MANAGING STUDENT AGGRESSION IN HIGH SCHOOLS: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

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The provision of school psychological services in high school settings where aggressive student behavior is a concern presents challenges and opportunities for leadership to practitioners. This article places focus on the role of the school psychologist as (a) a consultant in the evaluation and restructuring of effective student discipline procedures and (b) a provider of direct intervention services to high-risk youth. School psychologists are urged to bring a prevention focus and their insight into the principles of learning and adolescent development to the design of effective school and classroom behavior management structures. Promising primary and secondary prevention programs are reviewed and implications for practice discussed. ©1998 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Conventional notions of what goes on within the walls of North American high schools is fueled by the popular media. High schools and high school students are commonly portrayed to the general public in stereotypical forms. In the cinema, for instance, urban schools are typified to be aging fortresses of warring gangs and other violent, ne'er-do-well teenagers and populated by burnt-out teachers in desperate need of salvation through some individual's heroics (e.g., *Blackboard Jungle* in the 1950s, *Up the Down Staircase* in the 1960s, and more recently, *Stand and Deliver* and *Dangerous Minds*). Non-urban high schools—to the degree that they are represented at all—tend to be shown as populated by alienated adolescents concerned excessively, if not exclusively, with drugs, sex, and music, with no evident concerns for anything resembling school violence (e.g., *The Breakfast Club* and *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*). Whereas art does often imitate life to some degree, the reality inside both urban and non-urban high schools most often bears little resemblance to popularized depictions.

As Furlong and colleagues, among others, have cautioned, (e.g., Furlong, Flam, & Smith, 1996; Furlong & Morrison, 1994a, 1995) public—and even educator—perceptions of the problems inside the nation's schools often are not based on verifiable, factual information and may be exaggerated. While other authors counter with a more pessimistic interpretation of the available data (e.g., Goldstein & Conoley, 1997a; Stephens, 1997), it is clear that violence, gangs, and related drug activity in the high school environment, although not the pandemic some media outlets would suggest, is still a concern in many communities across the nation. For example, in a survey of 2066 ninth grade pupils in Lexington, Kentucky, during a six-month period, 43% reported they had hit another student, 8% reported they had hit a teacher, and 16% responded they had carried a weapon to school (Kingery, McCoy-Simandle, & Clayton, 1997). In a survey of high school students in Seattle, 6.6% of male students reported they had carried a handgun into school at some time (Callahan & Rivera, 1992). Finally, Hanke (1996) re-analyzed the victimization data from *Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of the Lifestyles of and Values of Youth* (Bachman & Johnson, 1988), an annual, nationally representative survey of high school seniors. Hanke found that while in school, 17.6% of the males and 10.5% of the females were injured in a fight, and 8.3% of the males and 2% of the females reported injury by an offender armed with weapon (not specified). The preponderance of student victimization in high school was found to be of a property offense nature. Hanke concluded that the data further confirmed that events of interpersonal violence in the high school setting, although disturbing and problematic, remain relatively uncommon in comparison to both property and nonvictimization rates in the same setting.

Although data from surveys and opinions such as these allow educators to add perspective to local concerns, they are of limited use at the school building level. It is here that critical risk factors interact, such as socioeconomic condition of the community, size and racial/ethnic composition of the student body, training and experience of administration and teachers, availability of alternative educational opportunities, and availability of community personnel and resources. Risk factors such as these potentiate each other in their additive effects (Rutter, 1985). An overcrowded building in a racially diverse, low SES neighborhood with disheartened teachers and administration presents an environment of heightened risk for everyone.

