

Virginia High School Safety Study

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Virginia High School Safety Study





In collaboration with:

- Virginia Department of Education
- Department of Criminal Justice Services and Center for School Safety

Funded by U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention



Virginia High School Safety Study Research Assistants

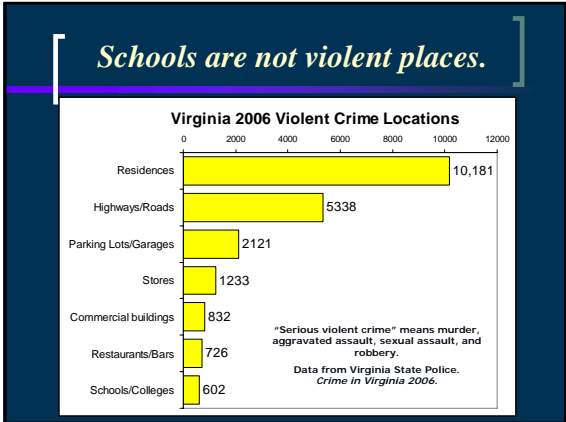
Sharmila Bandyopadhyay			
Justin Collman			
Megan Eliot			
Carli Hague			
Francis Huang			
Jennie Klein			
Talisha Lee			
Tse-Hua Shih			
Erica Shirley			
Aisha Thomson			
Farah Williams			

Presentations

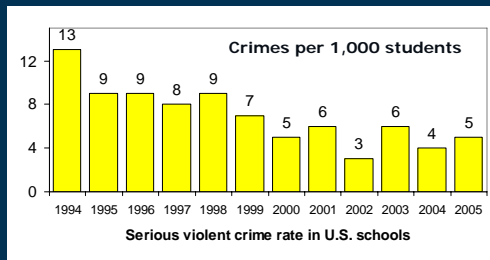
- School Safety Overview
Dewey Cornell
- High school safety conditions
Talisha Lee & Aisha Thompson
- Demographic influences
Erica Shirley and Sharmila Bandyopadhyay
- Authoritative discipline
Anne Gregory
- Encouraging students to seek help
Megan Eliot
- Discussion
Michael Furlong

School Safety Overview

- National Trends in School Safety
 - School violence
 - Effective programs
- Rationale for the Virginia High School Safety Study

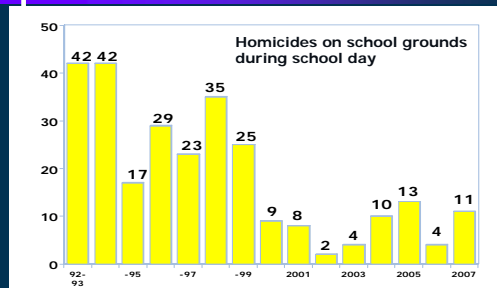


School violence is not increasing.



Indicators of school crime and safety: 2007

School homicides are not increasing.



Cases identified from records of the National School Safety Center.

Why the decline in juvenile violence?



- Many factors seem to have contributed to the decline in violent juvenile crime.
- Research shows that two widely used interventions did NOT work and should NOT be credited....



“...transferring juveniles to the adult justice system generally increases, rather than decreases, rates of violence among transferred youth.”



Zero tolerance is not effective. Suspension associated with poorer outcomes for students.

FBI advises against profiling



Download at www.fbi.gov

“One response to the pressure for action may be an effort to identify...a “profile” of the typical school shooter. This may sound like a reasonable preventive measure, but in practice, trying to draw up a catalogue or “checklist” of warning signs to detect a potential school shooter can be shortsighted, even dangerous. Such lists, publicized by the media, can end up unfairly labeling many nonviolent students as potentially dangerous or even lethal.” (FBI pp 2-3)

Secret Service/DOE recommends threat assessment



"In an educational setting where there is a climate of safety, adults and students respect each other. This climate is defined and fostered by students having a positive connection to at least one adult in authority. In such a climate, students develop the capacity to talk and openly share their concerns without fear of shame and reprisal. They try to help friends and fellow students who are in distress, bringing serious concerns to the attention of adults." (p 6)

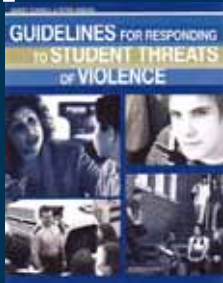
Download at:
www.secretservice.gov

Teach students to distinguish snitching from seeking help

Snitching: informing on someone for personal gain
Seeking help: attempting to stop someone from being hurt



Virginia Threat Assessment Model



Why the decline in juvenile violence?



