

# Experts focus on violence culture

Panelists weigh in on the issues of prior abuse and anger management among others in brainstorming solutions to a violent culture

By Kristy Hessman  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Increased violence and strategies for prevention were just of few of the issues addressed Friday during a panel discussion held on the University campus.

The discussion entitled, "A Systemic Response to a Culture of Violence," was offered in conjunction with a clinical workshop as part of the annual Oregon Association for Marriage and Family Therapy fall conference. The conference took place Saturday and Sunday in Gerlinger Hall on the University campus.

**It all comes down to relationships. We need to help kids and adults in relationships with themselves and other people.**

**Anna Beth Benningfield**  
president  
AAMFT

"We believe the level of intensity of violence is increasing," Anita Bernardi Maher, president of the OAMFT and moderator of the discussion said. "It is complex — there is no one solution, so we are pulling together solutions to violence."

The panel, which included two regional and two national experts on violence, spoke to a room filled with teachers, therapists, counselors and social service workers on ways to deal with the growing problem of violence in young

people.

"There has been a steady climb in violent juvenile crimes," Steve Carmichael, panelist and director of Lane County Department of Youth Services said. "It has gone down in the past couple of years but it is not over, there is still a flood of violence and more kids involved with guns."

Panelists also discussed statistics involving death in schools.

"Since 1992 over 200 youth have been murdered in schools; last year 20 youths died at school," said Jeff Sprague, panelist and co-director of the University institute on violence and destructive behavior.

There is no single factor of the root causes of violence, the panelists agreed, but some of the factors which violence is rooted in comes from the family, poverty, abuse and neglect.

"When a child grows up being abused the cycle effect builds on itself," Carmichael said.

The role of violent media is also a significant one, Sprague said.

"We all watch TV but we need to teach our children to deconstruct what they see," he said.

In addition to the roots of violence, the panel also discussed prevention and intervention methods.

"We need to view offenders with compassion," said Richard Schwartz, panelist and staff therapist at Northwestern University's Family Institute. "Most violent offenders have had horrifying childhood's, we need to treat them not just punish them."

Teaching children valuable traits at a young age is also an important prevention technique.

"Kids need to learn to manage their anger, just like the learn to read," Sprague said.

Relationships are also a key foundation to the prevention of

## Risk factors used to determine who may be at risk for violence:

If individuals exhibit one or two of the following behaviors, it may not be of concern; however, three of the following traits means they might have increased risks for violence.

1. Are they failing in school?
2. Who are their peers?
3. Have they exhibited anti-social behavior in the past?
4. Family situation? Are their parents involved in criminal activities?
5. Are they involved with drugs?
6. The younger the person's age at the time of the first offense, the greater the risk.

SOURCE: Lane County  
Department of Youth Services

violence.

"It all comes down to relationships," said Anna Beth Benningfield, panelist and president of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy in Washington, D.C. "We need to help kids and adults in relationships with themselves and other people."

"By the end I was very satisfied with the way they approached the issues," said Patricia Cortez, a case manager for Looking Glass Youth Services. "Being a case manager for Latino youth, the discussion was very related to what I do."

Other participants agreed, but thought different aspects should have been addressed.

"I thought it was excellent," said Laura Kude, diversion coordinator for Multnomah County. "There were some things that weren't addressed such as sexism, the role of sex and sexism needs to be addressed as well."

# Global warming soaks Northwest

EUGENE — Worldwide climate shifts may be causing the planet to get warmer, but don't expect the weather to get any drier here in the Pacific Northwest.

Two University of Oregon geography professors are among a group of academics who are trying to pull off the ultimate meteorological task: Helping to build a computer model they hope will be used to predict what the conditions will be like when global warming has taken its toll.

And unlike many people, Pat Bartlein and Cathy Whitlock believe it will take a toll.

"Even the skeptics have changed their argument from 'No, it's not going to happen' to 'It's going to happen but it's not going to be a big deal,'" said Bartlein, whose research focuses on climatology. "The main issue in the climatology community is how sensitive is the climate to these changes that are happening."

Bartlein and Whitlock plan to provide some answers by studying past climate changes. By examining items such as fossil pollens, ancient plant material and lake bed sediments, they're studying how the climate of the western United States changed during and after the Ice Age.

Using that kind of data, scientists can take computer models used to predict future climate and run them backward in time. By seeing

how well the models match what they already know about past climates, they can tell how accurate the models are at forecasting future changes.

"The only way to tell how well a model works is to compare it to the past," Whitlock said. "When you can produce a good match, then you can use the model to run in the other direction and predict future conditions."

Existing models give researchers some idea of how the weather will change around the globe, but such information doesn't necessarily give an accurate picture of a particular region, like the Northwest.

The data Bartlein and Whitlock are collecting from sites around the West should help. They've learned enough about regional climatic swings to gauge the accuracy of computer models.

While scientists continue to collect data to improve the models, they already point to major changes on a time scale far shorter than anything seen in the past. Whitlock said this century could see more carbon in the atmosphere than at any time in the last 35 million to 40 million years.

"It's pretty unprecedented," she said. "It's really almost frightening to see the simulations because the changes are on such a large scale, it's mind-boggling."

It will take a lot more work to get

a reliable model, but the preliminary data indicates that although temperatures could increase in the Northwest, it could actually rain more. Excess winter precipitation will fall as rain rather than snow, which could have a major effect on the other side of the mountains, according to the researchers.

"The main change that keeps coming up, strange as it may seem, is a great spread of forest into the area east of the Cascades," he said. Whitlock said forests could also replace much of the Alaskan and Canadian tundra, while white bark pines could disappear from the northern Rockies.

Less snow could put ski resorts out of business and decrease the amount of water available for summer irrigation. The changes also have huge implications for wildlife, which could face habitat changes that occur 20 to 40 times faster than ever before, Whitlock said.

And because human development has broken most remaining habitat into relatively small islands, animals may not be able to follow the shifting ecosystems.

"How are organisms going to be able to move across the fragmented landscape we've created?" Whitlock wonders. "The climate is changing so fast, it's hard to imagine how organisms are going to adjust."

The Associated Press

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