School Characteristics Related to Student Help Seeking: Supportive Climate and Zero Tolerance Discipline Policies

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by

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between supportive school climate and student willingness to seek help for bullying and threats of violence, as well as the relationship between both these variables and zero tolerance discipline policies. As part of the Virginia High School Safety Study, a total of 7,431 9th-grade students, 2,353 9th-grade teachers, and 289 principals were surveyed across 296 high schools in Virginia. Supportive climate was measured using student reports that their teachers were caring, respectful, and interested in their success. Using hierarchical linear modeling it was found that, as hypothesized, students who perceived their school climates as supportive were more likely to possess positive attitudes towards seeking help for bullying and threats of violence. In order to address the problem of shared method variance biasing these results, the student sample was split in half in each school, with supportive climate measured by one half used to predict help seeking in the other half. Under these conditions there was still a consistent relationship between a supportive school climate and help seeking. Finally, zero tolerance discipline, as measured by principal reports of the number of students recommended for expulsion due to zero tolerance violations, did not directly correlate with help seeking attitudes. However, zero tolerance expulsions were negatively correlated with perceptions of support in schools. Findings suggest that efforts to provide a supportive school climate in schools are a potentially valuable strategy for increasing student willingness to seek help.

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APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation, ("School Characteristics Related to Student Help Seeking: Supportive Climate and Zero Tolerance Discipline Policies"), has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Ruth Eliot, Janet Williams, and all those who encouraged me along the way.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE Page

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE Page

Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to identify school characteristics that promote student help seeking for bullying and threats of violence. Despite the potential benefits of approaching adults at school for assistance, adolescents are often reluctant to seek help. Studies document that as few as 25% of students who have been bullied report the incident to an authority figure and only 11% of students seek help at school for personal problems (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994). Student unwillingness to seek help hinders school authorities from preventing school violence and from offering services to students suffering from a range of related social and emotional difficulties (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000). Identifying school characteristics that promote help seeking will help schools and administrators increase student safety and well-being.

Bullying and threats of violence are a pervasive problem in American schools. According to principal reports on the national School Survey on Crime and Safety (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2007), 95% of American high schools experienced at least one violent crime in 2005-06. Approximately 28% of ninth grade students reported being victims of bullying at school in the past six months, including 21% who reported a physical injury (NCES, 2007). According to the 2006 School Survey on Crime and Safety (2006), 48% of public schools took serious disciplinary action (ranging from suspensions of at least five days to expulsion from

school) for incidents such as fights, possession of a weapon, and insubordination. Consequences of student victimization are far-reaching and include depression (Hawker & Boulton, 2000), low academic performance **(**Holt**,** Finkelhor**,** & Kantor, 2007), and a diminished sense of school belonging (Holt & Espelage, 2003).

Schools devote many resources to conflict resolution and violence prevention, but these efforts are most successful when students are willing to seek help at school (Kochendorfer & Ladd, 1996; Ladd & Ladd 2001; Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor, & Chauhan, 2004). For example, teachers do not often witness bullying incidents and may not recognize them even when they occur in their presence (Craig et al., 2000). As a result, most bullying intervention programs rely on victims and bystanders to report bullying incidents (Olweus, 1991; Rigby & Bragshaw, 2003). Students who report bullying are less likely to experience continued victimization (Kochendorfer & Ladd, 1996; Ladd & Ladd, 2001). In a study of 265 victims ages 11 to14, Smith et al. (2004) found that two thirds of students who were able to end bullying had talked to an adult at school.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of the value of student help seeking is the prevention of school shootings. School shooters typically communicate their plans in advance and, when fellow students are willing to come forward, these tragedies can be avoided (Cornell, 2006a; O'Toole, 2000). Daniels (2007) conducted a review of newspaper articles about foiled school shootings. In 30 cases, 57% were averted because other students informed school personnel or police. Furthermore, studies by both the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Secret Service (O'Toole; Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy,

Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002) reveal that many school shooters were victims of persistent bullying for which they did not seek or receive help.