- Increased *structural* efforts including community policing and efforts to reduce crack dealing and juvenile access to guns
- Increased *support* efforts, including school-based and after-school programs to supervise, mentor, resolve conflicts in youth

The Effects of School-Based Intervention Programs on Aggressive Behavior: A Meta-Analysis

Sandra A. Williams and Mark W. Lipsey
James H. Dwyer

- Reviewed 221 studies of diverse school-based violence prevention programs
- Average effect size = .25 for demonstration programs, which would reduce fighting 50% in a typical school

The Effects of School-Based Intervention Programs on Aggressive Behavior: A Meta-Analysis

Sandra A. Williams and Mark W. Lipsey
James H. Dwyer

- Routine practice programs much less effective than demonstration programs (ES .10 vs .25)
- Need to study routine school practices.

Numerous Effective Programs

- Anger management
- Bullying prevention
- Conflict resolution
- Family therapy
- Parenting skills
- Problem-solving
- Social competence
- Substance abuse resistance
- Etc.



Virginia High School Safety Study

Purpose: To assess school safety conditions in Virginia high schools and to identify effective school policies and practices that:

- Maintain safe and supportive learning environment
- Ameliorate effects of demographic risk factors

Who participated in the study?

From each of Virginia's 314 high schools:

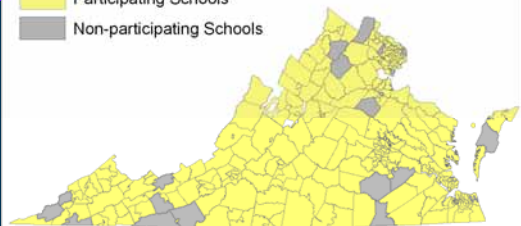
1. 25 ninth grade students (approx.)
2. 10 ninth grade teachers (approx.)

Selected from random number lists applied to alphabetical lists of students and teachers

Virginia High School Districts

Participating Schools

Non-participating Schools



296 of 314 schools (94%)

How was the survey carried out?

Written and video instructions for

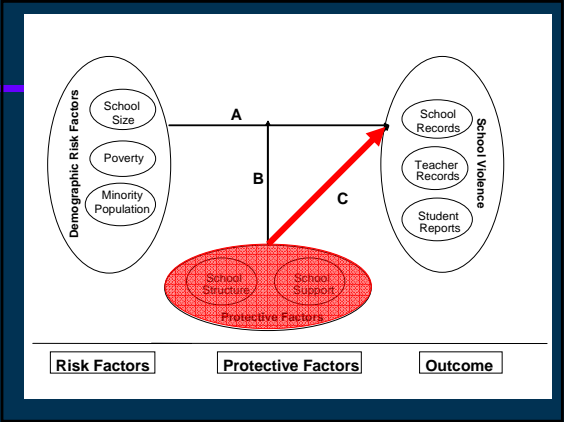
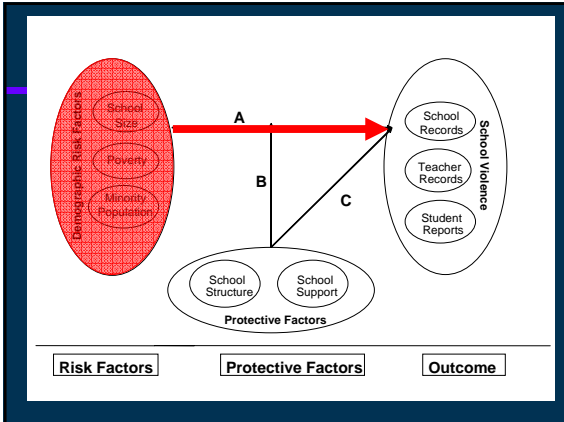
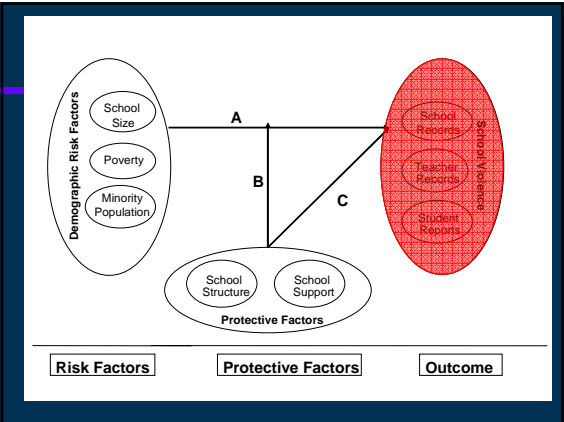
- Principals
- Teachers
- Students



