**Overview**

1. School shootings
2. Zero tolerance
3. Threat assessment
4. Authoritative discipline

**School shootings across the US**

**Case example:** How schools permit and even promote bullying
- School newspaper
- Rest room monitoring
- Hallway teasing
- Classroom mischief
- Uneven enforcement
- Marching band initiation
- Gym class humiliation
- Group rivalry

**Authoritative School Discipline and Zero Tolerance: Questions of Fairness and Effectiveness**

Dewey Cornell, Ph.D.
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia

434-924-8929
Email: youthvio@virginia.edu
Website: youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu

Dewey G. Cornell, Ph. D., is a forensic clinical psychologist and Professor of Education in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. Dr. Cornell is Director of the UVA Youth Violence Project, a Program Director for Youth-Nex, the UVA Center for Effective Youth Development, and a faculty associate of the Institute of Law, Psychiatry, and Public Policy.

Dr. Cornell has studied youth violence for over 25 years and has assisted numerous schools in the development of violence prevention programs. He has authored more than 100 publications in psychology and education, including two recent books: *Guidelines for Responding to Student Threats of Violence* and *School Violence: Fears versus Facts.*

**School violence**

**Major U.S. school killings (1983 - present)**

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434-924-8929
Media-driven Fear of School Violence

Zero tolerance as a response to school violence

Zero Tolerance

A policy that mandates a severe punishment that is applied to all violations regardless of the circumstances.

From APA Zero Tolerance Task Force Report, 2006

The assumed benefits of zero tolerance

- Strong deterrent effect
- No requirement to make judgments
- No allegations of unfairness or favoritism

The illusion of fairness under zero tolerance

- Everyone knows the rules
- Everyone knows the punishment
- Everyone receives the same punishment

The Expansion of Zero Tolerance

From No Guns to
- No Toy Guns
- No Nail clippers
- No Plastic utensils
- No Finger-pointing
- No Jokes
- No Drawings
- No Rubber band shooting

No Accidental violations
Nervous Officials No Longer Ignoring Threats by Students
Around the Country, Children Are Being Arrested

- 4 Kindergarten students suspended for playing cops and robbers during recess.
- New Jersey district zero tolerance policy resulted in 50 suspensions in 6 weeks, mostly in kindergarten and 3rd grade for verbal threats.
- 8 yr old suspended for pointing a chicken finger at a teacher, saying pow-pow
- 10 yr old expelled for a 1" GI Joe toy gun
- 14 yr old convicted of felony for e-mail threat
- 17 yr old arrested & expelled for shooting a paper clip with a rubber band

The disconnect between youth violence and school safety practices

Cub Scout utensil gets boy, 6, school suspension
First-grader brought it to eat his lunch with; soon he’s facing reform school

- Equal treatment does not guarantee fairness.
- The punishment should fit the crime.

The illusion of fairness under zero tolerance

The school-to-prison pipeline

Suspension Practices

Suspension is a practice that has more negative than positive effects on students:

- Fall behind in their classes
- Feel alienated and rejected
- Continue to misbehave and be suspended
- Drop out of school
- Juvenile court involvement

Threat assessment as an alternative to zero tolerance

Suspension is a practice that has more negative than positive effects on students:

- Fall behind in their classes
- Feel alienated and rejected
- Continue to misbehave and be suspended
- Drop out of school
- Juvenile court involvement

Zero tolerance is not effective. Suspension associated with poorer outcomes for students.
FBI Recommendations on School Violence

“Although the risk of an actual shooting incident at any one school is very low, threats of violence are potentially a problem at any school. Once a threat is made, having a fair, rational, and standardized method of evaluating and responding to threats is critically important.”
(FBI report p 1)

Secret Service/DOE Recommendations:
• Create a planning team to develop a threat assessment program.
• Identify roles for school personnel.
• Clarify role of law enforcement.
• Conduct threat assessments of students who make threats of violence.

Threat Assessment

1. Identification of threats made by students.
2. Evaluation of seriousness of threat and danger it poses to others, recognizing that all threats are not the same (e.g., toy guns are not dangerous).
3. Intervention to reduce risk of violence.
4. Follow-up to assess intervention results.