Seeking help from adults at school can ameliorate a wide range of other adolescent problems. For example, Broman-Fulks et al. (2007) found that adolescent victims of sexual assault were less likely to experience a major depressive episode if they disclosed the assault within one month. In contrast, non-disclosers were more than twice as likely to commit a delinquent offense within one year. Appropriate help seeking protects suicidal students at any point along their pathway toward self-injurious behavior (Kalafat, 1997; Resnick et al., 1997; Rubenstein, Halton, Kasten, Rubin, & Stechler, 1998; Rudd et al., 1996). And, seeking help for academic difficulties resolves the immediate problem and helps students become more independent learners in the future (Newman, 1990).

Help seeking is particularly important in 9th grade, a year in which students are vulnerable to conflict, aggressive and disruptive behavior, and school disengagement (Donegan, 2008). In Virginia, ninth grade students are responsible for 45% of all discipline infractions among students in grades 9-12 (Virginia Department of Education, 2005). Estell, Farmer, Irvin, Thompson, Hutchins, and McDonough (2007) found that aggressive behavior in ninth grade was related to poor grades and substance abuse. Academic achievement and social adjustment in ninth grade is also highly correlated with drop-out rates (Nield, Stoner-Elby, & Frustenberg, 2008; Neild & Balfanz, 2006; Ripple & Luthar, 2000). In a study of Chicago youth, Roderick & Camburn (1996) found that 60% of students who dropped out of high school had failed ninth grade. Among those

students who spent more than 1 year as ninth graders, only 20% completed high school. In Neild et.al.'s (2008) study of 2,933 students in Philadelphia public schools, ninth grade academic performance predicted high school drop-out, even after controlling for family income, parental education, and eighth grade academic performance.

What Conditions Promote Help Seeking in Schools?

Research from the parenting literature provides a useful framework for investigating school conditions that might promote help seeking. Since Baumrind (1968) presented her landmark typology of parenting that contrasted authoritative and authoritarian styles, researchers have identified two central dimensions of effective parenting of adolescents: a) structure—strictness and close supervision as reflected in parental monitoring and limit-setting, and b) support—parental warmth, acceptance, and involvement (Herman, Dornbusch, Hen-on, & Herting, 1997; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, & Mounts, 1994; Steinberg et al., 1992). Authoritative parenting, a style that balances elements of structure and support, has been found to promote competence and deter problem behavior from early childhood through adolescence. Authoritarian parenting, a style that uses excessive demand and structure, can undermine support and negatively affect child outcomes (Baumrind, 1991).

Examples of support in the school environment include school counseling services, peer mediation procedures, and violence prevention programs. Examples of structure include school rules and discipline policies, adult supervision, and physical protections. There is currently a wide disparity in the degree to which schools employ support and disciplinary strategies to prevent violence (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan,

Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004). Some schools focus on the development of positive teacher-student relationships (Gregory, 2007), while others rely on the enforcement of automatic expulsion for an ever-widening list of offenses (APA Task Force on Zero Tolerance, 2006). Despite the wide variety in school approaches, there is little research identifying common characteristics of safe high schools.

Gregory, Cornell, Fan, and Sheras (2007) adapted Baumrind's theory to the high school environment in their proposal of "Authoritative Discipline Theory." Authoritative Discipline Theory posits that schools that employ a balance of support and structure will have optimal student outcomes across a variety of measures including engagement, learning, safety, and discipline. The researchers found that student perceptions of structure and support, aggregated at the school-level, were associated with lower rates of student victimization and bullying (Gregory, Cornell, Fan, Sheras, Shih, & Huang, 2009).

Other studies have adapted Baumrind's theories to the school environment to investigate a variety of student outcomes. In a study of 30 African American, high school students who had received in-school suspension, Gregory and Weinstein (2008) found that teachers who exhibited both high degrees of support and structure had students who were more cooperative and less defiant. Pellerin (2005) applied Baumrind's parenting typologies to the high school environment in an analysis of archival data from the High School Effectiveness Study. Pellerin found that schools with authoritative climates had the best outcomes with regards to truancy, dropout rates, and student engagement. Authoritarian schools in this study employed excessive or overly harsh discipline and had the highest drop-out rates.