Adrianna Sgarlata, Miss Virginia 2006

Online Survey Administration

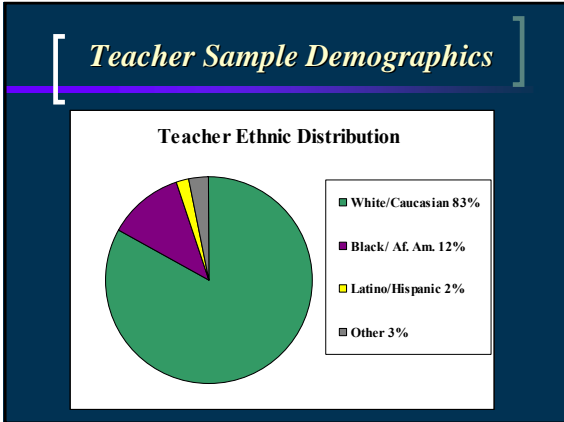
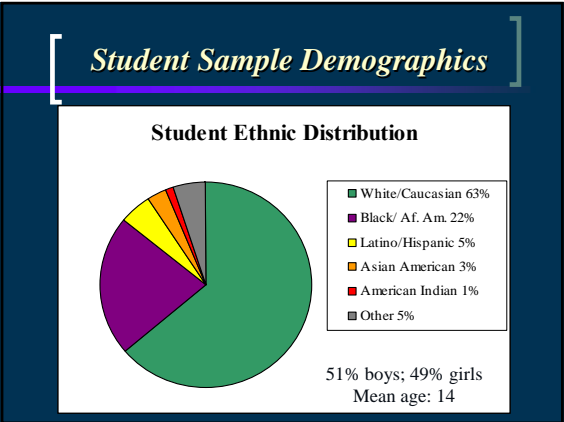


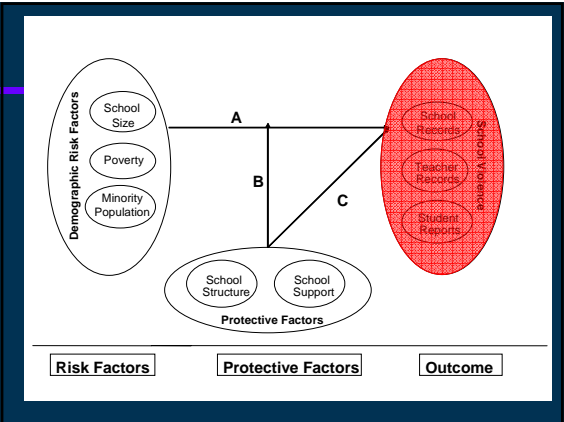


Virginia High School Safety Study

High school safety conditions

Aisha Thompson, Talisha Lee, and Dewey Cornell
 University of Virginia
 Curry School of Education





National School Violence Statistics

Students aged 12-18 :

- were the victims of 628,200 crimes at school
- 28% reported being bullied at school in the last 6 months
- 8% threatened or injured with a weapon

Reports of Violent Crime

Virginia High School Infractions:

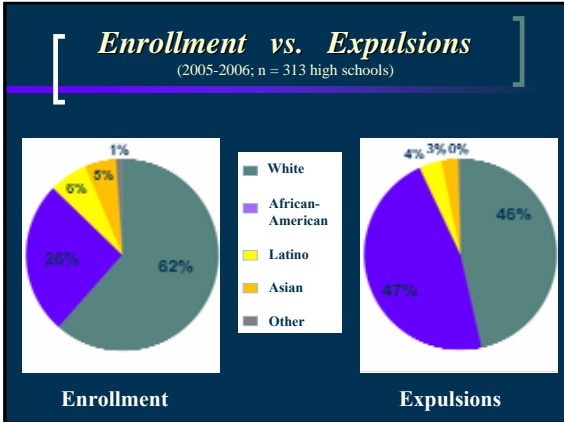
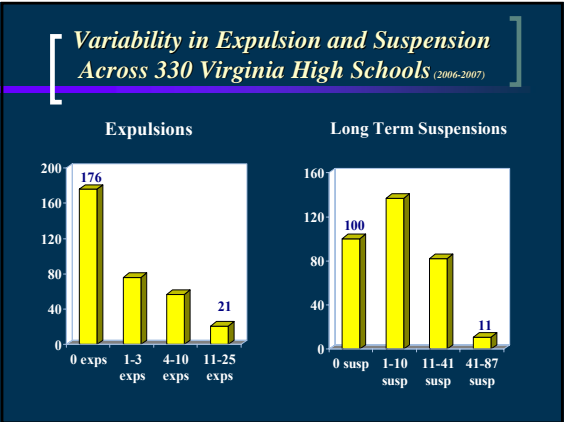
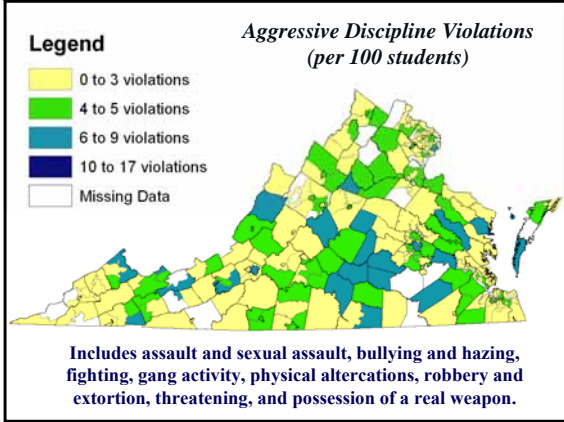
In 2006-07 Virginia high schools had:

- 766 weapon incidents, 1,971 assaults, 7,312 fights

Grades 9-12 disciplinary consequences:

- 109,037 short term suspensions
- 3,287 long-term suspensions
- 888 expulsions

Virginia's expulsion rate is 5th highest in the nation



Student Safety Concerns

“The people in this school need to be more aware of the students that they bring to the school. Because they don’t check the background of the child or the history and yet and still their bringing guns... drugs... and everything else..”

Positive Safety Comments

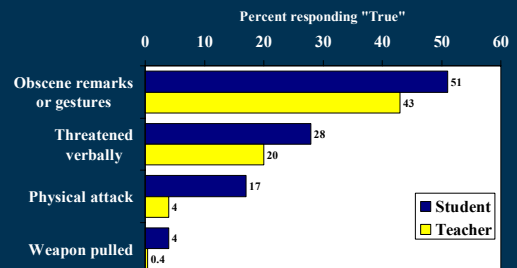
“This is a great school, but all schools have flaws, all schools have bullies. Safety is not an issue here. I can go to school without worrying about my personal safety.” – Student

“I feel fairly safe at this school. Whenever there has been a serious problem the administration has appropriately dealt with it...” - Teacher

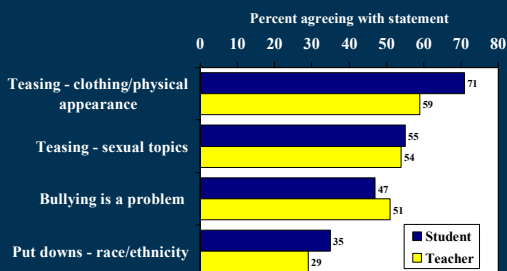
Safety Outcome Variables

- **Aggressive Behavior Offense Rates**
Includes: assaults, bullying and hazing, fighting, gang activity, physical altercations, robbery, threatening, and possession of a real weapon
- **Student and Teacher Victimization**
- **Student and Teacher Perceptions of Bullying**

Student and Teacher Victimization



Student and Teacher Perceptions of Bullying



What are students saying about bullying?

“Bullying is a big problem at schools, not all the time is it bad enough to tell someone, but it happens all the time still. Bullying brings down people's confidence, and a lot of the time, bullying makes kids stop trying hard enough at school.”

Teacher Concerns

“The school is in serious need of more security. I mean real security because it seems as if school security does not have any real authority or power. This needs to be done as soon as possible because with the number of students in this building and the problems with drugs and violence, I am so afraid that something will happen and someone will really get hurt and then it will be too late!”

Positive Teacher Comments

“I feel fairly safe at this school. Whenever there has been a serious problem the administration has appropriately dealt with it. However on occasion some students get off lightly for doing things and others students doing the same get the book thrown at them. Just my perspective and I realize I don't always know the entire story and background. I do feel that equity should always be strived for.”

