School Violence Prevention: School Administrators Fostering a Culture of School Connectedness Among Teachers and Students

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School Violence

- Statistically, schools are still safer than out in the community… but students still spend a significant portion of their waking hours in school

  - Significant proportion of social interactions take place in school

- High profile shootings in the 1990s (e.g., Littleton, CO) to the present (Chardon, OH) has raised public awareness of school violence

- School violence can range from verbal abuse, bullying, physical assaults, to school shootings

School Connectedness

- **<u>School Connectedness</u>** – Quality of relationships between students and school personnel
  - Student perception of belonging/acceptance, trust, dignity/ respect, safety within the school context

- Associated with social and emotional well-being, academic achievement, and resiliency (e.g., Shochet et al., 2006; Smith & Sandhu, 2004)

- Vital role in preventing school (and community) violence (e.g., Brookmeyer et al., 2006; Resnick et al., 1997; Volungis, 2012)

A New Paradigm to View Relationships in Schools: OCBs

⬥ **<u>Organizational Citizenship Behaviors</u>** – "Individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization" (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006, p. 3).

⬥ Five Common Dimensions
  ⬥ Altruism
  ⬥ Conscientiousness
  ⬥ Sportsmanship
  ⬥ Civic Virtue
  ⬥ Courtesy

A New Paradigm to View Relationships in Schools: OCBs

- Single dimension of OCBs for schools (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2001)
  - Not five separate dimensions of the construct, but rather a single dimension captured all aspects of OCBs in schools.
    - i.e., benefits to the organization and individual combined in a single construct

- Overall, the literature of OCBs in schools is rather sparse, especially within the context of administrators facilitating a school climate that is conducive to fostering OCBs in teachers (e.g., DiPalola & Hoy, 2005; Somech & Ron, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2002).

Goal of Paper

- Although there is a plethora of research recommending schools to have "high" levels of school connectedness (the "what"), the literature on actual mechanisms to develop this key construct (the "how") is sparse

- **<u>Primary Goal:</u>** Identification of leadership styles for school administrators to to utilize in their day-to-day interactions to foster OCBs in teachers as a means to developing and enhancing school connectedness

  - In turn, what does this look like through teacher interactions with students?

  - Role in preventing school violence?

Administrator Leadership & Teacher Relationships

- **Nature of the administrator relationships with teachers and students:**
  - Influences how teachers behave and relate to their students
  - Affects how the organization is run as a whole

- **How can administrator qualities make a difference?**
  - It depends on teacher perception of commitment, satisfaction (Zeinabadi, 2010), trust (Tschannen-Morgan, 2003; Dipaola & Hoy, 2005), dignity/respect, procedural justice, attitudes, and support provided within the school context

- **Leadership Styles:** Type of motivation that can contribute to organization success, teacher OCBs, and school connectedness

Administrator Leadership & Teacher Relationships

- **Types of Leadership Styles**
  - Participative vs. Directive Leadership (Somech, 2005)
  - Collegial Leadership (Dipaola & Hoy, 2005)
  - Charismatic Leadership (Oguz, 2010)
  - Transactional vs. Transformational Leadership (Oguz, 2010)
    - **Transactional Leadership:** The extent to which employees expect rewards for their output, compliance, and loyalty
      - "Enforcing contracts and job descriptions" (Graham, 1995)
    - <u>**Transformational Leadership:**</u> The extent to which employees consciously value their work and strive to improve their output
      - Looking at the costs and benefits for the organization as a whole as well as utilizing the principles of justice (Graham, 1995)

Administrator Leadership & Teacher Relationships

- **Examples of Effective Administrative Leadership Styles:**
  - Setting rules, but also listening and asking for suggestions/ideas from teachers (i.e., participation in decision making)
  - Reinforcing innovative ideas and positive behavior (e.g., when teachers take time after school to help students in their studies)
  - Providing aid when teachers need help with particular students (i.e., listening to their problems and helping to brainstorm productive ways on how to solve them)

Teachers and OCB

- Teachers in well functioning schools go well beyond the minimum expectations of formal job description and contracts (Tschannen-Moran, 2003)

- OCB in teachers plays a significant roll in the overall success of a school.
  - "Voluntary teacher behavior that goes the 'extra mile' to help students and colleagues succeed, that is, OCB, seems an especially important aspect of the performance of school faculties" (Dipaola & Hoy, 2005, p. 388)
- School organizations could not achieve their goals if teachers limited their contributions only to those specified in their job description (Dipaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2001)

- Thus, school climate may be impacted by teacher OCBs, especially through teacher-student interactions and relationships

Teachers and OCB

- **<u>Signs of OCB</u>** (e.g., DiPaola, Tarter, & Hoy, 2005; Nguni, Sleegers, & Denssen, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2002)
  - Willing to teach classes of absent teachers
  - Voluntarily help new teachers
  - Take the initiative to introduce themselves to substitutes and assist them
  - Schedule personal appointments at times other than during the school day
  - Make innovative suggestions to improve the overall quality of our school
  - Give advance notice of changes in schedule and routines

Teachers and OCB

- **<u>Signs of OCB</u>**
  - Give advance notice of changes in schedule and routines
  - Volunteer to serve on committees
  - Rarely absent
  - Begin class promptly and use class time effectively
  - Altruism and interpersonal helping