Research thus far suggests that authoritative practices in schools, as in the home, may optimize a variety of student outcomes (Gregory, 2007; Pellerin, 2005). Likewise, this study hypothesizes that students will be most willing to seek help in schools with authoritative practices as measured by the presence of supportive school climate and the absence of authoritarian discipline policies.

Support and Help Seeking

A supportive climate encourages help seeking. Lisi (2004) surveyed 27,604 secondary students in grades six through eight. Supportive climate in this study was measured using student perceptions that their teachers worked in their best interest, provided assistance and support, and had a personal connection with students. Students who reported these perceptions were more likely to report having at least one adult in the building whom they could approach regarding academic, personal, or family problems.

Although perceptions of support have been linked to student willingness to seek help in secondary school, older adolescents are often less willing to seek help than younger adolescents or preadolescents (Newman, Murray, & Lussier, 2001; Smith, Su, & Madsen, 2001). The influence of support in the environment may not be as strong on older students, whose developmental attitudes and striving for independence make them less amenable to help seeking. The first research question in this study examined the relationship between supportive school climate and student help seeking in a 9th grade sample: *How is supportive school climate associated with student help-seeking attitudes?*

Measuring Supportive Climate

Previous research indicates the importance of measuring both student and teacher perceptions of school climate. Students and teachers may disagree in their perception of school climate, and their perceptions may relate differently to a variety of student outcomes (Hanson & Austin, 2003; Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002). Additionally, an important methodological limitation of previous research in this area is that self-reported help seeking has only been correlated with self-reported perceptions of support. When the same source of information is used for dependent and independent variables, it is difficult to assess whether correlations are the result of an actual relationship between two variables or shared variance among measures.

This study examined supportive climate using three measures. The first measure was student perceptions of support from school personnel. Focus groups conducted with high school students consistently reveal that accessibility, availability, and perceived willingness to help are factors in a student's decision to approach teachers (Lindsey & Kalafat, 1998; Wilson & Deanne, 2001). Adolescents are also most likely to seek help from adults whom they believe are capable and qualified (Stanton-Salazar, Tai, & Bressler, 2001). This study examined student perceptions of teacher supportiveness, willingness to help, and ability to intervene as one indicator of supportive climate.

The second measure of supportive school climate used in this study was teacher-reported encouragement of student help seeking. Encouragement of help seeking has been shown to increase perceptions of support and student willingness to seek help. For example, teachers who encourage students to ask questions have classrooms in which

students seek more academic help (Newman & Schwager; 1993). Perrine, Listle, and Tucker (1995) found that a simple statement of availability printed on class syllabi increased college students' likelihood of approaching their professors for help**.** Explicit communications that help seeking is welcomed are effective, as are more implicit communications. For example, providing thorough answers to questions or allocating class time for questions increases academic help seeking (Karabenick & Sharma, 1994). Although open encouragement of academic help seeking is known to increase the rates at which students ask questions, it is not known whether open encouragement of help seeking for bullying and threats of violence increases student willingness to approach teachers with these problems. This study measured the extent to which teachers report that they encourage help seeking for bullying and threats of violence in order to examine its influence on student help seeking.

Finally, the third measure of supportive climate used in this study was teacher perceptions of support from administrators. Administrative support for teachers is essential to teacher efficacy in many areas. Teachers who feel that administrators acknowledge their abilities and provide assistance experience less stress and lower levels of burnout (Daniel, Altamier, & Van Velzen, 1987). Supported teachers are also more effective in the classroom. Support from principals can increase teachers' belief in their own efficacy and ability to influence student learning (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Tarter, Sabo, & Hoy, 1995). The extent to which administrators engage teachers in the discipline process influences student discipline outcomes. Mukuria (2002) found that principals who involve teachers in disciplinary decisions have lower rates of suspension and

disruptive behavior in their schools. It was hypothesized that teachers who feel more supported and more confident in how their administrators handle discipline would be better able to respond effectively to student help seeking. This study examined teacher perceptions of administrative support and discipline fairness as a third indicator of supportive climate in order to examine its influence on student help seeking.