The perspective offered in this article is that the management of aggressive student behavior at the high school level must first and foremost reflect a research-based, developmentally and culturally sensitive continuation of violence prevention efforts initiated in the earlier grades. School systems that implement developmentally appropriate prevention measures and education starting in the earliest grades are at a comparative advantage when addressing the needs of these same students when they reach high school. Numerous promising violence prevention programs and initiatives are available for use at the earlier grade levels (see for instance, Grossman et al., 1997; Lochman, Dunn, & Klimes-Dougan, 1993; Walker, Severson, Feil, Stiller, & Golly, 1998; Hudley, Britsch, Wakefield, Smith, DeMorat, & Cho, 1998). The continuing conceptualization and design of prevention efforts at the high school level should incorporate additional understanding of: (a) developmental factors associated with older adolescent patterns of anger and aggression (see DeBarshye & Fryxell, 1998); (b) sociocultural risk and protective mechanisms (e.g., Hammond & Yung, 1993; Hill, Soriano, Chen, & LaFromboise, 1994); (c) patterns and prevention of high-rate co-occurring behaviors such as drug use, sexuality, academic failure, and community delinquency (e.g., Furlong, Casas, Corral, Chung, & Bates, 1997; Opinas, Basen-Enquist, Grunbaum, & Parcel, 1995); and (d) the structural organization of traditional high schools that necessitates the need for greater self-control and independent decision-making, replacing the more heavily adult-influenced structures of the earlier grades. Accordingly, this article focuses on resources and suggested practice in two critical areas: the use of proactive discipline strategies and prevention-oriented skills training models.

Proactive Discipline

When teachers and other building staff members on occasion would offer up our predominantly African-American, mostly low SES students as the principal reason for the discipline problems in the building, I would ask them to stop somewhere on the way home one afternoon and watch the yellow buses from our school go by. If they did, they would observe that on some of the buses, the students were hanging out the windows, yelling at passers-by, and generally creating chaos. On other buses, they would see that the students were sitting in their seats, talking in conversational tones, and enjoying the ride. Same kids, different bus drivers. I would ask them to consider the implication (J. A. McBride, personal communication, August, 1997).

Recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poles have suggested that the American public—rightly or wrongly—believes that discipline and safety in the school setting are among the top problems facing schools (e.g., Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1996; Rose, Gallup, & Elam, 1997; but see also Furlong & Morrison, 1995). It is not unusual for high school educators also to express concerns about student discipline and often with understandable reason. Older adolescents who misbehave in an intimidating or aggressive manner can be very real physical threats to fellow students and education staff alike.

School disciplinary procedures, including those at the secondary level, tend to rely more on reactive administrative interventions such as suspension and expulsion than proactive classroom procedures (Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, 1993; Sprick & Nolet, 1991). This may be due in part to the reliance of teacher training institutions on the philosophy of "good teaching breeds good discipline." As a consequence, universities have emphasized course work in teaching methods and curriculum at the expense of classroom discipline (Hyman, 1997). The resultant strategies to manage aggressive

student behavior, including that of students with repeated incidents, relies heavily on attempts to initiate punishment contingencies. Such efforts include reprimands, loss of privileges, detention, suspension, corporal punishment, and expulsion (Colvin et al. 1993; Hyman, 1997). The effectiveness of these procedures in reducing serious adolescent behavior problems has been questioned (Goal Six Work Group, 1993; Morgan-D'Atrio, Northrup, LaFluer, & Spera, 1996). A comprehensive review of general school discipline models is beyond the scope of this article. The reader is referred to Bear (1996), Colvin et al. (1993), Hyman (1997), and Walker, Colvin, and Ramsey (1995) for useful reviews and proposals.

Whereas no single discipline plan is always better than another in every situation, a number of broad disciplinary factors and existing programs have been demonstrated to have positive effects on reducing aggressive student misbehavior at the high school level. As school psychologists consult with administrative and teaching personnel on matters of building and classroom discipline, the following may serve as useful guidelines.

Track and Evaluate the Patterns and Efficacy of Current Procedures

A set of discipline procedures is in many respects an educational program like others in the schools. It can include both dedicated and ancillary personnel, codified practices, stated or implicit goals, and budgetary impact. The determination of whether a school's discipline policy is "working" should not be based upon solely anecdotal or intuition-driven data. An article in the local newspaper that the high school is troubled by student violence or the occurrence of a single, high-profile incident should stimulate more systematic analysis, not sweeping or expensive change.

Discipline involves both (a) instruction designed to teach self-discipline and (b) disciplinary actions used to manage behavior problems when they occur (Bear, 1997). School psychologists are urged to take the lead in the methodological design and evaluation of these currently existing structures and procedures before new programs are initiated.

