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ABSTRACT

One of 52 theoretical papers on school crime and its relation to poverty, this chapter explores programs designed to prevent or to reduce student crime and violence in secondary schools that are based on the assumption that pupils are competent to make rational decisions and take rational actions, and programs that assume pupils are not competent. Program areas explored are organizational modification, curricular/instructional programs, security systems, and counseling services. Specific programs fitting into each category are discussed. The paper concludes that programs of many different kinds are needed to deal effectively with problems of crime and violence in schools. Although there was no striking difference in outcomes between programs that assume competence and those that do not, the author points out that this was not a research project but a cataloging of programs appearing in the literature. The author cautions that youths involved in such programs may be affected in unexpected ways as a result of program assumptions wholly unconsidered by educators and/or program planners. (Author/MLF)

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ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING PROGRAMS USED TO PREVENT OR REDUCE STUDENT VIOLENCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS*

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores programs designed to prevent or to reduce student crime and violence in secondary schools which are based on the assumption that pupils are competent to make rational decisions and take rational actions, and programs that assume pupils are not competent. Four types of program areas were explored: organizational modification; curricular/instructional programs; security systems; counseling services. Specific programs fitting into each category were discussed. It is the conclusion of this paper that programs of many different kinds are needed to deal effectively with problems of crime and violence in schools. Although there was no striking difference in outcomes between programs that assume competence and those that do not, the author points out that this was not a research project--it was merely a cataloging of programs appearing in the literature. The author cautions that youths involved in such programs may be affected in unexpected ways as a result of program assumptions wholly unconsidered by educators and/or program planners.

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Introduction

Programs designed to prevent or to reduce student crime and violence in secondary schools fall--at their most basic levels--into two general categories: programs that assume pupils are competent to make rational decisions and take rational actions, and programs that assume pupils are not competent. The present paper explores programs based on each of these root assumptions and some of their ramifications, while also analyzing some of the minor assumptions underlying specific programs. In preparing these analyses, two conditions became evident: first, the necessity of making generalizations required a certain amount of oversimplification; second, limitations of time and space dictated a less-than-universal sampling of programs aimed at the prevention or reduction of student violence in secondary schools. Assumptions are analyzed here without judgment being passed on them; assumptions are neither "right" nor "wrong," they just are.

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have approached issues such as the students' capacities to participate constructively in program development and implementation.

The need for program - planners to determine the root assumptions of various program approaches is demonstrable. It is fair to suggest that, even if adult planners fail to consider a program's implicit assumptions, most students affected by the program will probably realize them either consciously or subconsciously, quite possibly with unexpected and counterproductive results. In addition, programs planned by adults remove the psychological advantage of students' feelings of collective responsibility for the school's condition by placing it on the shoulders of the school staff (who presumably comprise the violence-reduction planners). This line of reasoning presumes that students simply are not competent to resolve such problems as crimes and violence prevention. Obviously, programs extensively utilizing pupils in the planning and implementation phases exhibit the opposite root assumption -- that pupils are indeed competent to help improve the social climate of the school.

There is often an unwillingness on the part of educators fully to recognize and grapple with the ramifications their assumptions about pupil competence, for a sort "catch-22" situation arises. Current research

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suggests that, whereas some kinds of crimes and violence in schools are of a practical nature (arson, to draw attention away from theft or burglary; extortion, to gain money; and so forth), other acts are best understood by their symbolic nature (graffiti; vandalism; and some types of gang activity) (See Ducey, 1978). Considering this difference, a program implemented without early analysis and determination of the intent of the acts it is supposed to control may fail to achieve its stated purpose because of misplaced corrective measures. Such unexpected failure is often not at all clear to the program's planners, and it is perhaps most likely to occur if the acts committed are of a symbolic nature and the program's prevention - approach is primarily "hardware" - oriented.[2] This is so because the needs of pupils -- as "stated" to the school administration through acts of serious misbehavior--are not addressed; students become even more frustrated, and incidence and intensity of criminal and violent acts may actually increase.