It was expected that schools with supportive school climates—as measured by student perceptions of support from teachers, teacher encouragement of help seeking, and teacher perceptions of support from administrators—would have higher levels of student-reported help seeking.

Demographic Risk Factors, School Climate, and Help Seeking

One of the most robust findings in the help-seeking literature is that girls are more likely to seek help than boys. Adolescent girls are more likely to visit their physician than adolescent boys (Quadrel & Lau, 1990), more likely to seek therapeutic help (Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992) more likely to share worries with parents and peers (Balding, 1997; Dekovic & Meeus, 1995; Silverman, LaGreca, Wasserstein, 1995), and more likely to approach school counselors with peer relationship problems (Asher, 1993). Girls are also more likely than boys to seek help on behalf of a friend. For example, girls are more likely than boys to tell an adult about a suicidal friend (Kalafat & Elias, 1992) or a friend with a substance abuse problem (Offer & Schonert-Reichl).

Male reluctance to seek help is also evident in studies on bullying and threats of violence. Although boys are more often the victims of bullying, they seek help for bullying less frequently than girls do (Rigby, 1996). In a study of middle school victims

of bullying, Unnever and Cornell (2004) found that the predicted odds of a male student telling someone that he was being bullied was two thirds that of the predicted odds of a female student. Hunter, Boyle, & Warden (2004) surveyed 830 students ages 9 to 14 and found that only 64% of boys told someone when they were bullied, as opposed to 86% of girls.

Research investigating the gender difference in help seeking suggests that boys are more likely to associate help seeking with personal weakness (Havermans, & Eiser, 1995). Boys also report not seeking help because they believe it is not socially acceptable for them to do so (Nadler, 1998; Timlin-Scalera, Ponterotto, & Blumberg, 2003). Schools that send a clear message to students that help seeking is acceptable and encouraged for all students may be able to mitigate the influence of shame and gender stereotypes on boys' willingness to seek help.

Minority racial status also influences rates of help seeking for a variety of problems. Windle, Miller-Tutzauer, & Barnes (1991) surveyed 27, 335 12- to 18-year-olds and found that African Americans and Hispanics were highly over represented among adolescents who stated that they would not seek support for substance abuse problems. In a sample of 9,000 depressed adolescents, Sen (2004) found that African Americans and Asian Americans were at the greatest risk of not seeking help for their symptoms.

Racial differences in help seeking in schools have not been thoroughly examined. Marsh and Cornell (2001) found that African American and other minority students were less likely to view their schools as places where they could turn to adults for help.

However, differences in help seeking for bullying and threats of violence at the high school level have not been documented. Williams and Cornell (2005) found no difference in the help-seeking attitudes of minority and non-minority middle school students. More information is needed about the existence of racial differences in help seeking for bullying and threats of violence among older adolescents.

Racial differences in help seeking are often attributed to mistrust of white authority figures. This mistrust has been linked to minority students' reluctance to seek mental health services (Nickerson, Helms, & Terrell, 1994) and to minority students' belief that they cannot talk to adults at school (Marsh & Cornell, 2001).Teachers who effectively communicate support and encourage help seeking may be seen as more trustworthy by minority students.

Cultural differences in help seeking norms may also contribute to minority students being less likely to seek help at school. Research with African Americans and Latinos has found that students from these racial groups often prefer to rely on family relationships and religious organizations for social support (Constantine, Wilton, & Caldwell, 2003). Teachers who effectively communicate support and encourage help seeking may be able to present themselves as a viable alternative for assistance to minority students.

The second research question in this study addressed the power of supportive school climate to moderate gender and race differences in help seeking: *How is supportive school climate associated with gender and race differences in student help seeking?*

Discipline and Help Seeking

School discipline policies are essential to maintaining order and safety in schools. Parenting research and Authoritative Discipline Theory suggest that some combination of discipline and support should maximize student help seeking. Bullying literature seems to support this conclusion. Immediate and uniform discipline consequences for bullies are one cornerstone of bullying prevention programs because they have been found to increase the number of victims and bystanders who report incidents of bullying (Rigby & Bragshaw, 2003). Stringent discipline policies have also been shown to support academic achievement and pro-social behavior among mainstream students (Way, 2004).