Continuum of Threats

• Warning of impending violence
• Attempts to intimidate or frighten
• Thrill of causing a disruption
• Attention-seeking, boasting
• Fleeting expressions of anger
• Jokes
• Figures of speech
Mental Health Assessment

- Not a prediction model.
- Identify any mental health needs.
- Identify reasons why threat was made.
- Propose strategies for reducing risk.

Law Enforcement Investigation of Very Serious Substantive Threats

- Interview suspects and witnesses.
- Conduct searches for weapons and other evidence of planning.
- Serve as a resource for students with fears or information to share.
- Take appropriate protective action.

High School Discipline Study

- Compared 23 high schools implementing threat assessment with 26 control high schools (no threat assessment).
- Used school records of suspensions and discipline infractions for baseline year prior to training and follow-up year after training.

In press, NASSP Bulletin

High School Discipline Study

Long-Term Suspension Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline Year</th>
<th>Outcome Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trained Schools</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companion Schools</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Randomized Controlled Trial

- 40 schools (K-12)
- Randomly assigned
- 1 year follow-up
- 201 students
Randomized Controlled Trial

Students in threat assessment schools...
- Received more counseling
- More parent involvement
- Fewer long-term suspensions
- Fewer alternative placements

Logistic regression odds ratios: 3.98, 2.57, .35, and .13

Key Point
Students DO NOT have to be suspended for making a threatening statement.
Many threats can be resolved without suspension.

Key Point
Zero tolerance is not needed for student threats of violence. Threat assessment is a more flexible and effective alternative.

Authoritative school discipline as an alternative to zero tolerance

Survey of principals
Two contrasting groups
- "Get-tough" strict discipline-oriented
- "Be supportive" prevention-oriented

Source: Skiba & Edl, 2004

Classic study of parents
Two contrasting groups
- "Authoritarian" strict discipline-oriented
- "Permissive" lacking in discipline

Source: Baumrind, 1966
Many people intuitively think that being tough and being supportive are opposites on a continuum.

Four types of parenting

Four types of school climate?
Virginia High School Safety Study

Who participated in the study?
296 of 314 schools (94%)
1. 7,431 ninth grade students
2. 2,353 ninth grade teachers

School climate factors
1. Structure
   - Rules are strictly enforced, but fair
2. Support
   - Teachers treat me with respect, willing to seek help from them.

The school rules are fair.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adults in this school want all students to do their best.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Virginia High Schools

Authoritarian 41
Authoritative 104
Negligent 99
Permissive 45

How are structure and support related to student bullying and victimization?
Bullying Climate Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bullying is a problem at this school.</th>
<th>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Agree/Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students here often get teased about their clothing or physical appearance.</td>
<td>53/47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students here often get put down because of their race or ethnicity.</td>
<td>65/35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lot of teasing about sexual topics at this school.</td>
<td>45/55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Stable factor structure
- Works for males and females, grades 6-12, white and minority students
- Teacher and student versions

Victimization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This year in school have any of the following happened to you personally in the school?</th>
<th>False</th>
<th>True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Damage to personal property worth more than $10.</td>
<td>85/15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft of personal property worth more than $10.</td>
<td>80/20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was physically attacked and had to see a doctor</td>
<td>96/4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was physically attacked, but not serious enough to see a doctor.</td>
<td>87/13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received obscene remarks or gestures from a student.</td>
<td>49/51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was threatened in remarks by a student.</td>
<td>72/28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a weapon pulled on me.</td>
<td>96/4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

104 authoritative schools (high structure and high support) had bullying at the 27th percentile

Results using TEACHER perceptions were consistent with STUDENT perceptions.

Similar results for a broader measure of student victimization (e.g., theft, assault, threats)

Schools with least structure and support have the highest rates of bullying and student victimization.
These results controlled for:
- School size
- Student poverty %
- Minority students %
- Urbanicity

Schools do not have to choose between “get tough” and “be supportive” policies, but should strive for both. However, rules must be enforced in a fair and consistent manner that respects and supports students.

Lower teacher victimization in schools with:
- Higher structure
- Higher support

The schools ain’t what they used to be and never was. Will Rogers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>180 million</td>
<td>312 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropout rate</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults with High School diploma</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults with Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Life is never fair, and perhaps it is a good thing for most of us that it is not.”

Oscar Wilde