Seminar in Preventive Psychological Intervention

EDS 246b
Stephen E. Brock, Ph.D., NCSP

Course Description: Study and application of various primary, secondary, and tertiary psychological interventions designed to prevent school failure and/or emotional challenges. Examines techniques of identifying pupils who are experiencing mental health difficulties that interfere with school functioning, and intervention techniques designed to address these problems.

This course primarily addresses elements of NASP domain of school psychology training and practice 2.7: Prevention, Crisis Intervention, and Mental Health. It also addresses the following domains: 2.2, Consultation and Collaboration; 2.4, Socialization and Development of Life Skills; and 2.11, Information Technology.

Specific student outcomes achieved during this course that are consistent with CSUS School Psychology Program Objectives are the following:
- Acquisition of knowledge important to successful collaboration with school and parents to implement interventions that promote positive outcomes for students.
- The ability to understand student needs from a developmental and ecological perspective.
- The ability to implement problem-solving approaches that either facilitate student coping and/or generate appropriate referrals.
- Development of an understanding of specialized needs of diverse student populations, including issues of culture, unique learning needs, alternative lifestyles etc.

Gerald Caplan’s “Preventive Psychiatry”

- Primary Prevention
- Secondary Prevention
- Tertiary Prevention
Primary Prevention

- Lowering the rate of new cases of a disorder in a population over a certain period of time by counteracting harmful circumstances before they have a chance to produce problems.

- Examples include
  - Violence Prevention
  - Skill Building (e.g., Problem solving, conflict management, social skills instruction, bully proofing, etc.)
  - School Safety Planning
  - Disaster/Crisis preparedness

Secondary Prevention

- Reducing the rate of disorders by shortening the duration of existing cases through early diagnosis and effective treatment.

- Examples include
  - Violence intervention
  - Student Success Teams
  - School crisis response
  - Psychological triage
  - Crisis intervention
  - Suicide intervention

Tertiary Prevention

- Programs designed to rehabilitate individuals with long term problems to return them to their productive capacity as quickly as possible to their highest potential.

- Examples include
  - Special education
  - School referral to Mental Health
  - 504 accommodation plans
  - Disaster recovery
  - Suicide postvention
Prevention Providers

- While all primary, and most secondary, prevention activities are appropriate undertakings for general educators, tertiary prevention requires special expertise training and skill.
- This response requires long-term psychological, and psychiatric treatments that are typically beyond what most general educators can provide.
- Mental health professionals typically provide these services.

Typical Seminar Agenda

1. Questions
2. Lecture
3. Break
4. General discussion & activities

Course Overview

- **Required Readings**
  - To be read by the dated indicated on the seminar outline. These readings are available online or in the required texts.

- **Optional Reading**
  - Supplemental material that will help you to better understand course content.

- **Required Resources**
  - While not all are required reading these documents need to be made a part of each students electronic libraries. To document that you have obtained these documents place them on a CD and turn in each no later than the date indicated on the course outline.
Course Overview

- Seminar Requirements/Activities:
  1. Attendance/Class participation.
  2. Field Observation/Interview.
  4. Psychological Triage Activity.
  5. Psychological First Aid Script.
  6. Psychological First Aid Role-Plays.
  7. Psychological First Aid Observation.
  8. Suicide Intervention Script.
  10. Extra Credit.

Youth Violence Prevention

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School Killings

- October 2, 2006 – Paradise, PA
- March 2005 – Red Lakes, Minnesota
- February 19, 2002 – Munich, Germany
- June 8, 2001 – Osaka, Japan
- March 26, 2001 – Kyanguli, Kenya
- March 5, 2001 – Santee, California
- February 20, 2000 – Mount Morris Township, Michigan
- April 20, 1999 – Littleton, Colorado
- April 28, 1999 – Taber, Alberta, Canada
- May 21, 1998 – Springfield, Oregon
- March 24, 1998 – Jonesboro, Arkansas
- December 1, 1997 – West Paducah, Kentucky
- October 1, 1997 – Pearl, Mississippi
- March 20, 1997 – Sanaa, Yemen
- March 13, 1996 – Dunblane, Scotland
- May 1, 1992 – Olivehurst, California
- January 17, 1989 – Stockton, California
- September 26, 1988 – Greenwood, South Carolina
- January 29, 1979 – San Diego, California
Preface: Schools are safe places.


