult Interpersonal Violence

Domestic Violence

- On average, 24 people per minute are victims of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in the United States. Over the course of year, that equals more than 12 million women and men (*Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, Merrick, Chen, & Stevens, 2011*).
- In 2005, 1,181 women were murdered by their intimate partners in the United States – more than three women murdered per day (*Catalano, 2007*).
- Nearly one in four women will experience violence by a current or former spouse (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008a*).
- Women who experience domestic violence are (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008a*):
 - 80 percent more likely to have strokes,
 - 70 percent more likely to have heart disease,
 - 60 percent more likely to have asthma,
 - 70 percent more likely to drink heavily.
- Each year, women experience close to 4.8 million physical assaults and rapes by intimate partners (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009b*).
 - Women between the ages of twenty and twenty-four are most at risk.
- Women with lower incomes are six times more likely to experience intimate-partner violence than women with higher incomes (*Catalano, 2007*).
- Women who are physically abused as children are at greater risk of victimization as adults (*Whitfield, et al., 2003*).
- Men who are abused as children are 50 percent more likely to continue the cycle of violence as adults (*National Organization for Women, 2009*).

Sexual Assault

- In 2007, there were 248,300 sexual assaults in the United States – an average of 680 sexual assaults per day or about one sexual assault about every two minutes (*Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2008*).
- Nearly 1 in 5 women (18.3%) and 1 in 71 men (1.4%) in the United States have been raped at some time in their lives (*Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, Merrick, Chen, & Stevens, 2011*).
- Each year, about 1.5 million women are raped or physically assaulted by an intimate partner (*Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000b*).

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- Two-thirds of women who are physically assaulted by an intimate partner are also sexually assaulted by that partner (*Taylor & Gaskin-Laniyan, 2007*).
- Victims of sexual assault are (*Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002*):
 - Three times more likely to suffer from depression,
 - Six times more likely to suffer from PTSD,
 - Thirteen times more likely to abuse alcohol,
 - Twenty-six times more likely to abuse drugs,
 - Four times more likely to contemplate suicide.
- In 2010, there were 84,767 forcible rapes in the United States. That averages out to 233 women being raped each day and nine women being raped every hour (*Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011a*).
- More than half of all rapes occur before the age of eighteen, and 22 percent of rapes occur before the age of twelve (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008b*).
- Women under twenty-four years of age suffer the highest rates of rape (*National Organization for Women, 2009*).

Street, Workplace and Community

- In 2010, 1,246,248 violent crimes were reported nationwide (*Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011b*).
- Female homicides primarily are robbery related – often occurring in convenience stores, eating establishments, and service stations (*United States Department of Labor, 2008*).
- Homicide is the second leading cause of workplace fatality in the United States (*United States Department of Labor, 2008*).
 - Homicides account for 26 percent of all deaths among female workers.
 - Homicides account for 9 percent of deaths among male workers.
- Nearly two-thirds of the injuries to women result from workplace assaults (*National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2008*).
 - 70 percent are directed at women employed in service occupations, such as health care.
 - 20 percent occur in retail locations, such as restaurants and grocery stores.
- Approximately 3.4 million persons age 18 or older were victims of stalking in 2006 (*Baum, Catalano, & Rand, 2009*).
- 1 in 6 women (16.2%) and 1 in 19 men (5.2%) in the United States have experienced stalking victimization at some point during their lifetime in which they felt very fearful or believed that they or someone close to them would be harmed or killed (*Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, Merrick, Chen, & Stevens, 2011*).
- The most common stalking behavior reported by victims was (*Baum, Catalano, & Rand, 2009*):
 - Unwanted phone calls or messages (66.2%)
 - Spreading rumors (35.7%)
 - Following or spying on the victim (34.3%)
 - Showing up at the same places as the victim without having a reason to be there (31.1%)
- Of all hate crimes reported in 2007, those against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals rose by 16.6 percent (*Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, 2009*).
- Gay men and lesbians have consistently been the third most frequent targets of hate violence over the past decade (*Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, 2009*).
- It is estimated that between 1 and 2 million people over age sixty-five have been injured, exploited, or mistreated by someone on whom they depend for care (*National Center on Elder Abuse, 2005*).
- The most common complaint investigated in nursing homes is physical abuse of elderly patients (*National Center on Elder Abuse, 2005*).

Culture

Media

- Children are exposed to twenty to twenty-five acts of violence in children's television programs each hour (*National Institute on Media and the Family, 2009*).
- The average child will watch 8,000 murders on television before finishing elementary school (*National Institute on Media and the Family, 2009*).

