4-23-1999


Editor

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp

Part of the Child Psychology Commons, Other Psychology Commons, and the Social Psychology and Interaction Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol6/iss16/5

This Trends is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Bulletin of Political Psychology by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact commons@erau.edu.
In the aftermath of students shooting students, faculty, and staff in the United States--e.g., the Littleton, Colorado shootings--come the inevitable and solemn opining of the "experts." Yet these emperors of social trends and child psychology should be viewed as the usual suspects.

"America refuses to recognize that there are millions of teens and children with psychological illnesses," pontificates one. This assumes that the shooters often can be accurately characterized as being psychologically ill--a dubious premise given that immoral, antisocial, and hurtful behaviors are too facilely typed as stemming from illness. "If we were able to get teachers to receive even basic tips from professionals...we might go a long way to preventing violence....", bemoans another. This assumes that there is adequate predictive validity between specific behavioral and intrapsychic signs--or other indicators--and later violence and substance use. Yet social scientists are notoriously ineffectual in predicting specific episodes of violence. "Parents have to be willing to....accept expressions of anger at home, whether they are tantrums or inappropriate language," declares yet another. This again assumes a supporting data base that, unfortunately, is lacking. Moreover, an equally compelling logic might be that not accepting expressions of anger at home might decrease the probability that expressions of anger--including killing people--would occur anywhere. "It is clear that these youths were having significant problems," intones a psychiatrist who has published a book on violence in schools. Sure. Yet data suggest most youths who have significant problems do not shoot up their schools. And other "experts" are casting causal ascriptions involving violent video games, television shows, families in which both parents work (or both don't), families that don't contain two biological parents or just two parents, the absence of dress codes, and the plethora of and easy access to formidable firearms and explosives in contrast to the "good old days" of chains, baseball bats, knives, and zip guns.

(Keywords: Colorado, Littleton, School Shootings, Security, Violence.)