Violence in Schools
Cross-National and Cross-Cultural Perspectives
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To all of the professionals concerned with understanding, preventing, and reducing school violence
Foreword

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Violence in Schools: Cross-National and Cross-Cultural Perspectives is an important and timely book. Over the past decade, youth violence, particularly violence in the schools, has become a serious national and international concern. The social response has often been to focus on harsher sentences and greater discipline. But getting tough with juvenile offenders by trying them as adults, thought to reduce the likelihood that they will commit more crimes, does not necessarily work. Youths transferred to adult criminal court have, in fact, significantly higher rates of subsequent felonies than those who remain in juvenile courts. Rather than treating school violence as a police matter only, we need to think of it as a public health matter. The U.S. Surgeon-General released a report on Youth Violence (2001) redefining this issue as a public health issue. From a health point of view, we know that although antibiotics are an important contribution to public health, inoculation is even more important. Clearly, in the area of school violence it is important for us to formulate strategies for prevention.

When we think of school violence we usually think of those incidents that are covered in the media. School murders by students are the most notorious and are attended to by the media in a way that rivets public attention. It alarms parents and educators and gets the general public concerned. In fact, violence among children and youth is one of those things that many adults think of as symptomatic of the decay of society. Are our schools more violent than they were in the past? Is this symptomatic of an increasingly violent society? A variety of statistical surveys have been done, most pointing to the fact that school violence as a whole has decreased. The Surgeon General's report indicates that the risk of school violence has not changed substantially over the last two decades.
What has increased is the perception by parents and children that their schools are not safe, and that they are at risk for nonviolent victimization. Bullying and fights are the things that children fear the most about their schools. This goes along with an increased perception that the adults in their environment don’t care and cannot or will not do anything to protect them. Despite the dramatic incidents that have occurred, children are actually less likely to become victims of crime in their schools than in their homes or neighborhoods. But the perception is otherwise.

What Is School Violence?

Although most of us think of mass murder as the key descriptor of school violence, school violence is about a range of things from bullying to aggravated assault, from suicide to homicide. Suicide is a form of violent behavior, and a significant number of mass murderers have contemplated suicide before thinking about murder. If we understand suicide as involving the lessening of inhibition around aggression, then we can see the importance of suicide and suicidal gestures as important risk factors for other kinds of violence. Nonfatal victimization and fights are the types of violent behavior that students complain about the most. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) (1999) reported that nearly 15% of students polled state that they have been in one or more physical fights in the last 12 months. Males are more likely to report a fight on school property than females (2 to 1 ratio) and students in lower grades (ninth grade and below) are more likely to be in a fight on school property than students in higher grades. Assaults against teachers are a form of school violence that needs serious attention. Bullying, which has become a serious concern as of late, has been variously defined, at times including relatively benign forms of social interactions and elsewhere considering more serious forms which threaten bodily harm. It would appear that painting all types of teasing with the same tar brush might be counter-productive.

This book, composed of a collection of chapters from experts from all over the world, attempts to explore many of the questions that come up in this field. The editors, Florence L. Denmark, Herbert H. Krauss, Robert W. Wesner, Elizabeth Midlarsky, and Uwe P. Gielen are all well known in their respective fields. The assembly of authors from various countries makes it clear that the issues are not unique to the United States, but is on the international stage as well. The book explores the history of violence, ways of coping with it in schools, and, most important, ways of preventing it.
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There are many explanations offered for school violence. Most of these explanations are speculative, but also instructive. In thinking about the teen years, where the greatest number of violent incidents are reported, we know that the following characteristics are associated with these years: impulsivity, searching for a place for oneself; idealism and extremism; highly developed fantasy; and violence as a compensatory mechanism. Add to these features the stage-specific dynamics, the exposure to violence in the family and the community, drug or alcohol use, the availability of firearms, prejudice based on difference, and the inability to resolve conflict in any way other than physical and the resulting mix is lethal.

Prevention

There are programs all over the United States that are set up with violence prevention in mind. The Surgeon General’s report contains a list of model programs, but we do not hear about these programs in the media because violence prevention is not newsworthy. In many such programs, the students feel supported and understand that the “grown-ups” need to be told when there is a concern that another student is at risk for becoming violent. These students have learned that there are some principles that are more important than not “tattling” and, therefore, with this understanding, they have averted dangerous situations. New York State has a “Save Schools” program where teachers and pupil personnel workers are required to have two hours of instruction in “violence prevention.”

What characterizes a good program? Successful programs are collaborative and systemic—that is, the whole school, perhaps the whole district, must be involved in the program. It is valuable if a classroom teacher institutes a conflict resolution course. These children will benefit and grow with the shared experience. If it is not something that fits in with the entire school program—if it is not systemic—then it will not serve the purpose that we wish it to, that is, the prevention of violence in the school.

Who Should Be Included in the Program?

All of the members of the school community must be included in the plan: students, teachers, administrators, pupil personnel workers, other staff in the school, the school board, security professionals, and community
groups. For a program to be successful, all of the people who are involved must feel some kind of ownership. Policies and procedures cannot be developed by the administrators and then dictated. Students need to feel that they belong to a community that cares, even as parents need to feel that their input is valued.

