Trauma and Youth

- While youth may feel the effects of childhood trauma, they may also experience traumatic events during adolescence.
  - Youth exposure to sexual abuse is estimated to be as high as 43%
  - Youth exposure to witnessing violence is estimated to range between 39% and 85%
  - Youth rates of victimization are estimated to be as high as 66%
- Youth of color are more likely to be subjected to traumatic events than their peers.
  - Disproportionate poverty and discrimination contribute to this
  - Immigrant youth are at higher risk than their peers
- Gender also contributes to traumatic experiences.
  - Young men are more likely to be exposed to community violence
  - Young men are more likely to experience serious injury

(Preidential Task Force on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Trauma in Children and Adolescents, 2008)

Youth in the Justice System

Youth account for 17% of all arrests made by law enforcement officers each year, which equates to a staggering 2.4 million youth who are arrested annually.

- Approximately 125,000 youth offenders are served in youth court programs each year
- The majority of youth in the justice system have one or more psychiatric disorder (66% of males; 75% of females)

(Abram et al., 2004; Pearson & Jurich, 2005)

Juvenile Offenders, Traumatic Experiences and PTSD

There are increasing numbers of juvenile offenders diagnosed with trauma-related disorders, including Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.

- PTSD is becoming increasingly prevalent among juvenile offenders
- Traumatic experiences and PTSD have a negative impact on “adolescent psychological functioning”, putting youth at higher risk for the development of other psychological disorders.

- Some studies suggest that a link may exist between traumatic experience and the development of delinquent behaviors. For example, Steiner, et al. (1997) found that a group of incarcerated male juveniles had a higher rate of PTSD than their non-incarcerated counterparts.

- Youth may experience symptoms of PTSD, with females reporting a higher incidence of PTSD symptoms than males.
  
  - For example, a study of 152 male and female juvenile offenders by Brosky & Lally (2004) found that some “re-experience” trauma (21.1% of females and 7.9% of males) and some report increased arousal (34.2% of females and 17.1% of males), both of which are symptoms of PTSD.

**Further Reading and References**