Jackson, Williams, and Elliott (1996) provided useful guidance for such an effort in their monograph, *Program Evaluation Overview.* In this practitioner-oriented treatment, the authors offer a general overview of evaluation research, discuss the nature of a collaborative relationship between the evaluator (e.g., school psychologist) and the program manager (e.g., principal), and offer a series of guiding questions for the evaluation design. In their discussion of Project PREPARE, a well-designed schoolwide disciplinary program, Colvin et al. (1993) provided sample checklists and procedural flow charts for assessing current policies.

Assist in the Development a Clearly Written Code of Discipline or Revisit the Existing One in Light of the Evaluation

A code of discipline species what will be considered appropriate school conduct and alleviates controversies associated with arbitrary rule enforcement (Hyman et al., 1982). Whereas such codes have not been demonstrated to have a significant impact upon episodic outbreaks of serious student aggression, if well-designed, clearly specified codes can help to establish a social contract from which a prevention-oriented discipline structure may be developed.

Unlike the older, legalistic code models with their heavy-handed, authoritarian emphasis on rules and punishment, a modern code of discipline should be developed "bottom up," with collaborative input from students, teachers, support staff, and parents, and reviewed frequently for modifications. The code should provide unambiguous language understandable to all concerned regarding logical, practical, and fair behavioral expectations for staff and students. Discipline codes should not focus primarily on sanctions for misbehavior, but be prevention-oriented. In this fashion, the code contains procedures and mechanisms to: (a) recognize and reinforce appropriate behavior; (b) identify and remediate less egregious behaviors that may be precursors to more dangerous behaviors; and (c) provide staff with both treatment and punishment options for serious or criminal behavior.

Stephens (1995) provided sample plans, policies, procedures, and codes that may prove useful to school psychologists as they consult on this issue. Integrating the code of discipline into an equally well-articulated overall school safety plan (e.g., Morrison, Furlong, & Morrison, 1994) allows student discipline to be perceived with a perspective on other factors (e.g., cultural, social, and environmental dimensions) that influence student aggression.

Explore Alternatives to Traditional Out of School Suspension and Expulsion

It is clear that circumstances sometimes warrant the temporary removal of a student from the building, but these circumstances should be generally limited to those in which the protection of students or staff is the central issue. In a study of a large urban high school, Morgan-D'Atrio et al., (1996) found that 65% of the entire student body had been referred to the administrator for a disciplinary offense during a single academic year, and of those, 52% had been suspended at least once. Of those suspensions, 20% were suspended even when such an administrative response was not included as an option in the school's code of discipline.

There are no systematically gathered data that support the notion that "zero tolerance" policies enforced by suspension effectively inhibit future aggressive behavior among chronic offenders (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, in press; Uchitelle, Bartz, & Hillman, 1989). Over-representation by race, SES, gender, and disability has also been among the most consistent findings (Skiba et al., in press). "In-school suspension" that involves isolation and imported class work is frequently little more than political cover to address parent or police complaints or, more sinisterly, to mask disproportionate suspension patterns.

Offender consequences for most noncriminal, chronic aggressive behavior should contain elements for the student of both inconvenience and skill development. School psychologists should be involved in the design and evaluation of alternatives to suspension policies that link a functional analysis of the offending behavior (Horner, Albin, & O'Neill, 1991) to the appropriate skills training program directed at the deficit behavior (e.g., Short, Short, & Blanton, 1994). Replacing home suspension with after school or Saturday skills training limits lost academic class time, prevents the potential for problematic unsupervised community time, and provides an element of inconvenience for the student.

Provide Staff Development Opportunities in Classroom Management Skills

Teachers in high schools where suspensions and other reactive administrative procedures are the modal response to physical or verbal aggression are under heavy peer pressure to themselves recommend and rely on these sanctions, perhaps at the expense of more proactive classroom procedures. School psychologists, as experts in both adolescent development and behavioral management, are in a central position to facilitate or provide the necessary staff training in the principles of proactive classroom discipline.

As Skiba (1997) noted, the classroom disciplinary climate in many secondary schools tends to be more reliant on coercive rather than positive reinforcement measures. School psychologists in an individual consulting or inservice training capacity can usefully emphasize to teachers the effective application of the principles of reinforcement and punishment. Hyman (1997), Keller and Tapasak (1997), Sprick and Nolet (1991), and Striepling (1997) have provided helpful, prevention-based discussions of classroom management strategies that can serve as foundations for training.

SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

The codification and publication of punitive disciplinary sanctions (e.g., detention, suspension, or expulsion) for student misbehavior can have a positive effect on aggressive behavior only to the extent that students are willing or able to modify their behaviors to avoid the aversive consequence— assuming they perceive the consequence as aversive. With chronically aggressive students, howev-

er, the school as a setting event can be viewed as offering insufficient antecedent properties to increase the likelihood of more socially responsive behavior (Mayer, 1995). For those students without potentially adequate anger management and interpersonal problem-solving competencies that are both salient as cognitive response choices and behaviorally within their repertoires, the expectation that they will inhibit aggression based solely on anticipated punishment consequences is naive, at best (see Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 1991, 1993). Further, the typical prosocial reinforcement properties of the high school setting (e.g., timely progress toward graduation, positive adult interactions, and athletic or extra-curricular opportunities) must be accessible in order to have an influence on student behavior. If such prosocial reinforcers for school attendance are unavailable to a portion of students due to lack of academic or interpersonal skills, these students may find alternative, antisocial reinforcement in disruptive behavior. Effective management of aggressive student behavior at the high school level means moving away from over-dependence on reactive measures to a more prevention-oriented approach.

Primary Prevention

Primary or universal prevention activities at the high school level can be dichotomized as (a) curricular attempts to influence attitudes and problem-solving skills and (b) systems-based interventions which focus on restructuring settings and environments (Guerra, Tolan, & Hammond, 1994). Whereas a few curriculum-based primary prevention efforts at the elementary level have demonstrated encouraging results (e.g., Grossman et al., 1997), similar broad population-based classroom programs at the high school level have not yet shown comparable usefulness in reducing generalized student aggression. The popular *Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents* (Prothrow-Stith, 19897) is an example of a high school classroom curriculum with high face validity but very little empirical support for targeted behavioral change (see Guerra, Tolan, & Hammond, 1994; Larson, 1994a; National Research Council, 1993; Tolan & Guerra, 1994). This 10-session curriculum, which seeks to teach skills in anger control and alternatives to aggression, although intuitively promising, lacks solid empirical support for either reduction of violent student behavior or generalization beyond the classroom. Its value as a *stand-alone program* falls somewhere between unnecessary flogging of the faithful and politically unwise utilization of teacher time and district funds.

School psychologists consulting at the high school level are urged to support a universal prevention curriculum only when there is an evident and obvious articulation of relevant skills introduced in earlier grades and solid evidence for enhanced and generalizable competencies among at-risk students. Evidence for generalization should be manifested in quantifiable school-based data (e.g., reduction in suspension rates or fewer discipline reports for aggressive behavior) and not solely in teacher or student "satisfaction" reports. Three recently published programs, *Viewpoints: A Guide to Conflict Resolution and Decision-Making for Adolescents* (6th–12th grade; Guerra, Moore, & Slaby, 1994), *Aggressors, Victims and Bystanders: Thinking and Acting to Prevent Violence* (6th–9th grades; Slaby, Wilson-Brewer, & Dash, 1996), and *Straight Talk About Risks* (K-12; Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, 1992) have shown promise in early evaluation studies and merit continued attention and study. An older, more comprehensive effort, *Resolving Conflict Creatively Program* (K-12; Educators for Social Responsibility, 1985) incorporates broadly-based staff development, classroom curricula, and peer mediation across all grade levels. The secondary curriculum emphasizes strategies for de-escalating potentially volatile situations through training in such conflict resolution skills as negotiation, perspective taking, and active listening. A study completed in 1990 found teacher-reported positive impact on behaviors such as classroom observed physical and verbal aggression (Lantieri, 1995; Metis Associates, 1990).

The more physical structures/systems-based approaches are wide-ranging and many are as yet substantially unexamined for effectiveness. For example, widely-used and potentially very expensive environmental controls such as metal detectors have shown promise in some circumstances (see

Ginsberg & Loffredo, 1993), but await future studies to determine cost-benefit ratios. Myriad authors such as Blauvelt (1996), Goldstein, Harootunian, and Conoley (1994), Morrison, Furlong, and Morrison (1994) and Stephens (1995, 1997) have enumerated and advocated an array of administrative, physical environmental, and security measures suggested to have beneficial effects on managing student aggression. School psychologists are urged to examine these recommendations in the context of a systematic school safety/school reform plan (e.g., Furlong, Morrison, & Clontz, 1993; Knoff, 1995; Linquanti & Berliner, 1994; Miller, Brodine, & Miller, 1996; Talley & Short, 1995) rather than as reactive "add-ons" to existing structures.