Parents frequently feel that the schools are not the least bit interested in their input and that they are frequently the last to know about what is going on in their children's lives. Staff has to feel safe in the school and administrators must enforce the rules that impact on the safety of their staff. Teachers must be helped to learn how to manage their classrooms to make the climate of the classroom safe. Important in any program is finding the positive incentives, that is, reward and recognition for positive behavior.

School violence is complex and requires a complex and multi-faceted approach. There are many programs and pathways available. Most important, the school should not simply choose any program but also collaborate on developing a program. It is important for there to be an open dialogue in this development. And finally, it is critical that we believe that our efforts can be successful. Each of the authors in this book deals with a part of this complex whole. Putting all of the pieces presented herein together makes a gestalt that moves our understanding along as well as our belief that we can be successful.

**REFERENCES**


Acknowledgments

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Contents

1. Violence in the Schools: An Introduction .................. 1
   The Editors

   References ............................................. 7

2. Conceptualizing Violence ............................... 11
   Herbert H. Krauss

   The Ubiquity of Violence ................................ 11
   The World Health Organization's View of Violence .... 13
   Demographics of Violence ............................... 16
   Violence and Biology ................................... 18
   Violence, Social Psychology and Beyond ................. 23
   WHO's Ecological Model of Violence ..................... 25
   Burke's Dramatistic Model of Violence ................. 26
   The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572 .......... 31
   References ............................................. 34

3. A History of Violence in the Schools .................. 37
   Elizabeth Midlarsky and Helen Marie Klain

   Violence in the Schools: Historical Perspectives ..... 37
   Historical Evidence of Student Violence ................. 39
   Historical Evidence of Teacher Violence ................. 46
   Factors Contributing to School Violence ................. 51
   Implications and Conclusions ............................ 54
   References ............................................. 54
4. **Warning Signs** ............................................. 59  
   *June F. Chisholm and Alfred W. Ward*  
   Perspectives on Violence ...................................... 60  
   Prodromal Signs of Violent Behavior in the Clinical Literature 64  
   Prevention Strategies ......................................... 64  
   Primary Prevention Initiatives .................................. 67  
   References ....................................................... 71  

5. **Developmental Aspects of School Violence** ............ 75  
   *Roseanne L. Flores*  
   Introduction .................................................... 75  
   Developmental Precursors to Violent Behavior ............... 78  
   Developmental Precursors within Contexts of  
      Violent Behavior ........................................... 80  
   Interaction between Community and School Violence ....... 82  
   Summary and Conclusions ...................................... 82  
   References ....................................................... 84  

6. **Gender and Ethnicity Issues in School Violence** ...... 85  
   *Darlene C. DeFour*  
   Defining School Violence ...................................... 86  
   Gender and School Violence .................................... 88  
   Relational Aggression .......................................... 89  
   Ethnicity and School Violence ................................ 94  
   Gender and Ethnicity Implication for School  
      Violence Interventions .................................... 96  
   References ....................................................... 97  

7. **Sexual Violence in the Schools** ........................... 101  
   *Beatrice J. Krauss, Herbert H. Krauss, Joanne O'Day,  
     and Kevin Rente*  
   Definitions .................................................... 104  
   Prevalence of Sexual Violence in U.S. Schools ............... 106  
   The Effects of Sexual Violence ................................ 109  
   Supreme Court Decisions ...................................... 110  
   School Policy .................................................. 111  
   The Ideal versus the Real .................................... 114  
   References ....................................................... 116
## Contents

### 8. A Transgenerational Perspective on Peace and on Violence Prevention .......................... 119

_Astrid Stückelberger_

- The Backstage of Violence: Socio-Demographic Dynamics ... 119
- The New Architecture of Our World .......................... 120
- A Multi-Generation Society: Family System in Mutation ... 128
- Conflict and Violence Between or Throughout Generations: From the Structural to the Developmental Perspective ... 134
- Structural Perspective: Link and Transmission from Generation to Generation .......................... 135
- Need for a Transgenerational Theory on Conflict and Violence .............................................. 144
- Conclusion .......................................................... 157
- References ............................................................ 164

### 9. Bullying and _Ijime_ in Japanese Schools ......................................................... 169

_Takashi Naito and Uwe P. Gielen_

- Japan’s Public Debate on School Bullying .......................... 169
- Japanese Classrooms .................................................. 172
- Definitions of Bullying .............................................. 174
- Defining Bullying from a Japanese Perspective .................. 175
- Frequency of Bullying ............................................... 177
- Findings of a Cross-Cultural Survey and Some Additional Data on Bullying .......................... 179
- Some Determinants of Bullying in Japanese Classrooms .... 182
- Concluding Remarks .................................................. 185
- Note ................................................................. 187
- References ............................................................. 188