However, researchers have suggested that overly rigid school structure, or structure implemented in the absence of support, may be detrimental to students (Gregory et al., 2007). Pellerin (2005) demonstrated that an authoritarian school climate, as measured by strict consequences for disciplinary infractions in the absence of warmth and communication between teachers and students, was negatively associated with school engagement and drop-out rates. Way (2004) showed that stringent discipline policies, as measured by high rates of suspension and expulsion, were negatively associated with the academic achievement and graduation rates of at-risk students.

Are there specific disciplinary practices that undermine the balance between support and structure in schools, creating an authoritarian climate? Zero Tolerance represents a seemingly authoritarian approach to discipline. A task force of the American Psychological Association recently defined zero tolerance as a “philosophy or policy that mandates the application of predetermined consequences, most often severe and punitive

in nature…to be applied regardless of the seriousness of behavior, mitigating circumstances, or situational context" (Skiba et al., 2006). Proponents of zero tolerance policies assert that removing disruptive students ensures school safety, deters future misbehavior, and creates a climate conducive to learning. Critics of zero tolerance argue that this approach does not reduce violence in schools and makes students less likely to share information with authorities for fear that doing so will result in a classmate's expulsion (Skiba & Noam, 2001).

The third research question of this study addressed the influence of zero tolerance expulsions on support and help seeking in schools. Student suspension from school has been associated with increased rates of discipline infractions over time (Tobin, Sugai, & Colvin, 1996). Schools that seem too strict may antagonize adolescents who are developmentally inclined to challenge authority and seek autonomy (Mayer & Leone, 1999; Smetana, 2005). Bertelsen (2005) found that adolescents were less likely to seek help for a friend engaging in risky behavior when they believed that telling an adult would get them or their friend into trouble. It was hypothesized that schools with higher rates of zero tolerance expulsions would have less supportive climates and less student help seeking: *How are zero tolerance expulsions associated with supportive school climate and help-seeking?*

Measuring Help Seeking

Studies on adolescent help-seeking behavior traditionally rely upon student-reported attitudes and hypothetical behavior (Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992). Stanton-Salazar et al., (2001) assessed the help-seeking attitudes of urban, high school students.

Students were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with statements such as, "Sometimes it is necessary to talk to someone about your problems" and "Friends often have good advice to give." Although these questions address general attitudes towards help seeking, they do not assess individual students' receptiveness to seeking help for themselves, nor the types of problems for which students would be willing to seek help. McDonald, MacEvoy, and Asher (2007) surveyed elementary school students' attitudes towards help seeking with items such as "I would like help learning how to fight less with other kids," and "I would like help learning how to get other kids to pick on me less." Although these items directly address student motivation for help with specific problems, they do not address the likelihood that students will seek help from the adults at their school. Students may wish for help, but be unlikely to approach teachers or counselors at their school for a variety of reasons.

Williams and Cornell (2005) developed a scale for student willingness to seek help for bullying and threats of violence. This scale directly asks students whether they would approach adults at their school. Respondents are asked to agree or disagree with statements such as, "There are adults at this school I could turn to if I had a personal problem," "If another student brought a gun to school, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school," and "If I tell a teacher that someone is bullying me, the teacher will do something to help." This scale was used in a study showing that gender, grade level, and student attitudes toward aggression affected student willingness to seek help for bullying and threats of violence (Williams & Cornell, 2005).

Present Study

How are supportive school climates associated with student willingness to seek help for bullying and threats of violence? In order to investigate the first research question, this study examined the influence of three measures of support: (a) student perceptions of support from teachers, (b) teacher encouragement of help seeking, and (c) teacher perceptions of support from administrators. It was hypothesized that higher levels of support on all three measures would relate to more positive help-seeking attitudes.