Relationships Among Safety Outcome Variables

	2	3	4	5
1. Aggressive Discipline Violations	.12*	.19*	.19*	.20*
2. Student Victimization	--	.01	.32*	.17*
3. Teacher Victimization		--	.23*	.19*
4. Student Perceptions of Bullying			--	.38*
5. Teacher Perceptions of Bullying				--

* p < .05

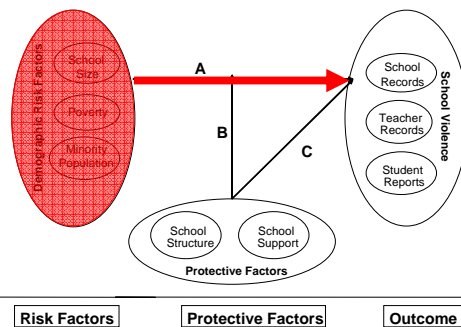
Summary

- There is a considerable amount of variability among Virginia Public High Schools
 - Student and Teacher Victimization
 - Student and Teacher Perceptions of bullying
 - Aggressive Discipline Violations
- What makes these schools different from one another?

Virginia High School Safety Study

Influence of Demographics on School Safety

Sharmila Bandyopadhyay, Erica Shirley, Peter Sheras, and Dewey Cornell
University of Virginia
Curry School of Education

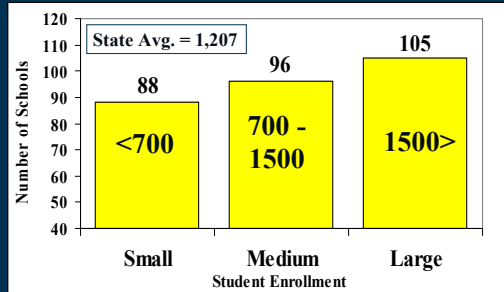


Demographic Variables

	Poverty	Minority Composition
1. School Size	-.42*	.35*
2. Poverty (FRPM)	-	.33*

* p < .05

School enrollment range: 33 – 2,881

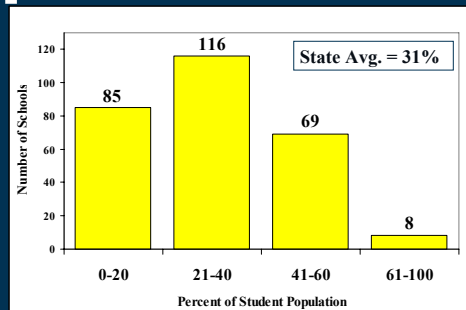


Does school size affect school safety?

	School Size	Poverty	Minority Composition
	R ²	R ² Δ	R ² Δ
Rate of Aggressive Discipline Violations	.08*		
Student Victimization	.00		
Teacher Victimization	.03*		
Student Perceived Bullying	.01		
Teacher Perceived Bullying	.03*		

* p < .05

Proportion of students receiving Free and Reduced Price Meals: 1% - 83%

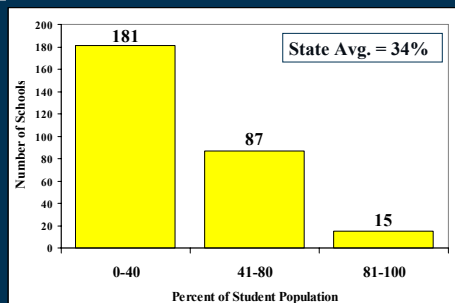


Does poverty affect school safety?

	School Size	Poverty	Minority Composition
	R ²	R ² Δ	R ² Δ
Rate of Aggressive Discipline Violations	.08*	.05*	
Student Victimization	.00	.00	
Teacher Victimization	.03*	.08*	
Student Perceived Bullying	.01	.04*	
Teacher Perceived Bullying	.03*	.03*	

* p < .05

Minority population range: 0% - 99%



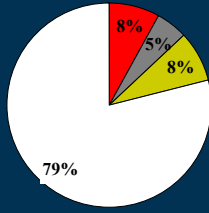
Does minority composition in schools affect school safety?

	School Size	Poverty	Minority Composition
	R ²	R ² Δ	R ² Δ
Rate of Aggressive Discipline Violations	.08*	.05*	.08*
Student Victimization	.00	.00	.00
Teacher Victimization	.03*	.08*	.09*
Student Perceived Bullying	.01	.04*	.01
Teacher Perceived Bullying	.03*	.03*	.03*

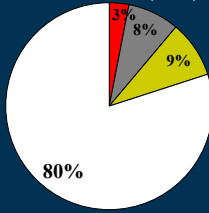
* p < .05

Influence of Demographics on School Safety

Rate of Aggressive Discipline Violations (21%)