But divisions between academic constructs such as symbolic and practical crime have little utility for educators or security personnel responsible for the safety of students. While penologists can place adult criminals into modus operandi categories such as car thieves, muggers

2 "Hardware" refers to security equipment: locks; entry-detection systems; motion-detection systems; perimeter alarms; and so forth. The application of hardware to reduce crime is called "target hardening."

sex offenders, extortionists, and so forth, this does not seem to obtain for juveniles. Whether because youths are aware of their near immunity from criminal prosecution or because they lack committment to a particular pattern of criminal behavior, the boundaries of criminal activity are less defined; today's juvenile vandal may also be today's extortionist, joy-rider, thief, or sex offender. Since much juvenile offense-prevention planning is aimed at "companion crimes" with fairly clear boundaries, it is vastly more complex to establish programs to reduce or prevent a wide range of less-bounded (and often less well-defined) criminal misbehaviors in public schools. In order, then, to set up viable programs security-program planners must largely disregard motivation and focus attention on ways to prevent the largest number of acts of violence and mayhem.

With regard to this need to develop the necessarily broad student crime-prevention programs, in contrast to programs that primarily target specific crimes, and understanding of root assumptions and some specific operating assumptions of any proposed program can be immensely useful to school administrators and school security directors. It is useful, not for any academic reason, but because a program based on ill-conceived assumptions may actually exacerbate a given problem, at great cost in terms of administrative embarrassment as well as of the pupils' educational environment.

This paper has been prepared to assist planners understand basic root assumptions and some secondary or operating assumptions underlying programs to prevent or reduce crime and violence in schools. It will not be debated here whether assumptions are "right" or "wrong"; the sole issue is one of understanding what a specific program effort shows pupils about the attitude of program planners toward them.

Method of Analysis

A document produced by Research for Better Schools, entitled Planning Assistance Programs to Reduce School Violence and Disruption (Marvin, Connally, McCann, Temkin, Henning, 1976) presents four categories of programs for combatting student violence. These categories are especially useful here, since they are broad enough to encompass a wide range of activities, yet specific enough to outline the most important types of school-based crime-prevention programs. They are as follows:

(1) Organizational Modification includes programs designed to modify the structure of education in a classroom or school to make it more responsive to the general student body or to a certain segment of students.

(2) Curricular/Instructional Programs are used to help students in trouble acquire critical skills in specialized curricular or instructional programs (e.g., basic reading skills; personal behavior skills;

or conflict-resolution skills). Some schools develop general courses on law and law enforcement to make sure students understand the potential consequences of violent or disruptive behavior.

(3) Security Systems usually have a primary emphasis on alarms and patrols; however, their concerns may be more comprehensive, including target-hardening, as well as student-centered efforts. The general intent of these systems is to protect staff and students from crime and violence committed either by outsiders or by other students, while concurrently protecting the school's physical facilities from vandalism, arson, and burglary.

(4) Counseling Services are generally used to provide services for students in trouble. These programs frequently coordinate school counseling services with those provided to youths and their families by other community agencies. (pp. 49-52)

Using Marvin's four categories, dozens of crime-prevention programs were analyzed to determine whether they assume youths to be competent or noncompetent. This difference between programs assuming competence and those assuming noncompetence is often difficult to pinpoint. Despite that difficulty, however, analysis and categorization was undertaken, and the results are presented here.

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Youths as Competent

Programs which seem to vest authority and/or responsibility in pupils are discussed first. As a class, such efforts seem to operate on the primary assumption that the program's success requires the involvement in planning and implementation of the same population of students affected by the program.

Organizational Modification Programs and Approaches

Persons responsible for programs involving youths can demonstrate their faith and assumptions of competence in young persons in a number of ways. Generally this involves adults' sharing some responsibility for activities and decision-making processes with youths (Brodsky & Knudten, 1973). Of the various methods of sharing responsibility, the following approaches have been noted in the literature.

