What is Authoritative School Climate?

Developmental research has found that authoritative parents, who are both demanding and warm with their children, are more effective than authoritarian parents who are demanding but cold and permissive parents who are warm but not demanding. Our research suggests that schools are most effective when discipline is strict but fair, and teachers are supportive.

Violence prevention begins with a safe and supportive school climate for all students.

Four types of schools?

- Authoritarian
- Authoritative
- Disengaged
- Permissive
Virginia Secondary School Climate Study

- Surveys of students and teachers since 2013
- Alternating years for middle and high schools
- In collaboration
  - Virginia Department of Education
  - Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

School Climate Survey Development


School Climate Survey Development


Why Do Student and Teacher Perceptions of School Climate Vary?

- Role differences
- Different vantage points
- Different conceptions of climate characteristics

Percent Agree or Strongly Agree

- 82% Students – I like this school.
- 70% Teachers – Students generally like this school.
- 92% Students – I want to learn as much as I can at this school.
- 33% Teachers – Most students want to learn as much as they can at this school.
- 72% Students – Most teachers and other adults at this school treat students with respect.
- 80% Teachers – Most teachers and other adults at this school treat students with respect.

Student and Teacher Perceptions of School Climate are Correlated but not Interchangeable

- Structure $r = .280$
- Support $r = .409$
- Engagement $r = .616$
Authoritative School Climate Linked to:

- Greater student engagement
- Less peer aggression & bullying
- Less aggression toward teachers
- Lower rates of risk behaviors
- Fewer discipline problems
- Better academic performance
- Higher graduation rates

Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying

Students in this school often are teased about their clothing or physical appearance.

Students in this school are teased or put down because of their race or ethnicity.

There is a lot of teasing about sexual topics at this school.

Students here get teased or put down about their sexual orientation.

Bullying is a problem at this school.

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Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying

A student said rude or insulting things to me.

A student stole or damaged my personal property.

A student threatened to harm me.

A student physically attacked, pushed, or hit me.

A student threatened me with a weapon.

Teacher Reports of Student Aggression

14,619 Teachers from 310 Virginia High Schools
Schools with high structure and high support:

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

Research Needs

- Test more integrative model of school climate
- School-level analyses of school climate
- Integrate student-teacher perspectives

Research Questions

How is an authoritative school climate related to school safety?
- From perspective of both students and teachers
- At individual and school levels
- Including the effects of school and community context
- Measuring safety in the form of bullying, general victimization, aggression toward teachers, and school suspensions

Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Demographics</th>
<th>Authoritative School Climate</th>
<th>Impact on Students</th>
<th>School Safety Outcomes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• School size</td>
<td>• Structure or demandingness</td>
<td>• Engagement</td>
<td>• Student victimization</td>
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<td>• Student SES</td>
<td>• Behavioral</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Racial/ethnic</td>
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<td>composition</td>
<td>• Support</td>
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<td>- Teacher victimization</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Urbanicity</td>
<td>• Respect</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Suspension rates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2016 Survey Sample

- 298 Virginia public high schools (93% of eligible regular schools)
- 60,441 students (86% participation rate)
- 11,442 teachers (52% participation rate)
Measures of fit for the full structural model CFI = .97, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .01; SRMR = .02

School demographics consistently related to Structure and Support (except Enrollment & Structure)

In combination, school demographics accounted for appreciable amounts of variance among schools in both Structure and Support.
In combination, structure and support accounted for 73% of the variance in student engagement among schools.

Student Engagement accounted for school level variance in 4 measures of school safety.

Structure is associated with Student Engagement, which in turn is associated with all 4 safety indicators.

Similarly, Support is associated with Student Engagement, which in turn is associated with all 4 safety indicators.

**Limitations**
- Correlational and cross-sectional
- Other important variables not in model
- More examination of demographic and intra-school differences
- Need for experimental design with longitudinal analyses

**Conclusions**
- Show strong association between school climate and safety in diverse sample of schools
- Integration of student and teacher perspectives
- Demonstrates multi-component model.
- Supports Authoritative School Climate model