Secondary Prevention

Secondary and tertiary prevention measures, while possessing more discrete roles with younger children (see Walker et al., 1996), are often indistinguishable at the high school level. Both involve the identification and treatment of students who are exhibiting problematic levels of aggressive behavior and who are at high risk for continuing problems as adults. Because aggressive student behavior has been found to peak near the seventh grade and decline substantially thereafter (Furlong, Morrison, Bates, & Chung, in press; Inanni, 1978), those adolescents who are still maintaining aggressive patterns into the high school years represent a population at serious risk for adult psychiatric and corrections problems (e.g., Loeber, 1988, 1990).

The identification for treatment of students who are at greatest risk can take place through multiple-gating procedures (Loeber & Dishion, 1983) or a more informal nomination process through teachers, parents, or law enforcement. Compared to their older peers, ninth graders have been shown to be at higher risk for victimization (Furlong, Morrison, Bates, & Chung, in press) and at greater risk to engage in fighting (Orpinas, Basen-Enquest, Grunbaum, & Parcel, 1995). Because of their comparatively young ages and higher risk status, problematic ninth grade students (or other students just entering high school) may have the greatest potential to benefit from psychosocial interventions designed to reduce their aggression in the school setting. Older students who have failed to become engaged in the academic process and who may be two or more years out of graduation sequence with their entering cohort may be less motivated to benefit. Additionally, when students are being identified for group intervention, a process that controls for chronic absenteeism and social acceptability of the intervention is essential (see Larson, 1994a).

A number of programs are designed to teach aggressive high school students how to manage aggression through anger control training. For example, Feindler and colleagues (Feindler & Ecton, 1986; Feindler, Ecton, Kingsley, & Dubey, 1986; Feindler, Marriott, & Iwata, 1984) described a group and individual anger control program that focuses on cognitive-behavioral strategies to help the adolescent reduce the frequency, intensity, and duration of anger-induced aggression. This intervention can be found in a session-by-session format in *Adolescent Anger Control: Cognitive-Behavioral Techniques* (Feindler & Ecton, 1986). The intervention provides training in relaxation, self-instruction, assertiveness, self-monitoring of anger incidences, and social problem-solving utilizing a Stress Inoculation Training approach (Meichenbaum, 1985). In the Educational/Cognitive Preparation phase, group members are taught an antecedent-behavior-consequence model of angry behavior and trained to recognize their own physiological anger cues and environmental "triggers." In the Skill Acquisition and Skill Application Phases, role-play, video-taping, and graduated real-life exposure is used to train group members to utilize the skills they have learned. Outcome studies with this intervention have shown reduced or maintained levels of disruptive classroom behavior and evidence of generalization (Feindler, 1991).

Larson and colleagues (Larson, 1992, 1994a; Larson & McBride, 1992; Larson, Calamari, West, & Frevert, in press) described and examined an adaptation of the Feindler and Ecton (1996) intervention designed specifically for the school setting entitled *Think First Anger and Aggression Man-*

agement for Secondary Students (Larson & McBride, 1992). Unlike the Feindler and Ecton program, however, *Think First* centralizes all its training around the adolescent's adjustment to anger-inducing stressors in the school setting. For example, environmental anger triggers such as teacher or administrator accusations and re-directions are used to train self-control strategies. A videotape segment is provided for each session and features African-American and European-American male and female adolescents modeling the training skills in classroom and hallway settings. This intervention's stated purpose is to strengthen the protective factors associated with school competence by addressing the students' school-related anger management and problem-solving deficits (Larson & McBride, 1992). Accordingly, *Think First* emphasizes a strategic and purposeful detachment of the therapist from the personal lives of the students outside of the school setting. In so doing, the problematic youths are inhibited from the common (and potentially fatal) challenge to the credibility of the therapist as being just another adult who is ignorant of their problems on the "mean streets" outside of school. In *Think First,* the therapist is advised to concede his or her ignorance, acknowledge the potential need for differing social competencies with peers and authority in the community setting, and return the focus to his or her area of high credibility: academic survival in school. No strategic attempt is made to train for generalization outside the school setting, though spontaneous self-reported effort is recognized. Outcome studies with this intervention have demonstrated reduced disciplinary referrals and an increase in self-guiding verbalizations (Larson, 1994b).

Focused Populations for Secondary Prevention

Minority children and youth are over-represented among both victims and perpetrators of violence across school and community settings (Hill, Soriano, Chen, & LaFromboise, 1994; Soriano, Soriano, & Jimenez, 1994). School psychologists who provide violence prevention services should be proactive in understanding and addressing the needs of cultural minorities in the school setting. Guiding foundations of many of the most salient of these sociocultural factors are usefully articulated in a series of chapters in the volume, *Reason to Hope: A Psychosocial Perspective on Violence and Youth* (Eron, Gentry, & Schlegel, 1994). These chapters cover the risk and protective factors that are associated with violence among young ethnic minority group members, including (a) African-Americans (Hammond & Yung, 1994), (b) U.S. Latinos (Soriano, 1994), (c) Native Americans (Yung & Hammond, 1994), and (d) Asian/Pacific Island Americans (Chen & True, 1994).

An example of an intervention program developed specifically for African-American youth is *Positive Adolescent Choices Training: A Model for Violence Prevention Groups with African-American Youth* (Hammond, 1991; Hammond & Yung, 1991; Yung & Hammond, 1993, 1998). Components include teaching violence risk education, anger management, and prosocial skills training. A set of culturally-sensitive videotapes entitled "Dealing With Anger: Givin' It. Takin' It. Workin' It Out" address the issues of providing low-provocation criticism, managing interpersonal anger, and negotiating solutions. The authors report that a study of youth who received training with these procedures demonstrated a significant reduction of physical aggression at school, that their behavior improved during the training and was maintained beyond their participation in the program (Yung & Hammond, 1998).

The increasing integration into the regular high school environment of youth with moderate to severe disabilities in general intellectual functioning with co-occurring anger or aggression management problems has created an opportunity and a challenge for school psychologists. Horner, Albin, and O'Neill (1991) have provided a very useful chapter for school psychologists consulting with classroom teachers regarding the aggressive behavior of these students. This approach emphasizes the use of a functional analysis and the application of positive behavioral supports in a preventive management program. A model for the group treatment of anger management problems in adolescents with developmental disabilities, *Anger Management and Assertiveness Skills Training,* has

been described by McLain and Lewis (1994). This intervention follows a cognitive-behavioral format similar to that described by Feindler and Ecton (1986) with significant and creative adaptations made to accommodate the disability. The authors have provided a helpful, session-by-session format that is easily adaptable to most school settings. A case study included revealed reductions in verbal and physical aggression following treatment (McLain & Lewis, 1994).

Enhancing Effectiveness of Secondary Prevention Efforts

Compounding the problem for school psychologists who desire to work directly with these youth is the finding that adolescents who are demonstrating problematic aggressive behavior frequently display co-occurring broad repertoires of other disruptive and problematic behaviors. Indeed, violent behavior is often just an extreme manifestation of a general pattern of antisocial behavior and other psychological problems within and across settings (Guerra, Tolan, & Hammond, 1994). High school students who are exhibiting patterns of disruptive and aggressive behavior in the school environment are frequently the same individuals involved in other conduct-related behaviors in the community (Lorien, Tolan, & Whaler, 1987; McDermott, 1985).

School psychologists who elect to provide direct intervention services in the high school setting can enhance generalization to other settings through the establishment of collaborative working relationships with influential agents in and out of the school building. For example, prior to implementing an anger management group in the high school, other adults instrumental in the group members' school adjustment such as administrators responsible for student discipline and influential teachers should be provided an inservice in which the training procedures are explained and recommendations for involvement by these individuals are made (e.g., Maher, 1985). As noted, adolescents who exhibit problematic behavior in the school frequently have co-occurring problems in other environments. The potential for treatment generalization to settings other than the school is increased if individuals such as parents (Bank, Marlowe, Reid, Patterson, & Weinrott, 1991), probation officers and/or law enforcement officials (Novaco, 1977) are strategically and purposefully brought into the process to support intervention efforts in school.

In their review of the intervention literature with aggressive adolescents across multiple settings, including schools, Tolan and Guerra (1994) concluded that there has been relatively limited empirical support for even the most commonly used programs. These authors suggested that "even the most basic knowledge about what is effective and what is not, let alone knowledge about what works with which populations and for what type of violence, is lacking" (p. 39). While practitioners of school-based, direct interventions with aggressive adolescents can point to selected programs that have shown promise (e.g., Yung & Hammond, 1993), there is a clear need for innovation and ongoing evaluation research, particularly with programs occurring within the high school setting.

Implications for the Practitioner

School psychologists who are responsible for service delivery at the high school level are positioned to be effective agents for action and innovation when concerns about student aggression arise. In addition to the establishment of both an effective system of disciplinary procedures and identification and treatment structures for high risk students, practitioners should keep the following in mind:

The data are impressive that a significant portion of adolescent aggression is the latest manifestation of a trajectory begun in early childhood (Loeber, 1988, 1990; Loeber & Stouthamer–Loeber, 1987; Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989). High school practitioners should collaborate with colleagues providing services in the elementary and middle schools on the development of comprehensive, research-supported primary and secondary prevention programs and procedures (for guidance, see Goldstein & Conoley, 1979; Furlong & Morrison, 1994a).

Adolescents who drop-out of high school, or who are "pushed-out" due to aggressive and other behavioral problems, increase their risk potential for corrections and mental health problems (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1995). This problem is especially acute with many low SES, ethnic minority youth (e.g., Soriano, 1994). Establishing a functional bond with the school can create a critical protective factor against antisocial behavior both in and out of the building (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992; Hawkins & Lam, 1987). School psychologists can work to help institute the structures necessary for challenging students to find academic and social success in the high school setting. Kortering, Hess, and Braziel (1997) provide an excellent analysis of the correlates and a review of prevention programs that can guide efforts to address this problem.

High schools, particularly those in large urban settings, are likely to have no shortage of community agencies eager to bring prevention and intervention programs into the building. Peace Colors Violence Prevention Program (Contact: Southern California Youth and Family Center, 101 North La Brea, Ste. #100, Inglewood, CA 90301) is an example of an intuitively appealing school–community collaboration project now in operation in a number of large Southern California school districts. The program is overseen by a board of school staff, student, parent, law enforcement, and business leaders, and contains elements of violence prevention curriculum, mediation training, and "Peace Day" activities. Whereas this program has garnered positive media reports (e.g., "Inglewood Pilots," 1994), there is no evidence of systematic evaluation of the outcomes. Representatives from programs such as this who approach the school with abundant grant money and unimpeachable intentions can prove hard for administrators and school boards to resist. The lure and political gain of "doing something"—particularly with someone else's money—is often too great to resist.

School psychologists should take the lead to ensure that any community collaborative prevention program adopted by the school has the following: a framework grounded in research-supported procedures with the targeted risk population, a solid program evaluation by an independent source demonstrating program effectiveness in relevant outcomes, generalization, and maintenance, and/or, a well-designed plan to conduct such an evaluation as a part of the implementation plan. Practitioners may find the monograph, *A Program Planning Guide for Youth Violence Prevention: A Risk-Focused Approach* (Guerra & Williams, 1996) to be a valuable resource in this endeavor. This practical, well-designed booklet is intended as a manual to assist community groups in developing organized violence prevention efforts. Along with an extensive bibliography and discussion of numerous types of community-based programs, the authors provide worksheets to guide in problem assessment and program evaluation efforts.

Practitioners providing service delivery at the high school level face unique demands when participating in violence prevention efforts. The comparatively advanced age of the students, the often large student body size with pupils in constant movement about the building, and the instructional organization that limits individual teacher contact and influence all contribute to this challenge. School boards, administrators, and building staff who struggle with the issues of providing a safe learning environment are often overwhelmed by the challenge and the array of potential "solutions." School psychologists can play a critical role by bringing to the task their knowledge of the principles of behavior change and their training and respect for data-driven, research-supported interventions and procedures.

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