



Research In the News

Questions
About
the Article ?

ARE YOUTH DESENSITIZED TO VIOLENCE?

Oakland, California, had several shootings in 2011 that resulted in very young victims—for example, five-year-old Gabriel Martinez Jr. was shot as he played near his father's business. After several years of declining violent crime, shootings in Oakland increased rapidly, with around five people shot or shot at a day. In an article in the *New York Times*, the experts interviewed gave their perceptions of the reasons for the increased violence. Anthony Del Toro of California Youth Outreach said, "To secure a gun in Oakland is like looking for some candy." Another youth worker believed that kids were too desensitized to violence because "young people see it all the time." The police department appeared to blame the budget cuts, which had resulted in officer layoffs. How could these beliefs translate into more scientifically based facts?

1. What kind of study is needed to determine whether young people are desensitized to violence?
2. What exactly is meant by the term *expert* in this article?
3. What does the empirical literature reveal about the relationship between law enforcement expenditures and rates of violence?

Source: Walter, S. (2012, January 8). Shootings soar in Oakland: Children often victims. *The New York Times*, A29A.