The second main research question was whether a supportive school climate can moderate gender and race differences in help seeking. Studies indicate that boys are consistently less willing to seek help from teachers than girls, and that minority students may be less willing to seek help in certain environments. It was hypothesized that supportive climate would normalize help seeking, making boys more willing to seek help despite gender stereotypes that encourage them to refrain from asking for help. It was hypothesized that supportive climate would encourage minority students to trust adults at school and view them as a possible source of support, despite cultural norms that dictate otherwise. This relationship is presented in Figure 1.

A third research question was how zero tolerance discipline is related to support and help seeking. Schools employ a variety of supportive and disciplinary elements to reduce violence. There is strong evidence that supportive strategies promote help seeking, and severe discipline may undermine support to students and help seeking rates. Zero tolerance is one popular discipline policy that many critics argue is too harsh (Skiba & Noam, 2001). In order to investigate the third research question, this study examined the

relationship between zero tolerance expulsions, supportive climate and student help seeking. It was hypothesized that zero tolerance expulsions would negatively affect supportive climate and student help seeking. This relationship is also shown in Figure 1.

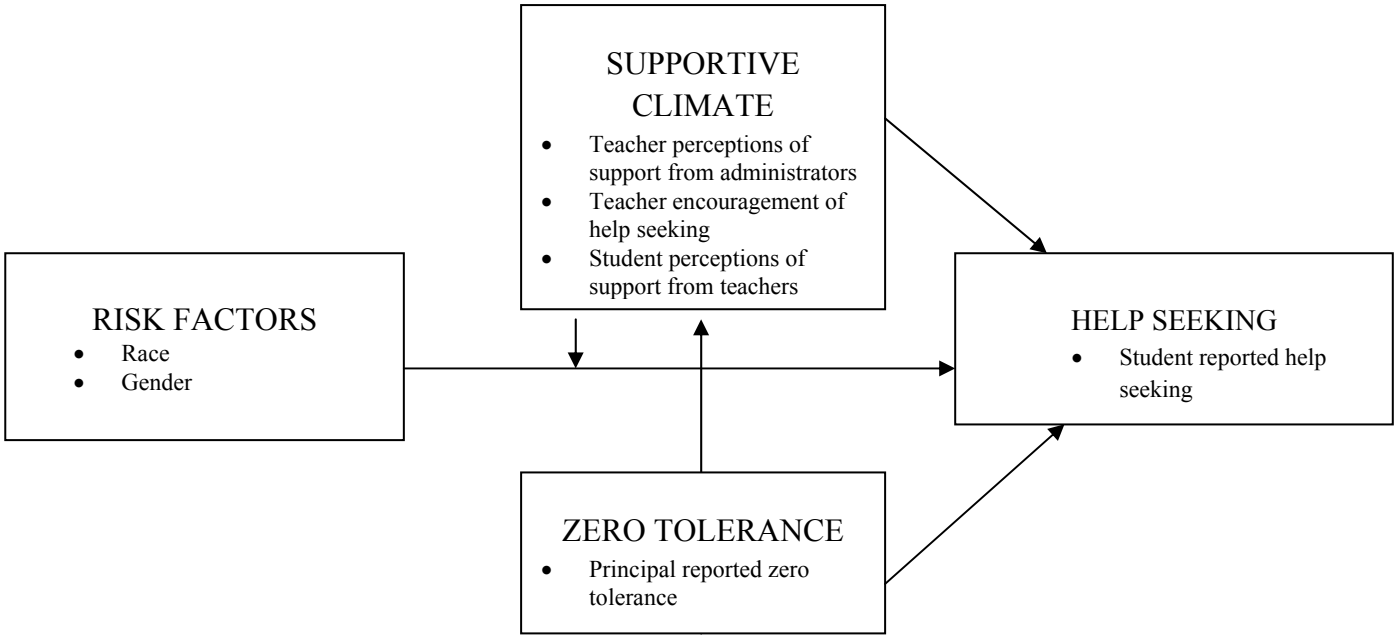

Figure 1. Relationships among study variables.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Although youth violence has declined substantially since the early 1990's (Brener, Simon, Krug, & Lowry, 1999; US Department of Health and Human Services, 2001), recent national studies indicate that violence still affects many students at school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). In 2005, approximately 13% of students in grades 9-12 reported being in a fight, 9% reported being threatened or injured with a weapon, and 6% reported carrying a weapon on school property. Students between the ages of 12 and 18 were the victims of 582,800 violent crimes at school in 2004, representing an annual rate of 22 per thousand students.