In 1972, New York's Panel on School Safety suggested that shifting the emphasis of a program away from assigned courses and tasks toward elective courses and tasks provided pupils with a sense of achievement and satisfaction. Examples included credit for experiential learning, satellite academies with courses tailored for hard-to-motivate youths, and opportunities for on-the-job training.

Berger (1974, p. 5) observed that youths often resort to violence and vandalism to express feelings of unfair treatment at the hands of school staff. The National Association of

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Secondary School Principals (1976) adds that pupils' feelings of alienation and frustration may well develop to the point where their desire to "get even" with the school neutralizes the effects of traditional penalties such as suspension or loss of privileges.

In order to avoid neutralizing school authority, some prominent programs combine a form of classroom-by-classroom development of student self-discipline (McLaughlin, 1976) with student input to the formation of schoolwide disciplinary policies (NASSP, 1976). Involvement of the student body in developing written regulations for acceptable daily behavior and prescribing the types and degrees of censure for various rule violations is the clearest example of this point of view.

Although student involvement in the establishment of school rules now seems an obvious means by which to fight disciplinary problems, it is a relatively new phenomenon. As post-Tinker era youths came increasingly to have more rights of citizenship within the school grounds (PSS, 1972, p. 81), and as educators increasingly identified and supported those rights, students themselves began to initiate and develop disciplinary regulations for adoption by local schools.[3] The literature reports that, when students can feel they have a real say in regulations governing their own behavior in

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[3] Although the literature is mute on this topic, the author of this paper suspects that this kind of student involvement is limited largely to schools in which students may reasonably be expected to develop rules similar to those the administration itself would prepare.

school, they are, understandably, much more likely to follow them (National Fire Protection Association, 1973, p. 19). Generally, the most important minor assumption underlying statements such as this is that, if students are trained in the democratic process and in the peaceful settlement of disputes, then they will use the structure of the school as a forum through which to make their needs and [illegible] known. Examples of successful applications of this approach include functional student courts and councils. In fact, however, this particular assumption often is not fairly tested, since administrators cannot legally relinquish certain powers and responsibilities to students. Another minor assumption is that students will agree with rules established collectively by the majority of their peers, and dissenting pockets of minority opinion which undermine the majority's wishes will not form. Human nature being what it is, this assumption is often proven false; it only takes a few malcontents to subvert the best wishes and plans of the majority of students.

Another groups of programs designed to reduce or prevent violence in schools uses the "peer-pressure/student-developed" approach to rule enforcement. Newman Preparatory School in Wayne, New Jersey, for example, involves the Student Council when vandalism of school property by students occurs. Through schoolwide peer pressure, the Council is reportedly most often able to fix the responsibility for destructive acts. The result is twofold: first, students are able to appreciate the

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high cost of vandalism and to decide as a body what will be done about it; and second, students themselves take some part in identifying the culprits (NASSP, 1976, p. 11). This second point is often seen as a useful mechanism for involving students in an aspect of school management ususally left to adults; it is, however, a very delicate thing to do. Extreme care must be taken to prevent a student-police or secrets-telling block of pupils from developing. Student Security Advisory Councils, discussed later, provide for student involvement without the Council's being labelled as comprised of a select group of pupils.

A variation of the Wayne, New Jersey, example involves "staking" the student body of the school to a budget equal to the vandalism costs for the previous year. Pupils are told that expenses due to vandalism for the current year will be taken from this fund. Since they may spend monies remaining in the fund at year's end as they choose, the students have an incentive to reduce vandalism (Kiernan, 1975, p. 10; Fernandez & Cardenas, 1976).