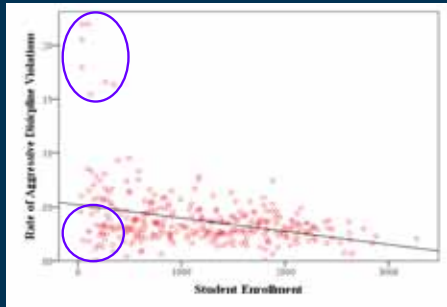


Teacher Victimization (20%)

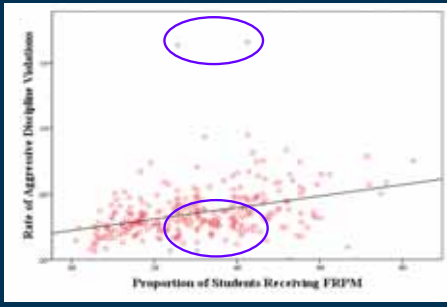


School Size Poverty Minority Composition

School Size & Rate of Aggressive Discipline Violations



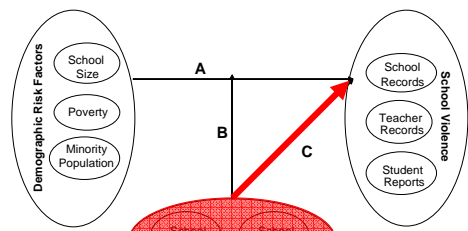
Poverty & Rate of Aggressive Discipline Violations



Virginia High School Safety Study

Authoritative Discipline Theory and School Safety

Anne Gregory, Dewey Cornell, Xitao Fan,
 and Peter Sheras
 University of Virginia
 Curry School of Education



Risk Factors Protective Factors Outcome

Authoritative Discipline Theory

Baumrind's (1968) parenting styles:

Authoritative style

- 1) **Structure**—consistency in supervision and rules
- 2) **Support**—the warmth and involvement of adults

(Herman, Dornbusch, Hen-on, & Herting, 1997; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, & Mounts, 1994; Steinberg et al., 1992)

Illustrating Authoritative Discipline in the Classroom

“When she talked to you with seriousness, she mean it, but then she also have a smile like, ‘I am on your side. I mean, I feel where you're coming from, but I'm still your teacher.’”

Authoritative Discipline in Schools

Conceptual model for study

Two strategies underlie school safety efforts:

1. **Structure** — Degree to which schools have explicit rules and consistency/fairness in enforcement of rules.
2. **Support** — Efforts to establish positive student-teacher relationships, and ensure students have access to adult help.

Factor analytic results

Subscales	Factor 1	Factor 2
	Support 43% ^a	Structure 39% ^a
Clarity of School Rules	.31	<u>.80</u> ^b
Daily Structure	.17	<u>.87</u>
Supportive Environment	<u>.87</u>	.34
Help-Seeking	<u>.93</u>	.18

a: % variance accounted for by each factor.

b: the salient factor loadings are underlined to indicate the grouping of the subscales for each factor.

Factor 1: Measures of Structure

- *Experience of School Rules*
 - student perceptions of the school rules as fair and consistently enforced (NCES, 2005).
- *The Daily Structure scale*
 - student perceptions of how strictly rules were enforced for common problems such as cutting class, smoking, fighting, and speaking sarcastically to a teacher (Cornell, 2006).

Factor 2: Measures of School Support

- *Learning Environment*
 - student perceptions that adults in their school care about all students (Austin & Duerr, 2005).
- *Help-seeking*
 - student willingness to seek help from school staff members for bullying and threats of violence (Cornell & Sheras, 2003).

Measures of school safety

- **Bullying**
 - Student perceived
 - Teacher perceived

- **Victimization**
 - Student
 - Teacher

Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM)

- HLM accommodates the nested structure of our data (i.e., students and teachers are nested in schools)

- HLM captures sources of variations in the outcome variables at both individual and school levels.

Student-Reported Bullying

Level 2	Parameter	Estimate	SE
School Size	γ_{01}	.0003*	.00
% Free/Reduced Meals	γ_{02}	2.01*	.42
% Minority	γ_{03}	-1.29*	.27
Structure	γ_{04}	-.03*	.01
Support	γ_{05}	-.04*	.01
Between-school variance = 6%			

* $p < .05$

Teacher-Reported Bullying

Level 2	Parameter	Estimate	SE
School Size	γ_{01}	.00	.00
% Free/Reduced Meals	γ_{02}	1.00	.67
% Minority	γ_{03}	1.1*	.43
Structure	γ_{04}	-.03*	.01
Support	γ_{05}	-.02*	.01
Between-school variance = 13%			

