

Effectiveness of a Small-Group Anger Management Counseling Intervention for Rural Elementary and Middle School Students

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Related papers:

Additional detail can be found in the following documents available for download in Adobe Acrobat format at: <http://crahd.PHI.org>

1. Constantine, N. A., Huh-Kim, J., Diaz, M., & Curry, K. (2000, April). *Factors associated with aggressive behavior of rural middle school students*. Poster presented at the Society for Research on Adolescence annual conference, Chicago.
2. Curry, K. & Constantine, N. A. (1999, April) *Implementation of a peer mediation program in six rural elementary and middle schools: A comprehensive qualitative evaluation*. Paper presented at the 1999 American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Montreal, Canada.
3. Constantine, N. A. & Curry, K. (1998, November). *Collaborative development of a theory-based assessment instrument for a school-linked violence prevention evaluation*. Paper presented at the 1998 American Evaluation Association Conference, Chicago.
4. An expanded written version of this presentation will be posted at this website later this year.

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Safe Haven Violence Prevention Program

- U.S. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) Violence Prevention Demonstration Program Site
- Five Years (1994 - 1999)
- Four components:
 - Classroom curriculum
 - Peer conflict managers
 - Anger management groups
 - Community mobilization
- Six rural schools
- Grades 3 to 8 (ages 8 to 14)
- Approximately 1,800 students served by one or more components

Evaluation Design

- WestEd joined as new evaluators for years 4 and 5
- Highly participatory, utilization focused evaluation approach
- Evaluation workgroup reached consensus on priorities and methods:
 1. **Classroom curriculum:** Fully randomized wait-list control design
 2. **Peer conflict managers:** Comprehensive qualitative implementation evaluation
 3. **Anger management groups:** Quasi-experimental pre/post/(follow-up) with multiple raters and cohort comparisons; use of standardized commercial assessment instrument (the *Social Skills Rating System*)
 4. **Community mobilization:** Documentation logs and interviews

Component 1: Classroom Curriculum

■ Fully randomized wait-list control pre/post/follow-up design

- Extensive development of theoretical framework and assessment instrument (Constantine and Curry, 1998)
- No intervention effects found for elementary or middle school students

Constantine, N. A. & Curry, K. (1998, November). *Collaborative development of a theory-based assessment instrument for a school-linked violence prevention evaluation*. Paper presented at the 1998 American Evaluation Association Conference, Chicago. (at www.wested.org/schrg)

■ Secondary analysis of factors associated with aggressive behavior

- Attempted to replicate Bosworth (1999) urban middle school students findings
- Some overlap in findings, plus additional hypothesized relationships found (Constantine, et al., 2000)

Bosworth, K. (1999). Factors associated with bullying behavior in middle school students. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 19, 341-362.

Constantine, N. A., Huh-Kim, J., Diaz, M., & Curry, K. (2000, April). *Factors associated with aggressive behavior of rural middle school students*. Poster presented at the Society for Research on Adolescence annual conference, Chicago. (at www.wested.org/schrg)

Component 2: Peer Conflict Managers

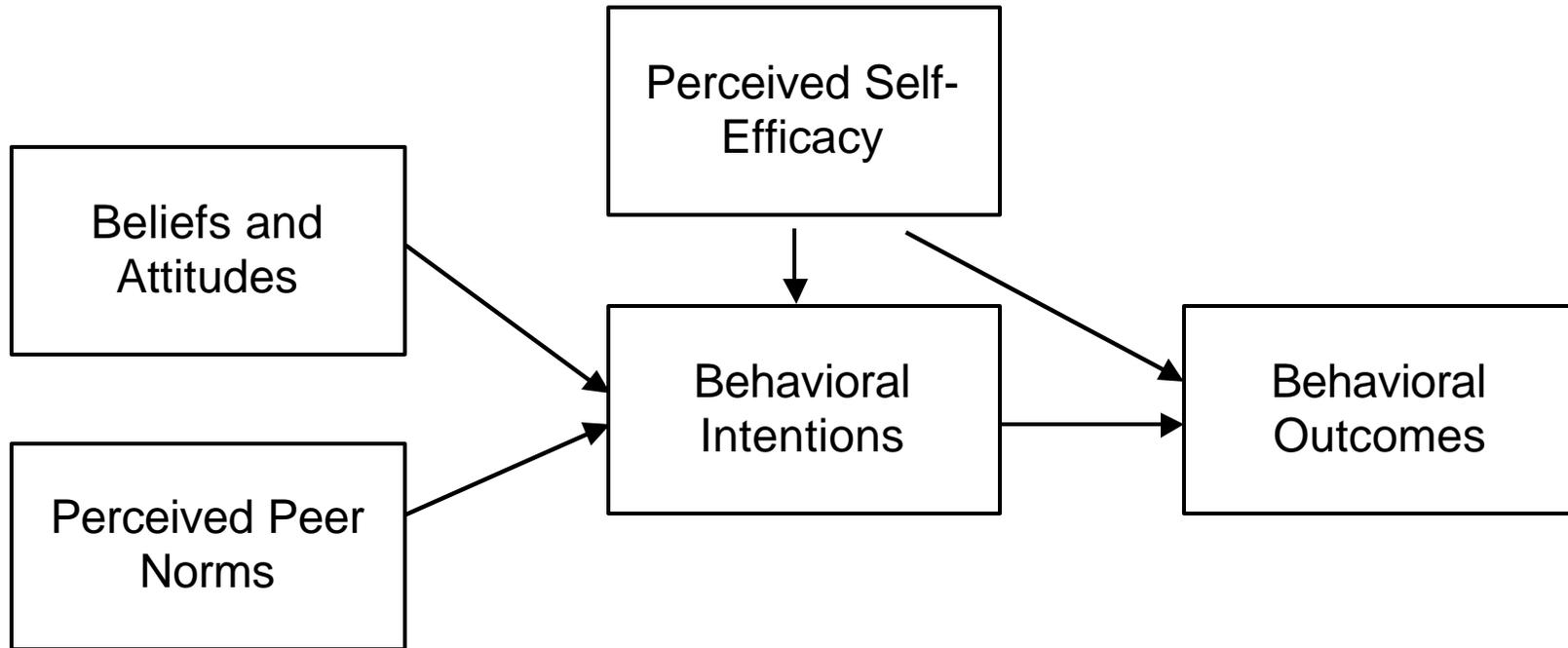
■ Comprehensive implementation evaluation involving interviews and focus groups with 91 students, teachers, counselors, and principals. (Curry and Constantine, 1998)

■ Cross-site analyses of:

- degree of integration
- success factors
- challenges
- participant recommendations

Curry, K. & Constantine, N. A. (1999, April) *Implementation of a peer mediation program in six rural elementary and middle schools: A comprehensive qualitative evaluation*. Paper presented at the 1999 American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Montreal, Canada. (at www.wested.org/schrg)

Figure 1. Factors Associated with Aggressive Behavior Secondary Analysis: Theoretical Framework



Beliefs and Attitudes

- Trusting Communication
- Use of Aggression
- School Climate

Perceived Peer Norms

- Trusting Communication
- Use of Aggression
- Drugs and Alcohol

Behavioral Efficacy

- Trusting Communication
- Temptation Refusal
- Accepting Help
- Non-Violent Strategies

Behavioral Intentions

- Trusting Communication
- Temptation Refusal
- Accepting Help
- Non-Violent Strategies

Behavioral Outcomes

- Trusting Communication
- Misconduct (drug and alcohol use)
- Physical Aggression
- Verbal Aggression

Component 3: Anger management groups

Implementation

- Paraprofessional counselors provided by a local community agency presented anger management counseling and skills training
- Students referred by teachers or other school staff, or self referred
- Services were provided in small groups (4-6 students) lasting 40-50 minutes, once per week
- Students excused from regular class to attend group
- Each group lasted 10-15 weeks
- Supplemental individual counseling and follow-up provided as necessary
- Before entry into group, short term goals were developed with student and parents
- The groups began with activities of getting to know you and feelings; then moved into identifying and looking at anger and what triggers it for each student.
- Specific skills were introduced and reinforced through discussion, activities, readings, and video.
- Program entry occurred over a 16-month period spanning two school years

Component 3: Anger management groups

Evaluation Design

- Pre-post multiple cohort, multiple rater design
- Counselors administered the Social Skills Rating System (Gresham & Elliot, 1990) to participating students, their teachers, and their parents within one week of group entry and within two weeks after the completing group
- Assessment included several subscales each within the domains of social skills and problem behaviors
- Separate versions were used for elementary (n= 67) and middle school (n=31) students.

Gresham, F.M. & Elliot, S.N. (1990). *Social Skills Rating System Manual*. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.

Component 3: Anger management groups

Assessment Instrument

- The ***Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)*** is a nationally-normed survey instrument from American Guidance Services.
- Teacher, parent, and student rating scales are employed to sample the three domains of:
 - social skills,
 - problem behaviors, and
 - (academic competence, not used in this study)

Gresham, F.M. & Elliot, S.N. (1990). *Social Skills Rating System Manual*. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.