  - Help students outside the classroom; after school hours
    - More prone to reach out to students when distressed; listen, validate, problem-solve, etc.
      - Leads to school connectedness (Volungis & Howe, 2012)
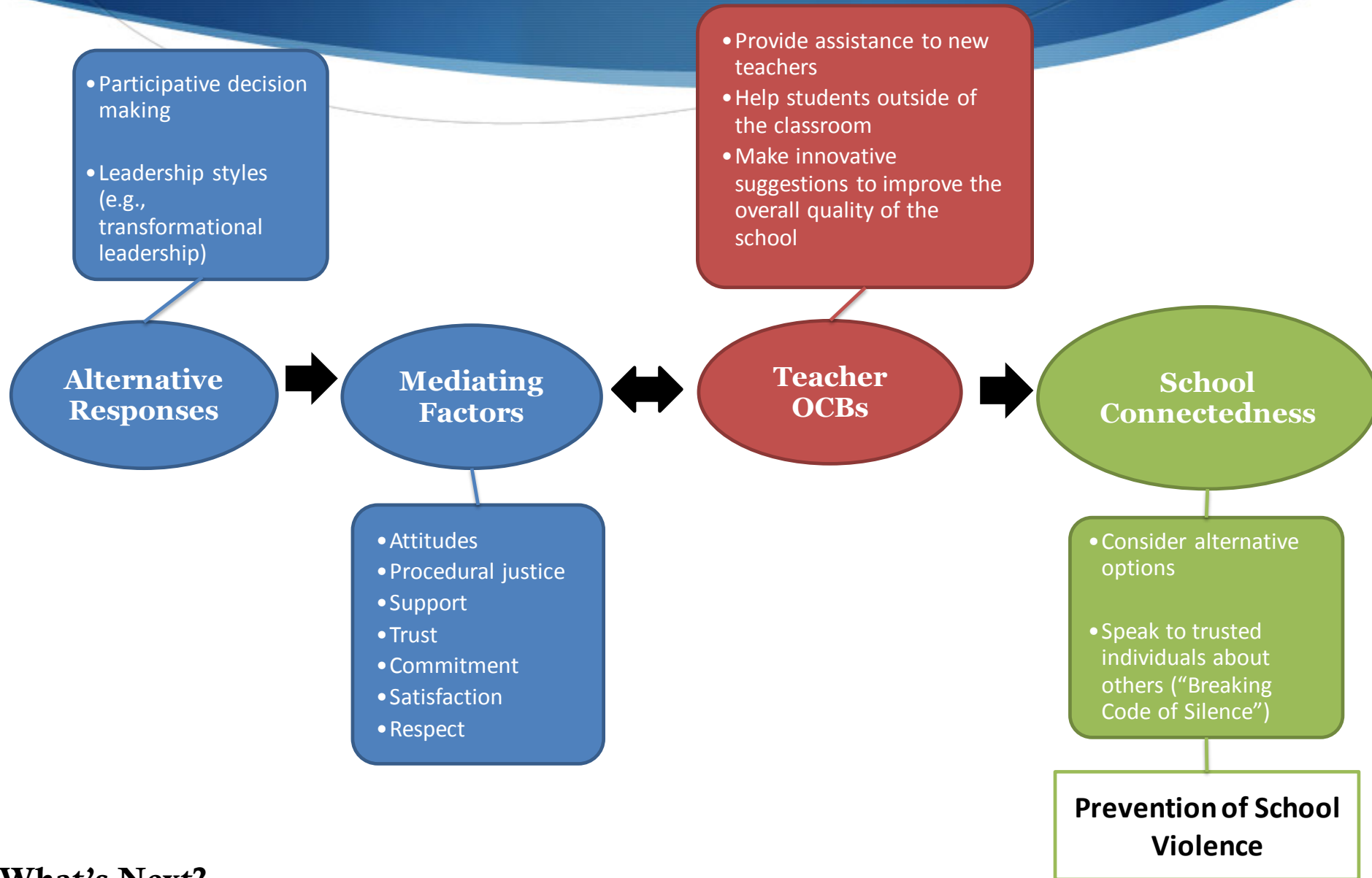
Teacher OCBs & Student Relationships: Preventing School Violence

- Broad/Implicit outcome
  - Students who feel like they have close relationships with teachers they can trust and look up to, along with having their own thoughts/feelings validated, the less prone they are to contemplate acts of violence when distressed
    - Problem-solve / consideration of alternative options

Teacher OCBs & Student Relationships: Preventing School Violence

- A more salient outcome of strong teacher-student alliances
  - Students are more willing to speak up when there is knowledge of a potential violent act

- Leakage (e.g., Daniels et al., 2010; O'Toole, 2000)

- Code of Silence (O'Toole, 2000)

- Students who may be hesitant to share any leakage have a greater proclivity to communicate such knowledge with a trusted teacher (Brinkley & Saarino, 2006; Daniels et al., 2010; Yablon, 2010) built upon basic relationship building and communication skills
  - **Breaking the Code of Silence**

Administrator-Teacher Interpersonal & Relationship Event-Stages

- Participative decision making
- Leadership styles (e.g., transformational leadership)

- Provide assistance to new teachers
- Help students outside of the classroom
- Make innovative suggestions to improve the overall quality of the school

Alternative Responses ➡️ **Mediating Factors** ⬅️➡️ **Teacher OCBs** ➡️ **School Connectedness**

- Attitudes
- Procedural justice
- Support
- Trust
- Commitment
- Satisfaction
- Respect

- Consider alternative options
- Speak to trusted individuals about others ("Breaking Code of Silence")

Prevention of School Violence

What's Next?

Teachers establishing relationships with students using basic counseling skills…

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