There are two drawbacks to programs that "give" money to the students and then draw against it to pay for "student-incurred" losses. First, all losses are not student-incurred; they may be caused by outsiders coming on campus. Second, although a majority of the student body may support such a program, a few "bad" kids may now find themselves in a position of being able to continue annoying the "good" students and

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foiling the administration of the school through acts of vandalism. Additionally, a generic weakness of these "give-and-take-back" programs is that the entire deterrence value rests upon incentives for good behavior developed by raising pupil expectations and by interesting them in a sum of money to spend at year's end. Should that sum be used up before the end of the year, not only will the deterrence value of the program be lost but student expectations will be shattered. The available literature suggests that, as a result of problems such as these, most such programs fail miserably in school where the goals of pupils and administrators are not aligned or where there is an active and uncontrollably destructive knot of youths.

Curriculum and Instruction Issues

The second major category of program involves the schools changing their approach to curriculum and instruction so as to demonstrate to pupils that they are considered competent. In suburban schools, programs in this group generally are some variation on the students-tutoring-students approach. The principle benefit is usually that student instructors develop a sense of importance and responsibility, while at the same time providing tangible aid to underachieving (and usually much younger) pupils. Programs using high school pupils to tutor elementary pupils also make for "good press" for the administration and the school district by creating an impression of

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flexibility within the school system. Variations on this approach can be found in Laramie, Wyoming, in Clark County, Nevada, and in Richland County, South Carolina, to cite a few school districts (Brodsky & Knudten, 1973a, p. 54).

Other curriculum changes common in urban schools are employment apprenticeships or internship programs (Brodsky & Knudten, 1973b, p. 55). In these programs, teachers serve as community liaison with firms seeking young workers; the teachers supervise the students, who then receive school credit for work-related training acquired on the job. Usually such programs are developed for noncollege-bound adolescents.

Modifications which appear irrespective of location, albeit infrequently, are those involving student input to the school's learning environment. Although curriculum offerings and changes in the configuration of support staff (aides) in classrooms are ususally the principal's sole domain, student input on these points can be a powerful tool for involving pupils by aligning their aims with the administration's goals. The operating assumption is that a pleasant learning environment enhances the ambience of the school, and that administrators need a certain amount of guidance from students as to what constitutes a "pleasant learning environment." Further, many see this as a no-lose option, for, even if pupils' counsel is not accepted on points of curriculum or policy change, reasoned explanations from the administration can defuse student charges of unresponsiveness by school authorities (Brodsky & Knudten, 1973b, p. 50).

Security System Issues

Although usually viewed strictly as reactive rather than proactive, school security programs can be a strong force for making schools more pleasant for students. This is true to the extent that a security program emphasizes student responsibilities by integrating students into the planning and implementation phases of the program (PSS, 1972, p. 93). Involving pupils in the design and implementation of security programs makes the youths more aware of their individual and collective roles in turning their own school into a pleasant place in which to spend the day. The operational assumption of this approach is that students who have respect for their school will not vandalize it and will not permit it to be vandalized by others. The prototypical example of this approach's success is in Prince George's County, Maryland, where a Student Security Advisory Council has been developed in each of 17 junior high schools. In order to avoid potential stigmatization of any specially selected or limited Council membership, these Councils are open to all interested students. Council members maintain a watch-and-report role, rather than one of active involvement in detection and apprehension. In this program pupils use the district's security force (called investigator-counselors) as a resource for the Council members by calling on security personnel for advice on personal as well as on school matters relating to crime or criminal activity.

This sharing of responsibility for the safety and security of the school between the security office and the students has the very positive effect of developing the students' sense of responsibility for the environment around them. Such cooperation between studetns and security personnel carries with it the bonus of alleviating public concern about having security personnel in, around, or available to the school site (see Brodsky & Knudten, 1973a, p. 16).

Counseling Service Issues

Peer counseling with pupils playing a primary role is usually conducted under the guise of a "rap session" led by a counselor experienced in group dynamics. The advantages of using a peer-counseling approach revolve around the self-understanding and self-awareness that presumably result from it. Further, and unlike traditional counseling of students by adults, peer counseling allows youths to work through problems aware that others in their age group have similar problems. As with the use of students in security programs, the caveat about not polarizing the counseling sessions by including particularly "good" and particularly "bad" pupils also pertains here.[4] Although some such polarized programs

[4] The meaning of terms such as "good" and "bad" changes with subcultures. Urban youths may be "bad" in wholly different ways than students so labelled in suburban schools. For an excellent discussion of different degrees or kinds of misbehaviors as a function of subcultural membership, see Cavan (1969).

have been reviewed favorably, these seem to be located in suburban school districts (NASSP, 1976, p. 15).