![School Associated Homicides](image)

![School Associated Violent Acts](image)
School Associated Serious Violent Crimes

Preventing Violence:
Creating a Climate of School Safety

- Assess the school’s emotional climate
  - Do people in the school community feel safe?

- Respect and Listen
  - All students (and staff) must feel that they are respected (schools as “a shame free zone”) & listened to.

- Break the “Code of Silence”
  - Unwritten, but powerful (e.g., my middle school experience)
  - Encourage communication and change norms (i.e., make it “heroic” to break the code).

Preventing Violence:
Creating a Climate of School Safety

- Stop bullying
  - See Brock et al. (2002) chapter 9 for an example.

- Empower students by involving them
  - Especially important for adolescents.

- Ensure caring adult connections
  - Relationships are a powerful protective factor
  - Connections can easily be assessed
    1. Alpha List
    2. All staff check on list students they feel “connected” to
    3. Emphasize relationships with those who are not checked.
Preventing Violence:
Creating a Climate of School Safety

For further guidance on creating safe school environments refer to ....


Preventing Violence:
The Importance of a Climate of School Safety

Perceived Safety at School by API Quintile

Percent of students who reported perceived safety at school was very positively correlated with API scores (California Healthy Kids Survey, 1999-2000)
Preventing Violence:
The Importance of Caring Relationships

![Graph showing changes in student performance across different subjects.]

Source: California Healthy Kids Survey.

Preventing Violence:
Specific Prevention Programs

- Selection requires assessment of unique school needs.
  - Which problems are we likely to face in OUR school?
  - What are the primary short-term and long-term objectives of OUR school violence prevention efforts?
  - Who are the targets of the violence-prevention efforts?
  - Are these prevention efforts organized primarily at the school or district levels?
  - How are the prevention efforts linked to broader, community-level violence initiatives?

Adapted from Furlong et al. (2002)

Preventing Violence:
Specific Prevention Programs

- While prepackaged programs may work for specific schools with specific needs...
  - They cannot be randomly selected from the prevention program shelf and be expected to be beneficial.
  - Knowing who you want violence prevention efforts to target and what aspect (or aspects) of school violence you are most interested in preventing will be a first step in program selection.
- Furlong et al. (2002, pp. 142-149) classifies "Promising School Violence Primary Prevention Programs" according to program targets and domains.
Preventing Violence: Specific Prevention Programs

- Examples of Violence Prevention Programs:
  - Primary Intervention Project
  - Second Step
  - I Can Problem Solve (Brock et al., 2002, Chapter 6)
  - Peer Mediation (Brock et al., 2002, Chapter 10)
  - Aggression Replacement Training (Brock et al., 2002, Chapter 12)
  - Social Skills Training (Brock et al., 2002, Chapter 8)

School Violence Prevention: School wide or Curricular Approaches

- Second Step
  - The goal of this structured and systematic curriculum is to foster socio-emotional development and school adjustment of children through the development of empathy, impulse control, and anger management. Curricula are available for preschool through eighth grade.

- The Primary Mental Health Project
  - By identifying, and intervening with, students at risk for developing school adjustment difficulties, this 44-year-old project aims at preventing young children from becoming "troubled."
  - By making use of a specially trained paraprofessional, it provides special adult attention (via child-centered play) to young students judged by teachers as being at risk for school adjustment difficulties.
  - This special attention gives students an unequivocally positive experience with an adult at school.
  - Several state legislatures have provided funding for the systematic implementation of this program. For example, in California, a Primary Intervention Program is made available by State Department of Mental Health grants (through its Early Mental Health Initiative).
Targeted Violence vs. General Violence

- Targeted violence has been conceptualized as violence in which the perpetrator and the target(s) are identified or identifiable prior to an incident.
- The U.S. Secret Service uses this term when referring to individuals who make planned attacks against others.
- It has been suggested that students at risk for targeted violence may or may not possess many of the traditional risk factors associated with delinquency and general violence.

Juveniles who committed targeted homicide were...
- less likely to have had problems with school adjustment,
- less likely to have prior mental health difficulties,
- less likely to have prior arrests or placement in juvenile detention facilities, and
- less likely to have histories of prior violent behavior than were those youths convicted of assault.
- In addition, those youths who were perpetrators of targeted school shootings may differ from individuals who commit different types of homicide as well as from those who engage in nonviolent delinquency.

U. S. Secret Service Report
Ten Key Findings
May, 2002

For hard copies of this report
www.secretservice.gov
edpubs@inet.ed.gov
ntac@secretservice.gov
Fax requests to: 1-301-470-1244
Key Finding #1: There’s no accurate profile

- There is no accurate or useful “profile” of students who engaged in targeted school violence.
  1. Attackers came from a variety of family situations.
  2. Attackers differed from one another in academic achievement.
  3. Attackers varied in the types of social relationships they had created.
  4. Histories of disciplinary problems at school varied.
  5. Most attackers showed no marked change prior to attack.
  6. Over half of the attackers demonstrated some interest in violence.
  7. Most attackers had no history of prior violent or criminal behavior.

Implications for Schools

- Profiles are not effective
  - Criticisms
    - Unjustly stigmatizes students
    - Information may result in discrimination, invasion of privacy, punishment, isolation, and exclusion from school and activities without due process (rather than as a tool for identifying youths in need of intervention).
  - Focus on behavior and communications (not appearances)
    - Appearances may direct our attention, but should not direct our action.
    - Profiling focuses on appearances.
    - Risk assessment focuses on behaviors/communications.

Key Finding #2: Many attackers felt bullied

- Many attackers felt bullied, persecuted or injured by others prior to the attack.

Implications for Schools

- Take bullying seriously. Ensure students are not bullied in school. Empower students to let adults know when they are bullied.
Key Finding #3: Losses and suicidal attempts

- Most attackers had difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures. Many had considered or attempted suicide.

**Implications for Schools**
- Listen for feelings of desperation or hopelessness. Consider the changes in a student’s life.
- Monitor students who have displayed suicidal ideation.

Key Finding #4: Incidents of targeted violence at school rarely are sudden, impulsive acts.

- Revenge was a motive for more than half of the attackers.

**Implications for Schools**
- Students do not “just snap.” Attacks are a result of a process of thinking & behavior. However, the time span may be short.
- Students whose primary motivation is revenge should be carefully monitored.

Key Finding #5: Prior to the attack, others knew about the attacker’s idea and/or plan to attack.

**Implications for Schools**
- Students are an important part of prevention efforts. Schools must have an effective system for dealing with information brought forward.
- Positive relationships among students and staff increases the potential for reporting incidents of concern.
Key Finding #6: Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to the attack.

Implications for Schools
- Do not wait for threats, but begin inquiry if behaviors are evident. Respond to ALL threats.

Key Finding #7: Previous behaviors caused others concern

- Most attackers engaged in some behavior, prior to the incident, that caused others concern or indicated a need for help.

Implications for Schools
- Train staff & students to watch for Early Warning Signs, behavior, or comments, and to REPORT concerns.
- Have a reporting system in place & evaluate the process periodically.

Key Finding #8: In many cases, other students were involved in the attack in some capacity.

Implications for Schools
- Pay attention to the role of friends & others and the impact of peer pressure.
- Evaluate the climate of the school.
Key Finding #9:
Most attackers had access to and had used weapons prior to the attack.

Implications for Schools
- Pay attention to weapons access, use, or communications about weapons.

Key Finding #10:
Most attacks were stopped by means other than law enforcement intervention

Implications for Schools
- Have protocols & procedures for managing threats and other behaviors of concern. We must act quickly.
- Practice and evaluate crisis procedures routinely.

Required Resources
Next Meeting

- Youth Violence Intervention
  - Read
    • Brock et al. (2002) Chapter 13
    • Fein et al. (2002)
  - Obtain
    • Dwyer & Osher (2000)
  - Obtain and Complete