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The rising number of legal abortions, says Gentles, suggests that a woman's willingness to terminate an unwanted pregnancy largely depends on how difficult it is for her to have an abortion.

"The vast majority of abortions today," says Gentles, "are sought out by unmarried teen-aged women and by married women who simply do not want an additional child . . . [and who] would prefer legal abortion to the embarrassment [or] inconvenience of having a baby. On the other hand, it is hard to believe that all, or even most, of them would go to the extent of having an illegal abortion."

The Still-Wild West

"Violent Death, Violent States, and American Youth" by Michael R. Greenberg, George W. Carey, and Frank J. Popper, in *The Public Interest* (Spring 1987), 10 East 53rd St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

Murder, robbery, and other violent crimes are common occurrences in the nation's largest population centers, such as New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

But according to Greenberg, Carey, and Popper, all Rutgers University professors, young white people (counting Hispanics as whites, as the U.S. Census Bureau does) stand a greater chance of dying violent deaths on the streets of some rural towns in Montana, Nevada, and New Mexico than they do in dense urban areas.

Every year, thousands of young Americans, aged 15 to 24, die violent deaths—mostly from murder, suicide, and auto accidents.

Most of these fatalities take place where the majority of Americans live, in large towns and cities. But the authors found that six rural Western states (Arizona, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Wyoming and New Mexico) suffer from the highest number of youthful deaths per capita in the nation (excluding deaths among blacks, Orientals, native Americans, and other minorities). Death rates among young white people living in those states, the authors found, have, since 1939, stood some 20 percent above the national rate for young whites. And in the six most dangerous Western counties, the death rate among young white men even exceeds the rate for their black counterparts in Atlanta, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. Youths living in seven Eastern states (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, New York, Maryland, and Pennsylvania), the researchers found, are least likely to die violent deaths.

Why is the West so dangerous, at least for young people?

The authors blame various forms of social instability. Divorce rates in the six most violence-prone Western states, they point out, are two to three times higher than those in the Northeast, and the unemployment rate is one-third higher. Population migration is also more common in the West. About two-thirds of Northeasterners, but only two-fifths of Westerners, are still living in the states where they were born.

They also discovered the same relationship between instability and violence within the Western states. The rates of violent deaths in rural northwest New Mexico were 5.6 times higher than those around urban Utah County (Provo), Utah, where divorce and unemployment rates are

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Thanks to beer and fast cars, some of today's western youth are as dangerous to themselves as the The Wild Bunch (1969) were to others.

low and the influence of the Mormon Church is strong.

Finally, the authors blame violent deaths among Western youths on "the rural white ethos of the American West." This cowboy mentality, they say, emphasizes "outdoor machismo, individualism, risk taking, conspicuous athleticism, danger seeking and nature conquering."

Multiplying Errors

"The Nine Lives of Discredited Data" by Diane B. Paul, in *The Sciences* (May-June 1987), The New York Academy of Sciences, 2 East 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

College textbooks have changed dramatically during the past 20 years. Until the mid-1960s, textbook authors were academic specialists who wrote to ensure their reputations in their field.

Paul, an associate professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, contends today's textbooks are "slicker, more elaborate, and more expensive" than in the past. They are also less demanding.

The quadrupling of community college enrollment (to 2.5 million students) between 1960 and 1970 created a new market. Community college instructors, faced with ill-prepared students, demanded that textbooks not only be "dumbed down" to 10th-grade levels, but also that they have such "bell and whistle" supplements as slides, photographs, and tests.

Textbook authorship has also changed. Instead of being written by