A somewhat broader group-counseling program is found in Omaha, Nebraska. Called "Positive Peer Culture," it trains student leaders from both the "good" and "bad" groups, so that a much broader spectrum of pupils is affected by the resulting ripple effect than would be the case if only one target-group were involved (NASSP, 1976, p. 11).

Youths as Noncompetent

In contrast to the programs discussed above, the following programs are based on the root assumption that pupils cannot or should not be given responsibility for providing input to crime-prevention programs undertaken by school personnel. The student-as-noncompetent philosophy, which runs as a common thread throughout these programs, generally is rationalized by some form of the theory that "schools are places where pupils come to learn traditional course material, but not how to reduce violence." In programs falling into this category, the school administration typically devises and enforces institutionalized rules, regulations, and punishments. These programs generally label and track high-risk youths in order that the need for treatment and the treatment needed become known to the school administration.[5] These programs usually

[5] The circular nature of this argument is often discussed in labelling theory literature. See, for example, Polk and Schafer (1972) and Brodsky and Knudten (1973b).

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seem somehow to require adults to "save the day" and to develop approaches to student violence reduction which are independent of student input. Also, these programs are most often integrated into the school curriculum much as educational programs are; pupils are viewed as the passive clientele by adult program administrators who seem themselves as valiantly trying to prevent student crime and violence in "their" schools.

Organizational Modification Programs and Approaches

The operational assumption often seen in these programs is that students should receive immediate punishment or reward for unusually bad or unusually good academic or social acts while at school. In Shawnee Mission, Kansas, for example, "honor passes" representing clean slates are given to students at the beginning of each school year. Various acts deemed "misbehaviors," such as truancy, use of profanity, or disobediance, are assigned points from teachers or administrators; when a student receives a certain number of points, the pass must be surrendered and associated privileges, such as reduced or free admission to school events, are revoked. Sharing a similar philosophy, Huntington Park, California, schools give "Es" on report cards denoting excellence in the eyes of the teachers for acts of good citizenship (as defined by the school administration). These "Es" lead to eligibility for an in-school "Citizenship Honor Society" and for participation in special activities, such as dances, assemblies,

and movies (NASSP, 1976, p. 14).

In addition to the fact that this genre of program is invariably adult-designed, the operating assumption underlying such efforts is that "honor passes" or "Es" will be intrinsically sufficient to motivate students not to engage in behaviors school administrators consider unacceptable. The potential flaws in this thinking, and the reason such approaches tend to break down in urban settings, are discussed by Cavan (1969).

A significant variation on the theme of organizational modification without student input is structural modification without student input. The experimental model for the latter is the "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" program currently underway in Broward County, Florida, under the direction of Westinghouse Corporation. Among the operational assumptions for this and other programs of structural design changes in schools are these: first, students cannot be trusted farther than they can be seen, and so increased visibility is important; second, pleasant walls and floors with directional color-markings will alter hallway flow patterns and noise levels, thereby decreasing tension and increasing good pupil behavior. Evaluation results are not yet available regarding the success or failure of this approach.

Curriculum and Instruction Issues

Minor assumptions behind curriculum-related and instructional aspects of such crime- and violence-prevention programs apparently arise from the concept that behavior problems go hand in hand with academic problems. The most common traditional correlation along these lines is between reading deficiency and undesirable behavior. Programs designed to counter this correlation seem to contain the notion that, since youths must be in school and since "school" is where youths "learn," if "learning" for some students is not taking place in regular academic classes then special classes and alternative curricula must be developed in order responsibly to serve as much of the youth population as possible.

