Dewey 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 nearly 30 years and has assisted numerous schools in the development of violence prevention programs. He has authored more than 200 publications in psychology and education, including two books: Guidelines for Responding to Student Threats of Violence and School Violence: Fears versus Facts.

Topics

1. The fear of school shootings and zero tolerance
2. Research on school discipline
3. The authoritative model of school climate

Team roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal or Assistant Principal</td>
<td>Leads team, conducts Step 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Resource Officer</td>
<td>Advises team, responds to illegal actions and emergencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Staff (School counselors, psychologists, social workers)</td>
<td>Team member to conduct mental health assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team member to take lead role in follow-up interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not required to serve on team</td>
<td>Report threats, provide input to team. No additional workload.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers, aides, other staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School divisions may further specify team roles and include other staff to meet local needs.

Threat Reported to Principal

Step 1. Evaluate Threat.

Step 2. Decide if threat is clearly transient or substantive.

Step 3. Respond to transient threat.

Step 4. Decide if the substantive threat is serious or very serious.

Step 5. Respond to serious substantive threat.


Step 7. Follow up on action plan.
School Climate Research
Dewey Cornell, Ph.D.

Threat Reported to Principal

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Step 7. Follow up on action plan.

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.

Mental Health Assessment

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

Step 7. Follow up with action plan.

- Determine action plan to reduce risk of violence.
- Identify appropriate interventions for student.
- Schedule follow-up contact with student to assess current risk and update plan.

Research on Threat Assessment

1. Initial field-test study
2. Memphis field test
3. High school climate study
4. High school suspension study
5. Randomized controlled trial
Virginia High School Climate Study

Findings for Virginia Model Schools
- Less bullying and other victimization
- Greater student willingness to seek help
- Perceive adults as more caring and fair
- Fewer long-term suspensions

Controlled for school size, poverty, minority %, school security measures, and neighborhood violent crime.

School Psychology Quarterly, 2009

High School Discipline Study

Long-Term Suspension Rates

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

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

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

Virginia Public Schools
- 133 school divisions
- 2,002 public schools
- 1.2 million students

Reductions in Long-Term Suspensions Following Adoption of the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines

Dewey G. Cornell, Anne Gregory, and Xitao Pan

Abstract
This quasi-experimental study examined the adoption of the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines in 23 high schools. After training, school administrators and other staff members demonstrated substantial increases in knowledge of threat assessment principles and decreased contentment to zero tolerance approaches. Schools using the guidelines showed a 52% reduction in long-term suspensions and a 79% reduction in bullying infractions from the pretraining year to the posttraining year. In contrast to a control group of 26 schools not using the guidelines.
School Climate Research  
Dewey Cornell, Ph.D.

**Years Using TA Associated with Suspensions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>LTS</th>
<th>STS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One year increase in number of years using UVA TA (1-5)</td>
<td>17% fewer</td>
<td>5% fewer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05 for both LTS and STS
Same control variables*

**Association of Threat Assessment with Suspensions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>LTS</th>
<th>STS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used Virginia Threat Assessment Guidelines</td>
<td>19% fewer</td>
<td>8% fewer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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

The school-to-prison pipeline

**What kinds of school discipline practices are effective?**

Source: UVA training records and Safety Audit Survey records
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

Four types of parenting

Authoritarian

Authoritative

Negligent

Permissive

Virginia Secondary School Climate Study

Schools – 423 (98.4%)
Teachers – 9,134 (79%)
Students – 43,805 (84.8%)

Structure - Strict, but Fair

Support - Care and Respect
Virginia Middle Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Hi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>176</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligent</td>
<td>176</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying Scale

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

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

How much teasing and bullying do we observe in schools with different levels of structure and support?

IV - 4 groups of schools
DV - School percentile in Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying

Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying across 4 Types of School Climate

- Student Reports of Teasing & Bullying
- Teacher Reports of Teasing & Bullying

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Virginia High School Safety Study Links Bullying to Test Performance

Bullying and teasing reported by 9th grade students and teachers predicted schoolwide SOL passing rates.

- Algebra I
- Earth Science
- World history
- Biology
- Geometry

Findings controlled for the proportion of minority students in the school, student poverty, or school size.

Prior study of 9th grade

Schools grouped into high-medium-low terciles based on 9th grade student perceptions of bullying and teasing. Passing rates correlate .20 to .31 with PBT.

Schools grouped into high-medium-low terciles based on 9th grade teacher perceptions of bullying and teasing. Teacher and student perceptions correlated .31.

Virginia High School Safety Study Links Bullying to Dropout Rates

Perceived Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying Predicts High School Dropout Rates

- 9th grade student and teacher perceptions of the prevalence of bullying and teasing
- Cumulative dropout rate over 4 years
- Controlled for school demographics and SOL test performance
Bullying and teasing in 9th grade predicted schoolwide graduation rates 4 years later.

Findings controlled for school size, proportion of minority and poor students in the school, community crime, and SOL passing rates.

Bullying and Teasing are the Broken Windows of School Climate

Without order and care, the community deteriorates

Student Aggression Reported by Teachers

A student said mean or insulting things to me. 68
A student stole my personal property. 29
A student threatened to hurt me. 12
A student physically attacked, pushed, or hit me. 6
A student threatened me with a weapon. 1

Averages for 9,134 7th and 8th grade teachers in 387 schools.

Percentage reporting at least one time

Student Aggression Toward Teachers across 4 Types of School Climate

Authoritative Schools Have Fewer Aggressive Behavior Infractions
I. Positive school climate and prevention
II. High expectations for discipline
III. Equity and improvement

Schools with high structure and high support:

- Lower bullying and teasing
- Teachers report less mistreatment by students
- Lower schoolwide suspension rates

Schools with high structure and high support:

Findings are consistent across schools varying in
- School size
- Student poverty %
- Minority students %
- Urbanicity

Virginia Secondary School Climate Study

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

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Our Research Team

From left to right: Patrick Meyer, Erin Nekvasil, Francis Huang, Anna Schmôler, Priya Datta, Dewey Cornell, Tim Konold, Anna Lacey

Anna Heilbrun, Kathan Shukla, Peter Lovegrove, Juliette Berg

Virginia Youth Violence Project

dcornell@virginia.edu

Be the Hero

Created by students at Albemarle High School
http://youtu.be/6LJLMRtllAo

Students do not need a super-hero to stop bullying. They need a positive school climate.