



Prosocial youth: The legacy of Arnold Goldstein

Arnold P. Goldstein (1933-2002) was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his world-renowned contribution to research and intervention in preventing violence. Goldstein described how his model of Aggression Replacement Training “[ART]” was deeply rooted in the work of other pioneers in this field.

Arnold Goldstein served for over 30 years at Syracuse University where he directed the Center for Research on Aggression. His model of Aggression Replacement Training [ART] was enriched by diverse perspectives of many colleagues. This article highlights the ideas of three persons who strongly influenced Goldstein's work, namely, Jerome Frank, Albert Bandura, and Ervin Straub. An accompanying article in this issue addresses another of his contributions, The EQUIP Program of positive peer helping (Gibbs, Potter and Goldstein, 1995). Dr. Goldstein was to be recognized in 2002 by Reclaiming Youth International with the Spirit of Crazy Horse Award, an honor that was accepted posthumously by his wife, Susan.

Social skills training has evolved across forty years to build a range of strengths and competencies enabling youth to move successfully into adulthood. Various outcome evaluations support the efficacy of such cognitive behavioral interventions in work with aggressive children and adolescents. Arnold P. Goldstein had a profound impact on this field through the Aggression Replacement Training model of intervention (Goldstein, Glick and Gibbs, 1998). He passed away on February 16, 2002, leaving a rich legacy of written works and trained practitioners world-wide who continue his charge of turning aggression into prosocial behavior.

Aggression Replacement Training is composed of three complementary intervention procedures which target behavior, emotions, and values:

1. *Skillstreaming* is the social skills training component of ART used to increase the repertoire of behavioral alternatives to aggression.
2. *Anger Control* is the cognitive emotional component which teaches youth techniques for emotional self-control. In effect, Skill-streaming teaches what to do in social situations while Anger Control training imparts what not to do.
3. *Moral Reasoning* targets prosocial values. Youth may know alternatives to aggression and be able to manage their anger but still choose aggressive coping strategies. Targeting values increases the likelihood that skills learned will actually be used in facing life challenges.

ART has been evaluated in rigorous studies conducted by diverse investigators in a wide range of settings. It has been recognized as a promising program by the U.S. Department of Education and has received similar recognitions from the U.S. Department of Corrections, the American Correctional Association, and the U.K. Home Office Probation Unit. The Washington Institute for Public Policy and the California Institute for Mental Health have also engaged in large state-wide programs that have shown significant positive trends in all identified indicators.

Goldstein often pointed to three books that greatly influenced the development of ART. The first was *Persuasion and Healing* by Jerome Frank (1961). Frank proposed that favorable outcomes of different types of therapy result from qualities all held in common. These factors also apply to ART. Successful interventions are marked by a positive relationship or alliance between the helper and the person being served. The intervention must include treatment interventions that are understandable and believable. The helper must be seen as a bona fide authority and healer. Both parties in the process must also have positive expectations. When ART yields positive outcomes, it is because these factors are in play.

The second major influence on Goldstein comes from *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis* by Albert Bandura (1973). Bandura detailed environmental events which cause a person to first learn and then continue to perform aggressive behavior. The social learning theory of aggression provided a road map for its modification. Aggression is acquired both via direct experience and by observation of others. It is instigated by adverse events, incentives for aggression, and modeling. Aggression is maintained by direct or vicarious reinforcement and by thinking that neutralizes conscience. Bandura's analysis pointed to the

need for a comprehensive approach that attends to the many variables involved in the formation and replacement of aggression. ART is Goldstein's application of Bandura's science of aggression.

Goldstein was also influenced by the powerful book, *The Roots of Evil*, by Ervin Straub (1989). Straub demonstrated the depth to which contextual and cultural forces can bring out the worst in human behavior. Just as Bandura's study of aggression points the way to prosocial behavior, so ecological forces can be used to bring out the best in persons. Whether in the therapy room, school, peer group, or community, context greatly affects the content of behavior. Straub has also written widely about the impact of broad cultural currents: stereotyping, devaluation of subgroups, domination by the majority, exclusion, and the need for interpersonal connection in modern society.

Frank, Bandura, and Straub were ahead of their time, and so was Arnold Goldstein. In Aggression Replacement Training, modeling, role-playing, performance, feedback, and generalization training are keys to the program efficacy. Neuroscience is giving added support to these principles. Daniel Goleman (2006) cites research about the importance of neuroplasticity and social intelligence. Studies of neuroplasticity show the ability of the brain to heal itself after trauma. Recent discoveries also show how one's social interactions play a role in reshaping the brain (Doidge, 2007). Repeated experiences sculpt the size, shape and number of neurons and their connections. Goldstein's role-playing social skills and reinforcing self-talk fits this brain research.

While it has been more than six years since the passing of Arnold Goldstein, his concepts, influence, and training continues to impact those educators, psychologists, youth work practitioners, and other change agents who have utilized the model. His legacy lies in both theory and practice. He trained tens of thousands of practitioners and focused on mentoring others to be able to continue his work. Aggression Replacement Training is practiced all over the world and is well researched with demonstrated positive measured outcomes. Most importantly, Goldstein's vision of replacing aggression with prosocial values and behavior has improved the lives of countless young persons and their families.

References

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This feature: Amendola, M. and Oliver, R. (2008). Prosocial youth: The legacy of Arnold Goldstein. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 17, 2. pp. 28-30.