Component 3: Anger management groups

Social Skills Subscales

Social skills are socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable a person to interact effectively with others and to avoid socially unacceptable responses. The SSRS measures five sub-domains of social skills.

- The **Cooperation** subscale includes behaviors such as helping others, sharing materials, and complying with rules and directions.
- The **Assertion** subscale includes initiating behaviors, such as asking others for information, introducing oneself, and responding to the actions of others.
- The **Responsibility** subscale includes behaviors that demonstrate ability to communicate with adults' and regard for property or work. Rated only by parents.
- The **Empathy** subscale includes behaviors that show concern and respect for others' feelings and viewpoints. Rated only by student-self report
- The **Self-Control** subscale includes behaviors that emerge in conflict situations, such as responding appropriately to teasing, and in non-conflict situations that require taking turns and compromising.

Component 3: Anger management groups

Problem Behaviors Subscales

The *Problem Behaviors* domain includes sub-domains measuring Externalizing Problems, Internalizing Problems, and Hyperactivity. Problem behaviors, which might interfere with social skills performance, are rated according to their perceived frequency. Only the Teacher and Parent forms include problem behavior ratings.

- **Externalizing Problems** are inappropriate behaviors involving verbal or physical aggression toward others, poor control of temper, and arguing.
- **Internalizing Problems** are behaviors indicating anxiety, sadness, loneliness, and poor self-esteem.
- **Hyperactivity** behaviors are those involving excessive movement, fidgeting, and impulsive reactions. Hyperactivity is measured only at the Elementary level.

Component 3: Anger management groups

Elementary Results

- **Student self-reports:** Elementary students showed significant positive changes on the **self-control** subscale, and no changes on the cooperation, assertion, or empathy subscales
- **Teacher reports:** For elementary students, significant increases were found for all three social skills subscales employed: **cooperation, assertion, and self-control**, with no significant changes in any of the problem behaviors rated.
- **Parent reports:** For the elementary students, significant decreases were found in all three problem behavior areas - **externalizing problems (aggression), internalizing problems, and hyperactivity**; as well as significant increases in **responsibility, and self control**. No changes for found for the cooperation or assertion subscales.

Component 3: Anger management groups

Middle School Results

- **Student self-reports:** No changes were found for the middle school students on the cooperation, assertion, empathy, or self-control subscales.
- **Teacher reports:** For middle school students, significant positive changes were found for **internalizing problems**. No changes were found for the cooperation, assertion, self-control, or externalizing problems (aggression) subscales.
- **Parent reports:** For the middle school students, a significant decrease was found in **externalizing problems (aggression)**, and a significant increase in **self control**. No changes were found on the cooperation, assertion, responsibility, or internalizing problems subscales.

Component 3: Anger management groups

Implications

- For students perceived at risk of aggressive behavior problems, this study shows the effectiveness of a relatively inexpensive anger management counseling intervention.
- Under real-world implementation conditions, the intervention successfully reduced aggression and increased self-control as reported by students, parents, and teachers.

Table 1. Matched Sample Pre/Post T-Tests

	Students		Teachers		Parents	
	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary
Social Skills:	ns	ns	+ p<.001	ns	+ p<.05	(+p=.08)
Cooperation	ns	ns	+ p<.05	ns	ns	ns
Assertion	ns	ns	+ p<.001	ns	ns	ns
Responsibility					+ p<.05	ns
Empathy	ns	ns				
Self Control	+ p<.05	ns	+ p<.05	ns	+ p<.01	+ p<.01
Problem Behaviors:			(- p=.07)	ns	- p<.001	- p<.01
Externalizing Problems*			(- p=.06)	ns	- p<.001	- p<.001
Internalizing Problems			ns	- p<.01	- p<.01	ns
Hyperactivity			ns		- p<.01	
Valid n**	57	28	67	31	46	30

* Externalizing Problems are inappropriate behaviors involving verbal or physical aggression toward others, poor control of temper, and excessive arguing (Gresham & Elliot, 1990).

** Valid n with matched pre and post

- The elementary version was used for students in grades 5 and below; and the secondary version was used for students in grades 7 and 8. Most 6th grade students were assessed with the elementary version, however there were several exceptions.
- ns = not significant; p value in parentheses (p) = borderline significant
- **Shaded cells** = no scale score available at this level
- All significant changes are in the “desired” direction, i.e., increase in positive or decrease in negative scale score (+ means increase in scale score; - means decrease in scale score)