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- By age eighteen, a child will have seen 200,000 acts of violence on television, including 40,000 murders (*Herr, 2007*).
- More than 1,000 studies indicate that ongoing exposure to television violence during childhood increases aggressive and antisocial behavior, particularly in boys (*Wilson, 2008*).
- Local television news broadcasts devote 53.8 percent of their time to stories about crime, disaster, and war (*Herr, 2007*).
- High levels of exposure to violent video games have been linked to delinquency, fighting at school, and criminal behavior such as assault and robbery (*Anderson, 2003*).
- Attractive role models are the aggressors in more than 80 percent of music-video violence (*Krieger, 1998*).
 - Males are more than three times as likely to be the aggressors.
 - Blacks are more likely than whites to be the aggressors.

Computers

- Because young people spend far more time on their computers and use the Internet far more than their parents, many hate mongers target young people through hate music and special web sites (*Media Awareness Network, 2010*).
- Every year in North America, more than 50,000 white power CDs are sold (*Media Awareness Network, 2010*).
- Young people may be more susceptible to online racist propaganda because they don't possess experience or facts to refute the lies and myths being presented to them (*Media Awareness Network, 2010*).
- Lonely, marginalized youths, seeking a sense of identity and belonging, are both the most attractive targets for racists and the most useful tools once recruited (*Media Awareness Network, 2010*).
- Technology has become a quick and easy way for stalkers to monitor and harass their victims. In 2009, electronic monitoring of some kind (such as e-mail and instant messaging) was used to stalk one in thirteen victims (*Montaldo, 2009*).

Human Trafficking

- Each year approximately 800,000 people are trafficked across national borders (*United States Department of State, 2008b*).
- It is estimated that there are 12.3 million people in forced labor, bonded labor, forced child labor, and sexual servitude at any given time (*United States Department of State, 2008b*).
- Approximately 80 percent of human-trafficking victims are women. Up to 50 percent are minors (*United States Department of State, 2008b*).

War

- In 2007, over 14,000 terrorist incidents occurred worldwide, resulting in 22,000 deaths (*United States Department of State, 2008a*).
- Throughout world history, a major portion of those who died as a result of armed conflict were civilians (*United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2007*).
 - Approximately 70 percent of the deaths in recent conflicts worldwide have been of women and children.
 - More children are killed in wars today than soldiers.
- From 1986 to 1996 (*Nordstrom, 2004*):
 - Two million children were killed in armed conflict.
 - Between 4 and 5 million children were physically disabled.
 - More than 5 million children were forced into refugee camps.
 - More than 12 million children were left homeless.
 - More than 10 million children were psychologically traumatized.
- Other effects of war on children are neglect, starvation, disease, and torture (*Machel, 1996*).
- In many countries, women and young girls are often raped, beaten by soldiers, abducted, and enslaved (*United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2007*).
- By 2004, there were as many as 300,000 children under the age of eighteen serving as combatants around the globe. Their average age was just over twelve. Children now serve in 40 percent of the world's armed forces, rebel groups, and terrorist organizations and fight in almost 75 percent of the world's conflicts (*Singer, 2004*).

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- 41 percent of the female veterans in the United States say they were victims of sexual assault while serving in the military (*Cable News Network, 2008*).
- From 2005 to 2010, service members took their own lives at a rate of approximately one every 36 hours (*Harrell & Berglass, 2011*).
- Only 1 percent of Americans have served in the military, however former service members represent 20 percent of suicides in the United States (*Harrell & Berglass, 2011*).
- As of February, 2010, among U.S. military personnel in Iraq, there were 4,382 casualties and 31,716 service members had been wounded in hostile action (*Associated Press, 2010*).
- Women and children are fourteen times more likely than men to die during a natural disaster (*United Nations Development Programme, 2009*).
- Following a natural disaster, women are more likely to be victims of domestic and sexual violence, and women often avoid using shelters for fear of being sexually assaulted (*United Nations Development Programme, 2009*).

The Planet

- Globally, the illegal wildlife trade is said to be the second largest illegal trade in volume, second only to narcotics and followed by arms and ammunition (*Grigoriev, 2009*).
- In the past fifty years, 90 percent of all large fishes have disappeared from the world's oceans because of industrial fishing (*Walton, 2003*).
- Other species under threat include (*Grigoriev, 2009; International Union for Conservation of Nature, 2009*):
 - 70 percent of all known plants,
 - 21 percent of all known mammals,
 - 30 percent of all known amphibians,
 - 12 percent of all known birds,
 - 28 percent of all known reptiles,
 - 35 percent of all know fish.
- In the past fifty years, one-third of the world's rainforests have been destroyed, and deforestation continues at an alarming rate (*Rainforest Foundation, 2010*).

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