### 10. A Perspective on Child Abuse in the Philippines ................................................... 191

_Richard Velayo_

- Brief History of Education in the Philippines .................. 193
- School and Church: Institutional Powers in the Philippines ... 195
- The School and the Filipino Child .................................. 195
- The Church and the Filipino Child .................................. 197
- Church and School as Culturally Intertwined Institutions of Power .............................................. 197
- Cultural Vagueness in Defining Abuse .......................... 199
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevention Efforts and Other Recommendations</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Manifestations of Violence in Arab Schools and Procedures for Reducing it</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ramadan A. Ahmed</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arab World, Land, and People: An Overview</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables Associated with Violence among School Students</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures and Scales for Assessing Violent/Aggressive Behavior</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Modification Programs, Therapeutic and Counseling Studies</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efforts, Measures, and Procedures to Reduce School Students' Violent Behavior</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Comments</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Violence In Schools: Australia</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Judith E. Papházy</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs Against School Violence</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience Promotion in Schools</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience Programs in Schools</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience Promotion Information</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Is It Important?</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Are The Outcomes?</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Predicting School Violence</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Daniel A. Krauss</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Violence</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Prediction and Assessment</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions and Future Directions</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

14. Preventing Violence in Schools ....................... 275
   Maram Hallak, Kathryn Quina, and Charles Collyer
   Violence ............................................. 276
   Nonviolence ....................................... 277
   Kingian Nonviolence .............................. 278
   Kingian Training .................................. 279
   Effectiveness of Nonviolence ...................... 280
   Do These Interventions Work? The URI Nonviolence
      Project Evaluation .............................. 282
   What Do The Findings Tell Us About Nonviolence
      Training? ....................................... 288
   References ....................................... 291

15. What Can We Do About School Violence? .......... 293
    Melissa Laracuenta and Florence L. Denmark
    Developing a Safe School Environment .............. 294
    Developing a Violence Response Plan ............... 295
    Intervention Strategies ........................... 296
    Conclusion ....................................... 299
    References ....................................... 299

16. Summary and Conclusion ............................. 301
    The Editors
    Reference ......................................... 305
    About the Editors ................................ 307
    About the Contributors ............................ 311
    Index ............................................ 317
Chapter 1

Violence in the Schools

An Introduction

The Editors

Violence has occurred in schools throughout recorded history (Aries, 1962). Although the rate of violent crime involving youth, whether in or outside of the schools is not currently “spinning out of control,” it is, and ought to be, of great concern. Over the course of the twentieth century, the nature of student “problem behavior” has changed from small irritations to serious and increasingly dangerous actions. Thus, while in the 1940s, teachers reported the most important school problems to be excessive noise, littering, and gum chewing, by the 1980s, these problems had been displaced by rape, robbery, and substance abuse. By the 1990s, substantial numbers of both teachers and students reported being afraid to go to school (Lexington Herald Leader, 1993).

Indeed, graphic images of young people sprawled bleeding on school playgrounds or crowding into hospital emergency rooms clutching their gunshot wounds have shaken deeply held beliefs about the meaning and significance of childhood and adolescence. In contrast to the mistaken impressions that youth is typically a period of protected innocence, children and adolescents are more frequently victims of crime than any other age group in the United States (Rennison, 1999). Moreover, in contrast to violence in the earlier part of the twentieth century, today’s violence is more apt to be lethal and more likely to occur in places once thought to be safe, including schools (Elliott, Hamburt, & Williams, 1998). In addition to inhibiting development and learning, and either directly or indirectly
increasing feelings of anxiety and vulnerability in those subjected to it, violence begets further violence as victims become bullies, and worse (Baldry, 2003; Haynie et al., 2001).

Setting aside for the moment the question of whether the rates of violence against children and the incidence and prevalence of psychopathology in that sub-population have actually been on the upswing, it is clear that they are intolerably high. No one seems to doubt that we and our children have been and continue to be submerged in a sea of economic insecurity, class distinctions, and invidious ethnic, sub-cultural and gender discrimination which compromise the life chances of those who experience them (e.g., Hochshild, 2003; Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Teitz & Chapple, 1998). It has been argued that we and our children live in an era in which family life has deteriorated (Parkman, 1995) and in which we are bombarded with images of interpersonal conflict and violence. Of the latter, our children receive a double dose via the media and through video-games (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Bushman & Anderson, 2001).

The milieu in which our children currently reside is certainly not bereft of its positive elements. Nevertheless, even if we grant that certain features of our children's lives have improved in recent decades, it is clear that other features, including many that are critical for children's well-being, have gotten significantly worse. So much have conditions deteriorated that Garbarino (1995), for one, believes our children are living in a *socially toxic environment*. By coining and applying that phrase he means "that the social context of children, the social world in which they live, has become poisonous to their development" (Garbarino, 1995, p. 3). To continue his metaphor, as the water we fish and the seas and the soil we farm become dangerously polluted, so, too, has our social environment become increasingly unwholesome. To Garbarino,

The social equivalents of lead and smoke in the air, PCBs in the water, and pesticides in the food chain include violence, poverty and other economic pressures, depression, trauma, despair, nastiness, and alienation. These forces contaminate children and youth [and the rest of us] and are the elements of social toxicity. (Garbarino, 1995, p. 4)

Predictably, the children whose developmental paths are most likely to be deformed and compromised by these pollutants are those who have been most extensively exposed to them.

As the social environment becomes more toxic, it is the most vulnerable children who show the effects first, those who have accumulated the most developmental risk factors. These risk factors include being a single parent, poverty, racism, drug addiction or alcoholism, trauma from violence, and emotional problems that impair parenting . . . .[I]t is not the presence of any one or even two of these risk factors but their accumulation that developmentally disables children. Such
accumulation overwhelms the child – particularly when it occurs without a parallel accumulation of opportunity factors. Once overwhelmed, children are likely to fall prey to the socially toxic influences that surround them. (Garbarino, 1995, p. 4)

Evidence from a variety of sources indicates that the social environment that we have constructed for our children, especially our male children, is noisome and that its toxicity, if anything, has increased. Margolin and Gordis (2000) report, for example, that in some inner city neighborhoods approximately one-third of pre-teenage and teenage children have been directly victimized by community violence, and all have been exposed to it. Of the two sexes, results of numerous studies indicate consistently that males are more likely than females to be involved in physical aggression at school, both as perpetrators and as victims (Cornell & Loper, 1998; Furlong, Morrison, Chung, Bates, & Morrison, 1997). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1994a) between 1985 and 1991, homicide among 15 to 19 year-old males increased one-and-a-half times and was the second leading cause of death for this group. The increase in the rate of homicide for 15 to 19 year-old African American males was even greater (Jenkins & Bell, 1992). This finding expectedly follows the precept that what befalls non-African Americans has a magnified impact on African American males, a group whose homicide rate was already ten times that of whites and for whom homicide was already the leading cause of death (Centers for Disease Control, 1994b). In fact, in regard to its rate of youth homicide (11.0 per 100,000 for those between the ages of 10 and 29), the United States more closely resembles a developing country or one in social upheaval (e.g., Ecuador, 15.9; Mexico, 15.3; Philippines, 12.2; Russian Federation, 18.0) than a stable Euro-system democracy (Canada, 1.7; United Kingdom, 0.9; Denmark, 1.5; Germany, 0.8; France, 0.6; Australia, 1.6) (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lazano, 2002).

Garbarino (1995) cites the significant increase in the presence and intensity of emotional and behavioral problems experienced by American children between 1974 and 1989 and the concomitant increase in the relative proportion of children judged as needing psychotherapy as found in surveys conducted by Achenbach and Howell (1995), and he uses Achenbach’s Child Behavior checklist (CBCL) as further support for the view that the social environment in which children are raised has deteriorated. While in 1976 about 10 percent of the children surveyed were judged to be in need of psychological intervention (psychotherapy), by 1989 that proportion had risen to approximately 18 percent. The survey results further indicate that in contrast to responses by children in 1976, children in 1989 were more likely to experience negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, sadness, and distress) more frequently and intensely, and they reported liking school less.
To a substantial degree, our schools are safe havens in contrast to our neighborhoods. Nonetheless they are not immune to many of the viruses that beset our culture. Schools participate in our culture wars, our sexism, racism, and classism (Achenbach & Howell, 1003; Cole & Omari, 2003; Hochschild, 2003; Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Teitz & Chapple, 1998). Because of its importance and the central role it plays in our society, some of our most well-meaning, best educated, most civic-minded, and brightest citizens are drawn to service in the educational establishment. However, as in the case of any institution of power that controls and dispenses influence, money, and jobs, our schools also attract men and women of lesser talents and meaner intentions. Thus, just as violence by pupils may reflect the results of the toxic environment in which children are raised, a further contribution to the problem of school violence may come from the inept and even cruel behavior by certain teachers in our schools (Turner, 2002).

If we focus only on physical violence, all evidence points to our schools as being among the safest places for children (Vossekuij, Reddy, Fein, Borum & Modzeleski, 2000). Less than one percent of violent deaths of children (either murder or suicide) occur on or around school property (Mulvey & Cauffman, 2001). Furthermore, the rate of violence within our schools or during school activities has declined between 1993 and 2000 (Vossekuij et al., 2000), and the rate of criminal victimization taking place in schools remained constant between 1989 and 1995 (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). However, that this is the case ought not to be taken to mean our schools are violence-free. The U.S. Department of Education (1997) estimated from the survey responses given by public school principals that during the period 1996 to 1997 approximately 4000 sexual batteries or rapes, 7000 robberies, and 11,000 attacks involving weapons took place during school sponsored events. There is every reason to assume that these figures greatly underestimate the scope of the problem. Were these figures not enough to set in motion a national public outcry about violence in our schools, the murders that have occurred at schools in Jefferson County (Columbine), Colorado; Jonesboro, Arkansas; West Paducah, Kentucky; and elsewhere have surely sufficed to do so. As Mulvey and Cauffman (2001, p. 797), suggest,

As Joseph Stalin, of all people, noted in another time, "A single death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic"... Unfortunately, there now may have been enough tragedies to precipitate action.

It should be noted that the school shootings that took place in the latter part of the 1990s and those which have occurred more recently had precursors. Excluding gang related and drug related incidents, the U.S. Secret Service in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education have identified 37 similar incidents involving 41 current or recent students who
intentionally attacked, primarily with firearms, other students or school personnel in the period extending from 1974 to October 2000 (Vossekuil, et al., 2000). These incidents took place in 26 states. In over half of these cases at least one school administrator, faculty or staff member was targeted. At least one person was murdered in two-thirds of these incidents.

The recent spate of murderous assaults on our schools has set in motion a reaction that is both intense and broad-based. Elements at every level of our society from the Executive Branch of our national government to local Parent Teacher Associations have been sensitized to the issues raised by violence in our schools and have been energized to take steps to deal effectively with them. As Mulrey and Cauffman (2001, p. 797) point out, this concern, moreover, has gone beyond simple statements and speculations. A heightened awareness of the potential tragedy of a school-related violent incident has prompted school administrators, law enforcement professionals, and mental health professionals to put into place methods for identifying and intervening proactively with potentially violent students and situations. Many communities have seen curriculum changes, the adoption of “safe school” policies, new weapons-reporting requirements, and increased efforts to refer problem students to mental health professionals. For example, several years ago, New York City spent over 28 million dollars on metal detectors...and numerous school districts have implemented mandatory school uniform policies to cut down on gang identification... After the shooting at Columbine, the principal distributed a memorandum requesting students to report on other students whom they deemed to be demonstrating maladaptive behavior (e.g., dressing oddly, being loners...). Currently, professionals seem open to trying just about anything to combat the perceived dangers of school violence. (emphasis ours)

As part of the effort to inform all interested parties about what is known about violence in schools, how its occurrence might be reduced, and the techniques through which its consequences might be ameliorated, three of the Editors of this volume, Florence L. Denmark and Herbert H. Krauss of Pace University and Robert W. Wesner, a scientific publisher, brought together a group of experts to present a workshop on this topic at the New York Academy of Sciences to concerned academics, practitioners, school administrators, teachers, and parents. This workshop was hosted by the Academy and co-sponsored by Pace University and the International Organization for the Study of Group Tensions. The success that greeted the workshop stimulated our interest in producing a book that would address the subject more comprehensively and with greater attention to detail. To better achieve that end, two well-known scholars, Elizabeth Midlarsky of Teachers College, Columbia University and Uwe P. Gielen of St. Francis College were recruited to join in creating and producing the proposed volume.

The Editors were not brought together by happenstance. Each is a recognized authority in his or her field. Each believes that no one is
more vulnerable to violence and its consequences than are children (e.g., Margolin & Gordis, 2002). Those of us who are entrusted with the care and protection of these children while they are in the school milieu must be cognizant of every threat to their safety and their well being. Furthermore the Editors all share similar beliefs and attitudes about what this proposed volume must do:

- It must recognize that violence is a global problem (e.g. Krug et al., 2002). Consequently our efforts to deal with it must be informed by an international perspective.
- It must take a broad view of what violence is and what produces it. Violence is much more than physical assault. It is also intentional neglect and abusive behavior of a variety of stripes, including racism, sexism, and cultural discrimination and suppression. While the potential for violent action may be rooted in our biology, it is absolutely clear that most often violence is a cognitive act that is influenced primarily by the social world into which we are born, in which we develop, and which constitutes our present sense of experienced reality (e.g., UNESCO, 1989, cited in Silverberg & Gray, 1992).
- It must take into account the history of the phenomenon. School violence is not a problem that is new, or that has been limited to a particular ethnic group, locale, or historical period. An understanding of the history may be a means for understanding and ultimately ameliorating the current state of affairs (Prothrow-Stith & Quaday, 1996; Volokh & Snell, 1998).
- It must, in acknowledging the shortcomings of the moment, not be overpowered by them. We have had too much success in taking rational, intentional action to improve our condition to warrant a lapse into a posture of defeatism. Racism is not vanquished but its direct impact is greatly diminished. The same might be said for sexism, and many of the other "isms" that blight our lives. Furthermore, many other societies have succeeded in finding more harmonious ways of living together. If nothing else, we can learn from them. Surely every attempt to improve our lot brings unintended consequences. These are nothing more than additional challenges that can be overcome provided we do not become infected with a "This is the best of all possible worlds" quietism that is all too often associated with specious arguments of either biological or economic determinism.
- It must be up to date and speak with legitimate authority yet be accessible in style and substance to its intended audience: scholars, school administrators, teachers, and staff; practitioners of the helping professions; and educated lay people.
Violence in the Schools: An Introduction

Readers will, of course, come to their own opinions as to how well the Editors succeeded in producing a book that achieved the desired ends.

The book that you are about to peruse is organized into sections flowing from general information regarding school violence to specific descriptions of it in the United States and in countries worldwide. A general description of violence in our society is presented by Herbert H. Krauss in “Conceptualizing Violence”, while Elizabeth Midlarsky, and Helen Marie Klein review historical facts regarding school violence in “A History of Violence in the Schools”. School violence is described in terms of various internal and external factors in: “Warning Signs: School Violence Prevention” by June F. Chisholm and Alfred W. Ward, “Developmental Aspects of School Violence: A Contextualist Approach” by Roseanne L. Flores, and “Gender and Ethnicity Issues in School Violence” by Darlene C. DeFour. Another example of how violence is exhibited in schools is included in “Sexual Violence in the Schools” by Beatrice J. Krauss, Herbert H. Krauss, Joanne O’Day, and Kevin Rente. While the first half of this volume generally focuses on the United States, the next section describes school violence in countries across the world. Violence in Japan (“Bulling and Ijime in Japanese Schools: A Sociocultural Perspective” by Takashi Naito and Uwe P. Gielen), the Philippines (“A Perspective on Child Abuse in the Philippines: Looking at Institutional Factors” by Richard Velayo), in Arabic countries (“Manifestations of Violence in Arab Schools and Procedures for Reducing It” by Ramadan A. Ahmed), and in Australia (“Violence in Schools-Australia” by Judith E. Papházy) are presented by authors who are experts regarding these issues in their respective countries. Strategies and intervention techniques to prevent violence are discussed by Daniel A. Krauss in “Predicting School Violence” and Maram Hallak, Kathryn Quina, and Charles Collyer in “Preventing Violence in Schools: Lessons from King and Gandhi”. Finally, in the concluding chapter, Florence L. Denmark and Melissa Laracuenta summarize and make concluding statements regarding the state of school violence as it is today and goals for the prevention of it in the future.

REFERENCES


Chapter 2

Conceptualizing Violence

HERBERT H. KRAUSS

THE UBIQUITY OF VIOLENCE

Violence has always been with us. Before humans learned to objectify their experiences, concretize them symbolically, and transmit them in ideograph, they had mastered the ability to prey on one another. Human remains in Atapuerca, Spain provide evidence of European cannibalism 800,000 years ago. By the middle Paleolithic period (150,000 to 40,000 B.C.E.) there are indicators that human-induced trauma in humans had mounted significantly (Walker, 2001). After reviewing the bioarcheological evidence, Walker (2001, p. 573) concluded “No form of [human] social organization, mode of production, or environmental setting appears to have remained free of interpersonal violence for long.” The most influential of human moral narratives, the Old and the New Testaments, the Koran, and the Bhagavad Gita, are replete with descriptions of human violence, some of which are held forth as exemplary exercises of power employed for the good.

Modern times have not seen humans put violence aside. Not counting incidents of intentional starvation, of violence against ethnic or political subpopulations, or of purposely lethal “re-education” programs carried out as instruments of public policy, from 1945 until 1997 when Summerfield (1997) tallied them, there were more than 160 wars and armed conflicts. And the twenty-first century has certainly gotten off to a bloody good start.

In American society, violence is pandemic. Focusing upon violence perpetrated by and against the young, the National Incidence Study of
the National Center of Child Abuse (1996) found 23.1 per 1,000 children, 18 years old or younger were maltreated. Of these, 3.2 per 1,000 suffered sexual abuse. The National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse Survey of 1997 reported that 15 of 1,000 children are victims of child abuse. Clearly, the rates at which children have direct experience with violence are enormous. In some US neighborhoods over one-third of pre-teens and teens have been directly victimized by community violence (Margolin & Gordis, 2000). In their review of the literature Margolin and Gordis (2000) came across one investigation, based on parental reports, that estimated that in the US inner city neighborhood surveyed, 84 percent of first and second graders witnessed community violence (e.g., shootings, stabbings, gang chases, drug use, etc.) and 21 percent were directly victimized. The comparative statistics for fifth and sixth graders were 90 and 35 percent, respectively. When the children themselves were asked, the fifth and sixth graders indicated 97 percent had seen community violence and 59 percent had been victims of it.

Our schools are havens compared to the neighborhoods in which they are embedded; only 10 percent of reported incidents of non-fatal violence against those 12 or older occurred in school buildings or on school property (Mattaini et al., 1996). Yet they too can be quite violent. In a survey of 12 schools in an economically depressed area of Chicago, Kellam (1990) concluded that the incidence of moderate to severe aggression in first grade varied from under 10 percent to more than 30 percent. Within-school variation was even higher, no doubt due largely to pupil "tracking," with some classes reporting an incidence of violence under 10 percent and others over 65.

In addition to experiencing violence, either as victim or observer, our society embeds its children in a matrix of imaginary aggression. Video games and movies aside, children can get a full dose of violence just by watching television. The American Psychological Association (1993) estimated that US children between the ages of two and eleven watch approximately 28 hours of television per week and teenagers around 23 hours (children of lower socio-economic classes watch more). During primetime about five to six violent acts per hour are depicted. On Saturdays, with its heavy loading of cartoons, the number rises to between 20 and 25.

In spite of the society’s enthrallment with imaginary, albeit increasingly graphic and realistic, representations of violent behavior, few wish to live in a culture in which the threat of violent harm is imminent and real or for their loved ones to live in one. To reduce the likelihood that we or those to whom we are close become its victims, effective action to reduce violence is needed. This requires a way to understand violence.

It is imperative that we understand our circumstances, our condition, by adopting, discovering, or creating conceptualizations that enable us to
attend to, form, and organize the streams of impressions we receive into structures of meaning. The root reason we need, seek, and produce such structures is that our ability to abstract information accurately from our environment and act on that information increases our odds of survival. And we have survived. But it is also obvious that sometimes, perhaps as unintended consequences or perhaps as necessary sub-routines in a process and strategy so central to survival, meaning-making takes on a life of its own. Because of this, because human beings are not born with a store of infallible information sufficient for their survival, and because all of the data that we process is colored by and weighted with our hopes, fears, desires, and aims as individuals and as members of collectives, taking the appropriate lesson from what we perceive and finding the proper conceptualization to further our interests is far from easy as the history and current state of epistemology attests. This task is made more daunting if the data set to be appreciated is large and complex, and, more challenging still, if a methodology adequate to assessing the correspondence between what is conceived or formulated as present and what indeed is present is itself a work in progress.

This is indeed the case with violence. Violence is defined variously, perceived multifariously, and studied in diverse ways. The perspective from which this essay views violence and attempts to visualize its meaning is that provided by the work of Kenneth Burke (e.g. 1966, 1969a, 1969b). Burke’s conviction is that drama and its production and performance affords an apt analogy for comprehending why people act as they do. For this reason he termed his paradigm dramatistic. Before discussing dramatistics, however, violence and the most current construction of its meaning on the “world stage” will be considered.

**THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION’S VIEW OF VIOLENCE**

The Forty-Ninth World Health Assembly adopted Resolution WHA 49.25 in 1996. That resolution expressed “great concern” over a “dramatic worldwide increase in the incidence of international injuries affecting people of all ages and both sexes, but especially women and children...,” and declared violence a “leading worldwide public health problem” (cited in Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002, p. xx). It urged member states to assess the incidence and nature of violence within their borders and to send this information to the World Health Organization (WHO) along with a report of the initiatives undertaken to deal with violence and its sequellae. WHO also requested that its Director General take steps to “(1) describe violence’s typology and assess its causes and consequences, (2) evaluate the efficacy of programs designed to prevent violence and ameliorate its
effects, (3) promote national and transnational efforts to reduce violence and its deleterious influence on human well being, and (4) send to the Executive Board a plan for developing a science-based public health approach to violence prevention" (cited in Krug et al., 2002, p. xx).

The World Report on Violence and Health (Krug et al., 2002) was intended to be an important, albeit partial, response to the charge of Resolution WHA 49.25. Directed to researchers and practitioners, it defined violence as

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. (WHO Global Consultation on Violence and Health, 1996)

WHO's definition of violence is purposely broad, denoting not only the intentional use of physical force which harm, but also the malintentioned use of the influence inherent in unequal social and institutional power relationships (e.g., parent and child) which harm, and the malintentioned failure to present harm. Thus, falling within WHO's definition of violence are intentioned physically violent acts and "neglect and all types of physical, sexual and psychological abuse, as well as suicide and other self-abusive acts" (Krug et al., 2002, p. 5).

WHO's definition of violence is also quite complex in that it includes a notion of intent and because it applies that notion unevenly. Willed action is an essential component of every act of violence; however, the act is deemed violent by WHO even if its perpetrator did not intend the harm that ensued. The intentional use of physical force, for example, is deemed a violent act if it either results in harm or is likely to do so even if its initiator failed to appreciate accurately its full potential for ill.

Undoubtedly, WHO's primary aim in requiring an assessment of the initial impetus for an individual's act (was the act intentionally undertaken or was it the result of happenstance) was to make possible a differentiation between a violent act and a "true" accident. (Bear in mind WHO reserves to itself the ability to substitute its view of an action for an agent's report as to why it was undertaken, for example, when WHO believes culpable negligence is behind the act. Culpable negligence defines an act as violent if the act produces harm). In introducing intention in its definition of violence, however, WHO also implicitly promulgates a volitional model of human action. Such a model depicts individuals as purposeful. Nonetheless, in separating one's intent in undertaking an action from one's view (or his or her society's view, for that matter) of its likely outcome in its definition, WHO appropriated to itself the right to say what is and is not
violence. WHO’s aim in this was to substitute an universal “enlightened public health paradigm” (emphasis is mine) for that used by the individual or the individual’s indigenous culture to understand and deal with violence. Cultures clearly differ among themselves in their conceptualizations of violence (e.g., Naroll, 1983; Rohner, 1975; Barton, 1969) and what a given society holds as normal at one time might be considered violence at another (e.g., Harris, 2001; Miller, 1993).

Striking one’s pupils to enhance their performance, to cite one instance, is considered violence by WHO whether or not the teachers of a given society at a given time might judge doing so to be culturally sanctioned acts of discipline.

In three significant respects WHO’s approach to violence is superior to others. One advantage is that it allows the work of compiling potentially consistent statistics on violence (e.g., prevalence, incidence, cost) both across societies and within a particular society to begin. It permits, within the limits of the reliability and validity of those estimates, the reasoned analyses of violence and the patterns of its occurrence, analyses which might lead to a deeper understanding of etiology, and inform primary, secondary and tertiary prevention efforts. A second advantage is that WHO’s involvement makes violence an issue of international concern whose amelioration requires an international initiative led by an international organization, WHO, with the moral force and institutional resources necessary to orchestrate and direct the public health efforts needed to, if not eliminate violence, reduce its likelihood and its deleterious effects. The third advantage is that it potentially extends to large populations of individuals whose statuses typically make them more vulnerable to harm (the elderly, women and children, and the marginalized, for instance) various moral and institutional protections from violence for which they would otherwise not be eligible.

Acknowledging its assets, however, in no way minimizes its defects, real and potential. These include:

1. The lack of a compelling reason to believe that a public health model is appropriate for understanding and treating violence. Clearly public health professionals, as trained currently, have much to contribute to the secondary and the tertiary prevention of collective violence, their role in its “primary” prevention is far from clear.

2. In reserving to itself the right to substitute its universally applicable and “enlightened” definition of violence for that of the indigenous society, WHO is embarking upon an agenda and a course of action designed to change established social values as well as reduce violent acts. Putting aside the striking hypocrisy in insisting on respect for diversity and the tolerance
of cultural and religious differences while at the same time working to ensure cross-societal value homogeneity, even well-intentioned as efforts at value "reform" often produce unintended consequences which prove counterproductive. Just as there are untoward consequences for "defining deviancy down" (Moynihan, 1993), there may also be for defining normality down.

3. WHO's determination to classify as violent behaviors not viewed as such in a given society will also undoubtedly make reliably operationalizing WHO's conceptual definition of violence more challenging. Compounding the difficulties is WHO's inclusion of intent in its definition. If, for example, what is perceived as an accident in one society is considered the unintended consequence of mental illness in another, and culpable negligence in yet a third, how should the act be categorized?

4. The aggregation of instances of behavior judged violent by one society with those classed otherwise by another society may produce additional problems. The acts considered violent might have radically different etiologies than those phenotypically similar, but designated as normal. For example, alcohol abuse may contribute significantly to the probability of child battering in societies which construe hitting a child as markedly deviant and violent and not at all in societies in which it is deemed normal and proper to discipline children by striking them when they fail to show proper respect for elders. Aggregating into one class - child beating - instances from both societies would probably obscure variables associated with each of the two types of "violence" against children and, thereby, make primary prevention more difficult.

In spite of its problems, however, any fair summary assessment of its program to define, understand, and reduce violence would, after a careful weighing of its likely benefits and liabilities, conclude that on balance WHO has indeed provided a useful and valuable rubric for grappling with violence.

**Demographics of Violence**

WHO estimated that in 2000, 1.6 million people worldwide died from self-inflicted, interpersonal, or collective violence (violence committed to advance a particular social or political agenda). This yielded an overall age-adjusted incidence rate of 28.8 per 100,000 (Krug et al., 2002). Of these total deaths, 31.3 percent (8.8 per 100,000) were attributed to homicide, 49.1 percent to suicide (14.5 per 100,000) and 18.6 percent (5.2 per 100,000) to war.
Once created, databases such as the one from which the above statistics were drawn proliferate, because they suggest and make possible answers to such questions as the following:

Q. Are violence related deaths more common in low to middle-income countries than high-income countries?
A. They are by a ratio of more than two to one (32.1 deaths per 100,000 for the former and 14.4 deaths per 100,000 for the latter).

Q. Is murder related to gender?
A. It is. The age-standardized rate of males dying of homicide is 13.6 per 100,000. For women it is 4.0 per 100,000.

Q. Do homicide rates vary jointly as a function of age and gender?
A. They do. The rate at which men die of homicide rises precipitously within the age category of 15 to 29 (from 2.1 per 100,000 to 19.4 per 100,000) and then gradually diminishes (for males 60 and above it is 13.0 per 100,000). The rate at which females are murdered at each defined age division hovers at about 4.4 per 100,000 except for ages 5 to 14 where it is 2.0 per 100,000.

Q. Are there cross-national differences in the rates with which youths are murdered?
A. Indeed there are. In WHO's sample, rates of youth homicide were highest in Latin America (e.g., Columbia, 84.4 per 100,000; El Salvador, 50.2 per 100,000), the Caribbean (e.g., Puerto Rico, 41.9 per 100,000) and some south-eastern European countries (e.g., Albania, 28.2 per 100,000) and lowest in Western Europe (e.g., France, 0.6 per 100,000; Germany 0.8 per 100,000; United Kingdom, 0.9 per 100,000) and far Eastern Asia (e.g., Japan, 0.4 per 100,000). The U.S.'s youth homicide rate is 11.0 per 100,000. Almost all other countries with rates above 10.0 per 100,000 are “developing” or in the midst of a rapid social or economic change.

Researchers have consistently found homicide rates to be linked with such characteristics as nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, social status, socio-economic condition, family of origin and their combinations. The relationships found between these variables and homicide are far from exceptional. Somewhat different but stable associations between this set of social identifiers and the incidence of many other behavioral sequences which WHO defines as self-directed or interpersonal violence – suicide, rape, child abuse or neglect, wife beating, and so on – have also been established. These results demand adequate explanations. To date, of those advanced none has won general acceptance.

Even less is known about collective violence. This is in spite of its early appearance in human history and the consistently mounting death