* $p < .05$

Student-Reported Victimization

Level 2	Parameter	Estimate	SE
School Size	γ_{01}	-.00	.00
% Free/Reduced Meals	γ_{02}	.10	.16
% Minority	γ_{03}	-.21	.10
Structure	γ_{04}	-.01*	.00
Support	γ_{05}	-.01*	.00
Between-school variance = 1.5%			

* $p < .05$

Teacher-Reported Victimization

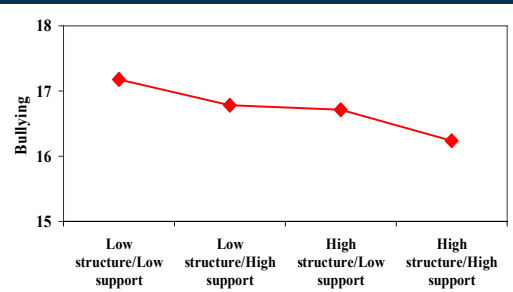
Level 2	Parameter	Estimate	SE
School Size	γ_{01}	.00	.00
% Free/Reduced Meals	γ_{02}	.79*	.17
% Minority	γ_{03}	.87*	.26
Structure	γ_{04}	-.01*	.00
Support	γ_{05}	-.01	.00
Between-school variance = 12%			

* $p < .05$

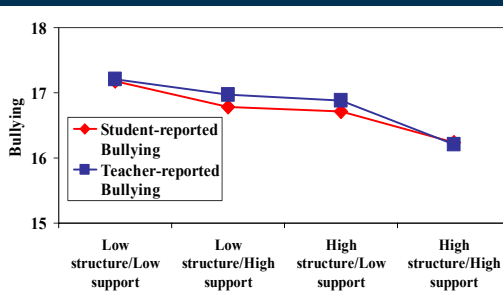
Summary

- High schools differ in their structure and support
- Authoritative Discipline Theory holds promise for high schools

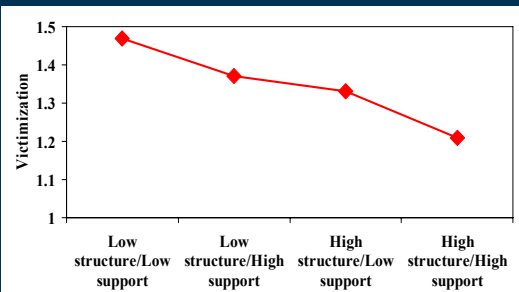
Structure and support reduce bullying



Structure and support reduce bullying



Structure and support reduce student victimization



Policy implications of the findings

Consider both structure and support together

For school structure:

- Intervene with misbehavior.
- Establish behavioral norms such that adults set the tone for respect and cooperation.
- Demonstrate fairness and consistency in rule enforcement.

Policy implications of the findings

For school support:

- Adult supports need to be both available and effective.
- Provide opportunities for genuine connection with adults.
- Communicate a belief in student potential.

Authoritarian schools

- Baumrind (1991) described authoritarian parents as
 - “...demanding and directive, but not responsive. They are obedience- and status-oriented and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation” p. 750.

Virginia High School Safety Study

School characteristics that encourage student help-seeking

Megan Eliot & Dewey Cornell
University of Virginia
Curry School of Education

Why is help seeking important?

- Seeking help works!
- Students are reluctant to seek help for bullying and threats of violence.
 - 25% of all victimizations (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994)
 - 11% for a personal problem (Boldero & Fallon, 1995)
- Students in greatest distress may be least likely to seek help

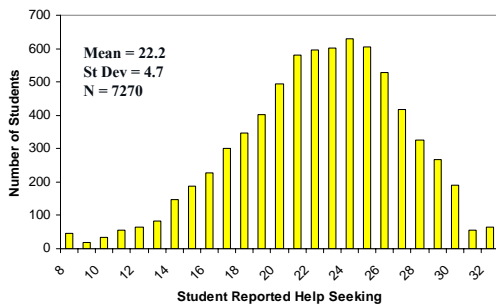
Help Seeking Items

5-item scale, alpha = .77

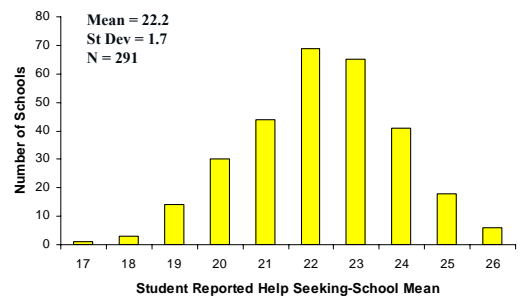
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

If another student was bullying me, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school.
If another student brought a gun to school, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school.
If another student talked about killing someone, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school.
There are adults at school I could turn to if I had a personal problem.
If I tell a teacher that someone is bullying me, the teacher will do something to help.

