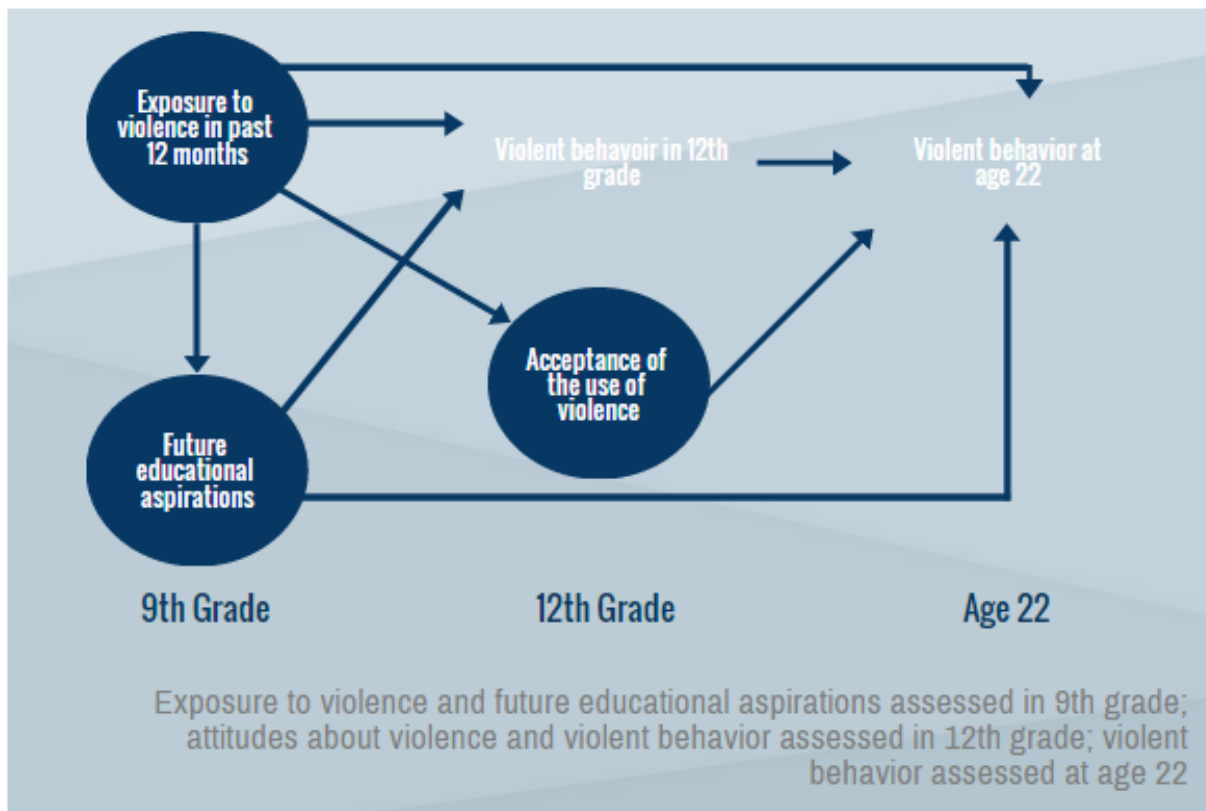


# Youth with solid educational goals may steer clear of violence

August 28 2015, by Terri Mellow



Young African-American men who have well-established educational aspirations by the time they are in 9th grade are less likely than their peers to engage in violent behavior at age 22, researchers from the

University of Michigan have found.

The team also found that exposure to [community violence](#) led boys without such aspirations to be more accepting of [violent behavior](#) and to use violence to solve problems in grade 12. Higher levels of acceptance and use of violence in [12th grade](#) also predicted high levels of violent behavior at age 22.

"Exposure to violence is a significant [public health](#) concern. Our research points to the importance of trying to promote a response to pervasive violence that centers around future expectations, in this case future educational aspirations," said Sarah Stoddard, assistant professor in the School of Nursing and School of Public Health, who conducted the research with colleagues at the Prevention Research Center and Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center at the School of Public Health.

The findings are reported in the *Journal of Adolescence*.

Previous research has shown that 80 percent of young people in large, urban areas are exposed to violence as direct or indirect witnesses, and 70 percent as victims. Research also has shown that this exposure often translates into more acceptance and use of violence.

The data came from the 12-year Flint Adolescent Study that followed 850 students from four high schools in the Michigan city. In particular, the study focused on 681 participants that identified as African-American. In the 12 months before they entered 9th grade, students were asked about exposure to community violence, educational aspirations, attitudes about violence and violent behavior. The surveys were repeated in 12th grade and at age 22.

Girls, who comprised 51 percent of the students followed in the study,

were less likely to accept and engage in violence at age 22, and also had higher educational aspirations. But, the authors noted, both boys and girls saw violence as an acceptable way to solve problems when they did not have aspirations for the future.

"For boys, future [educational aspirations](#) were in some ways more important than for girls in predicting later attitudes and violent behavior," Stoddard said. "Boys tend not to be as connected to schools as girls are. They are less engaged in education, more exposed to violence and more involved with [violence](#). It is important to look at ways to engage [young people](#) in looking at their future in different ways."

**More information:** "Predicting violent behavior: The role of violence exposure and future educational aspirations during adolescence," *Journal of Adolescence*, Volume 44, October 2015, Pages 191-203, ISSN 0140-1971, [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2015.07.017](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2015.07.017)

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