

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of *Preventing Drug Abuse: Effective Intervention Strategies and Techniques*

REFERENCE: Barth, R. P. and Derezotes, D. S., *Preventing Adolescent Abuse: Effective Intervention Strategies and Techniques*, Lexington Books, San Diego, CA, 1990.

The key word in this book's title is "effective." In a logical, step-wise format, the authors argue for the need to measure outcomes and learn from experience. They then collate their findings and suggest alternatives to be tried and measured next. The emphasis is on effectiveness of interventions throughout.

Preventing Adolescent Abuse studies the outcome of California's 1984 Child Abuse Prevention and Training Act (CAPTA). CAPTA has led to school-based child abuse prevention programs that focus on teaching aspects of abuse prevention to school-age children at four points in time, from preschool through high school. Most programs are classroom based and taught by visiting experts. A large amount of material is covered in brief classroom sessions. Although this book dwells primarily on the high school age group, it actually addresses many age levels.

Chapter 1 reviews rational data on the epidemiology of abuse, introducing the CAPTA mandated programs in Chapter 2 as a response to the growing awareness of child abuse. Although this second chapter focuses on California school programs, it begins to deal with the basic assumptions used to formulate CAPTA program teaching strategies and compares them unfavorably to what has been learned from other childhood prevention programs, for example, programs for the prevention of teenage pregnancy.

Chapters 3 and 4 detail the authors' actual study. They define their methodology and carefully outline their rationale and instrument. The study results in Chapter 4 are not summarized succinctly, however, and the point of their study is lost in the reporting of their data. The best summary is actually found in Chapter 5, where the results are used as a stepping stone for designing more effective programs.

In actuality, the last 2 chapters are the most provocative and exciting. Their study suggests that the 10-million dollar-a-year CAPTA programs lead to only moderate substantive gains in knowledge with no evidence of behavioral change in teens. Insight alone is still ineffective. Rather than leaving it at that, the authors then integrate their knowledge of the CAPTA program assumptions, strategies, and outcomes with those of other preventive programs, and present their conceptualization of an integrated and potentially more effective program. The latter would involve far-reaching school and community

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changes. Unfortunately, this would necessitate levels of coordination and integration that may be too idealistic to accomplish.

In all, this book uses a narrow focus—brief classroom based teaching programs on child abuse—as a stepping stone to call for far more comprehensive attacks on this national problem. It is done in a step-wise, logical method, building on existing data and supporting the authors' arguments in understandable ways. Although a wide audience can benefit from a review of this material, program designers and directors would find it more beneficial than therapists.