As a group, programs targeting pupils requiring remedial education are initiated, developed, and staffed by adults. For the most part, these programs cannot be compared with programs using students to tutor students (discussed above); the student-tutorial programs tend to use high school pupils tutoring elementary school pupils, whereas the specialized curricula duscussed here are usually aimed at high school youths with academic/behavioral problems.

The most common argument against special schools or special classes for "educationally disadvantaged" youths is that teachers, even the pupils themselves come to look at the achievements of those labelled as slow learners as something less than those of the "regular kids." This

inability to get satisfaction from cooperating with the school--and what it stands for may well contribute to pupil frustration and thus to rebellion against that school

Security System Issues

The only security programs that are neither strictly hardware nor utilizing of student input are those calling for guards, agents, aides, or police in schools (Berger, 1974; Kiernan, 1975, p. 8; Grealy, 1975). The operating assumption of such approaches seems generally to be that the school community reflects many of the larger community's problems, and that, since the general public has the services of police to assist in preventing and reducing crime and violence, the school--particularly in a megaschool district--should also have its own security force. The further rationale behind noninvolvement of students in planning and implementation of such programs in twofold: first, it is the duty (if not the actual legal responsibility) of students to be in classes, rather than involved in "tangential" functions such as planning for school security problems; second, in the same way that police departments frequently resist input from the untrained public (such as community review boards), school security forces do not seek counsel from students.

Counseling Service Issues

The operating assumptions and rationale regarding this category closely approximate those for issues involving curriculum and instruction. First, schools are where youths belong; in the case of troubled and troublesome youths, some social-adjustment counseling (often coordinated with community agencies) is one way to get youths reintegrated to schools. Second, schools are places where societal goals and norms are communicated to the next generation; as deviance from commonly accepted standards of behavior requires adjustment, counseling programs designed by adults for adolescents are appropriate.

Programs exemplifying the operation of these assumptions can be found in almost any school district, and a few examples will be mentioned. Students in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, who repeatedly misbehave in ways too extreme to be tolerated within normal classes are assigned to a "behavior clinic." The clinic focuses on personal values, interpersonal relationships, and students' feelings of self worth. In Blue Springs, Missouri, students who are repeatedly disruptive are placed in a special program. The criteria for behavior resulting in pupils' being placed in such classes are determined by the school administration. The program into which such students are placed has individual and group counseling designed to give students feelings of self-worth. In Coral Gables, Florida, a program combining counseling with remedial instruction is

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designed to improve students' attitudes toward school and self, to improve personal appearance and hygiene, and to develop self-respect, initiative, and resourcefulness (NASSP, 1976, pp. 8-9).

Summary

There is a vast range of possible approaches to reduction or prevention of crime and violence in the schools. Although they overlap to some degree, programs seem to operate according to opposite root assumptions: either (1) that pupils are *competent* to take a certain amount of responsibility for their own condition in school (as in life) and can usefully assist adults in the planning and implementation of programs designed to increase safety and social adjustment; or (2) that pupils are *not competent* to play any such active role.

Programs assuming pupil competence range from those featuring close participation of students with school staff in the development of rules and regulations to those which involve joint counselor/student counseling of troubled youths. Programs assuming pupil noncompetence range from administration-developed efforts to promote "good" pupil behavior to "special" classes or schools for troublesome youths.

Conclusions

The literature makes a strong argument that programs of many different kinds are needed to deal effectively with problems of crime and violence in schools, both because of the variety of these problems and because of local constraints to solving them. It has not been the purpose of this paper to pass judgment on any particular approach or assumption; instead, the author has presented assumptions underlying a range of programs, especially as such assumptions can be seen to affect planning for the reduction of violence of crime in schools. An important caution to the reader is that youths involved in a program may be affected in unexpected ways as a result of program assumptions wholly unconsidered by educators and/or program planners. It is hoped that, by challenging the assumptions behind particular programs, planners may gain greater insight into why pupils seem particularly to like or dislike and to respond positively or negatively to a given approach.

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