Distribution of help seeking at the individual level



Distribution of help seeking at the school level

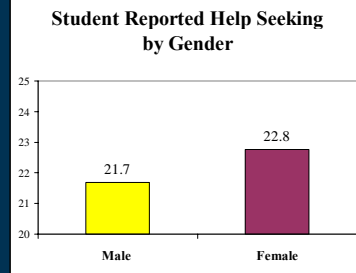


Are students who are most in need seeking help?

	<i>B</i>	R ² Change
Student Victimization	-.28*	.08
Teacher Victimization	-.13*	.01
Student Perceptions of Bullying	-.35*	.11

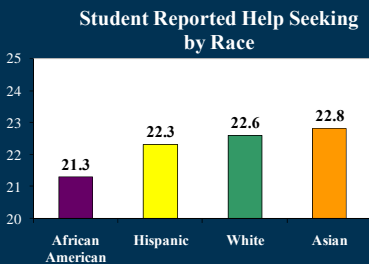
Level of need predicted help seeking. Students experiencing higher levels of victimization and bullying were *less* likely to seek help.

Who is seeking help?



Boys seek less help than girls: $F(1, 7269) = 97.2, p < .05$

Who is seeking help?



African American students seek less help than others.

Do perceptions of support increase help seeking?

	<i>B</i>	R ² Change
Supportive Environment (student report)	.73*	.47

* $p < .05$

Schools in which students perceive higher levels of support from teachers have more student help seeking.

Student Reported Help Seeking

Level 2-Gender	Parameter	Estimate	SE
Supportive Environment	γ_{13}	-0.16*	.05
Level 2-Race	Parameter	Estimate	SE
Supportive Environment	γ_{23}	-0.14	.12
Between-school variance = 24%			

* $p < .05$

Higher perceptions of support reduced the gender discrepancy in help seeking.

What else is associated with help seeking in schools?

	<i>B</i>	R ² Change
Student experience of school rules	.37*	.14
Student experience of daily structure	.33*	.10
Teacher experience of school rules	.10	.01
Teacher experience of daily structure	.17*	.03

* $p < .05$ level

1. Fair and consistently enforced rules.

What else is associated with help seeking in schools?

	<i>B</i>	R ² Change
Academic press (teacher report)	.20*	.04
Academic press (student report)	.43*	.18
Health and prevention programs	.21*	.04

**p* < .05 level

2. Encouraging academic excellence.
3. Implementing prevention programs.

What is NOT associated with help seeking in schools?

	<i>B</i>	R ² Change
Zero tolerance expulsion recommendations	.01	.00
Security measures	.11	.01

1. The number of zero tolerance expulsions was not associated with help seeking.
2. Increased security measures were not associated with help seeking.

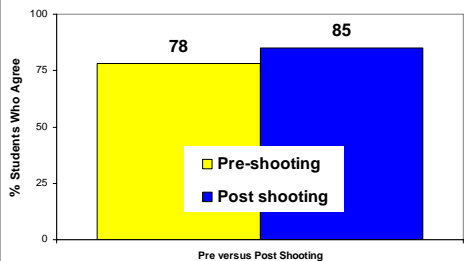
Summary

- Students least likely to seek help are:
 - Male
 - African American
 - Experiencing victimization
- Schools with greater student reported help seeking had:
 - Supportive environments
 - Fair and consistent rules
 - High academic expectations
 - Prevention programs
- Security measures and zero tolerance expulsions are NOT associated with help seeking.

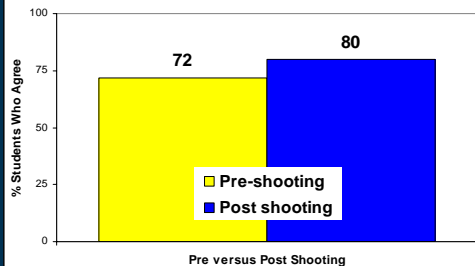
*Virginia Tech
 April 16, 2007*



If another student brought a gun to school, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school.



If another student talked about killing someone, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school.



Thank You!

For more information about the Virginia
High School Safety Study, visit:

<http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu>