ABSTRACT

This chapter discussed the overall reduction of crime and rise of violence in schools across America to include activities from bullying to school shootings. There was a definition of school violence provided along with the most common reasons why bullying occurs. The importance of warning signs was addressed and the significance of having key individuals such as teachers, coaches, counselors, SRO’s, parents and family members trained in recognizing these signs so that some type of orchestrated intervention can be applied to the situation and the children being bullied and those performing the bullying can be addressed. The fact of why many children do not report being bullied or ask for help and how it is connected to the issues of power was provided and information regarding teachers who would rather ignore bullying in their classrooms than to address it and be in a confrontational situation was examined. The four prominent theories which relate directly to learned behavior and violence, such as social learning theory, differential association, rational choice theory and Violentization were discussed due to them being the foundation for recognizing, understanding and effectively dealing with bullying and school violence for school officials, parents and SRO’s.

INTRODUCTION

In the last several decades the United States has seen a decrease in the overall crime rates throughout the entire nation and especially a dramatic drop in overall crime in New York City (Stojkovic, Kalinich & Klofas, 2012). However, at the very same time that the overall crime rate has been on the decrease in the United States there has also been an increase in the amount of violence occurring at all levels of the schools located throughout the United States. It is a problem that begins, and has been experienced, at the lowest levels of our school systems, in the classroom, in the playgrounds and on the busses that...
transport children to and from their classrooms and also has been occurring in high schools and colleges throughout the United States. In line with this development there is a serious issue which involves bullying and various types of violence being perpetrated by students against students (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Gottfredson, 2001).

In additional to bullying there has been a surge of mass killings being perpetrated on children, adolescents, teenagers, and young adults with many being killed and seriously injured at all levels of schools within the United States. The individuals who are perpetrating these offenses are individuals who, after the event has occurred and activities and friends have been interviewed, demonstrate that there were clear warning signs of pending violent action. These signs were either ignored or just were not noticed due to either lack of time, concern, or the ignorance of these signs via the lack of training or knowledge by those in the positions to make these critical observations (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Gottfredson, 2001).

All of these activities which occur in our nation’s schools, on the playgrounds and on the busses used to transport our nation’s children, come under the heading and title of school violence. The main focus of this particular chapter is school violence and disturbances which manifest themselves in the form of bullying and other such activities. School Resource Officers (SRO’s) are in one of the best positions to observe, identify and act on these types of behavior. In addition to SRO’s being in a great position to see and identify the behavior(s), which would indicate there is bullying or other detrimental activity afoot, the SRO’s need the assistance of the parents, teachers, coaches, school counselors and the SRO’s themselves to maintain a continuous vigilant watch in the school environment (Glover, 2002; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002).

The issues and events of school violence have come into the public’s eye after a substantial number of deadly shootings which have occurred in a variety of locations throughout the country in such places as Littleton, Colorado; Jonesboro, Arkansas; Santee, California; Red Lake, Minnesota; Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania; and Cleveland, Ohio. The possibility of school shootings has become an issue for urban, rural, and suburban communities alike. Since 1992, more than 40 schools have experienced multiple victim homicides, many in communities where people previously believed “it couldn’t happen here.” Given the number of students and schools in the United States, multiple-victim homicides are still extremely rare, and in recent years, the overall rate of violence in schools has actually declined. Physical conflicts, threats, and harassment are, however, still common. Many students and teachers are more fearful than ever before when they enter the doors of their school. This climate of fear makes it more difficult for schools to provide positive learning environments (Espelage & Swearer, 2004; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002; Hickey, 2013).

The various dynamics associated with the complex and dangerous situations that potentially exist in our schools systems, involving juveniles as both perpetrators and victims in grades K-12, are ever changing and can be highly volatile in both nature and substance. Youth that have a propensity for violence and lack the self-control to restrain themselves, from using violence as a means of demonstrating power and control or obtaining things they desire, present a unique challenge to the school system and to law enforcement. Many times these individuals are victims who have been harassed or ostracized by their fellow students leading to the use of violence in classrooms, in the cafeteria, or on playgrounds all of which are on school property. Some of these situations have been taken to the extreme by school children resulting in loss of life and injuries to both fellow students, teachers and administrators. These actions have a deleterious effect on everyone involved in the education system and these types of behaviors

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