Bullying is another pervasive form of aggressive behavior. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) conducted a nationally representative survey of grades 6 through 10 in which 19% of students self identified as bullies and 17% of students reported victimization (Nansel et al., 2001). Some studies document that as many as 30% of students are victims of bullying (Haynie, Nansel, & Eitel, 2001). It should be noted that many student surveys contain ambiguous or over-inclusive definitions of bullying (Cornell & Bandyopadhyay, 2007). Although these studies may overestimate the rate at which students are being bullied according to standard definitions, many students are reporting behavior at school that makes them feel unsafe. There are high rates of violence and bullying in Virginia schools. Students in Virginia committed 290,621 discipline violations during the 2005-2006 school year (Virginia

Department of Education, 2007). While the majority of these violations were for minor offenses (169,741), 3,237 of these incidents involved a weapon. There were 11,129 fights, 6,734 incidents of battery, 10,453 incidents of bullying, and 4,803 threats of violence. These counts include student violations directed at other students, teachers, and school staff. Forty-five percent of all violations directed exclusively at students were classified as bullying. Collectively, these incidents of violence resulted in extensive discipline consequences for students. Suspension and expulsion are defined as the denial of student attendance at school for a set period of time (Virginia Department of Education). Sixty-six percent of infractions resulted in the short-term suspension (less than 10 days) of a student and 2% resulted in long-term suspension (more than 10 days). Approximately 1%, or a total of 3, 054 students, were expelled. Virginia's expulsion rate of .169 per thousand students is among the top five in the nation (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006).

Although violence at school can result in negative emotional, academic, and discipline consequences for students, most violent incidents are provoked by a conflict or dispute that could have been resolved with adult intervention (Cornell, 2006a).Unfortunately, many incidents of conflict and bullying take place outside the view of adults (Craig et al., 2000). In a study of 1,126 7^{th} and 8^{th} grade students, Seals and Young (2003) found that approximately 60% of bullying incidents occurred in areas with poor adult supervision, such as in the lunchroom or on the way to and from school. High school students have even more freedom of movement throughout the day and are more likely to be in areas without adult supervision. Adults at school cannot intervene in

conflicts they do not know about. It is therefore important that at least one student contact an adult for help so that he or she can provide assistance and intervention.

High school students do seek help from adults in schools for a variety of problems, including threats of violence, peer conflict, bullying, depression, and academic struggles (Boldero & Fallon, 1995). However, students in trouble do not always seek help. Several studies have documented the reluctance of students to seek help for bullying (Houndoumadi & Pateraki, 2001; Kanetsuna & Smith, 2002; Unnever & Cornell, 2004). In their national study of 2000 adolescents between the ages of 10 and 16, Finkelhor and Dziuba-Leatherman (1994) found that only 25% of all victimizations were reported to an authority figure.

Students are reluctant to seek help for other types of problems as well. Boldero and Fallon (1995) found that, out of 536 adolescents who reported that they had experienced a "personal problem which had caused them considerable distress," only 11% sought help from a teacher. In a study of adolescent help seeking for dating violence, Ashley and Foshee (2005) found that 60% of victims and 79% of perpetrators did not seek any help for the violence occurring in their relationship. In a study of 3,287 students between ages 12 and 20, Gasquet, Chavance, Ledoux, and Choquet (1997) found that only 8% of depressed adolescents sought help from a counselor.

Although the small percentage of students who seek help from adults at school is troubling, what may be more disturbing is that it is often the students at greatest risk who are least likely to ask for assistance. For example, in a study of 2, 419 students ages 13 to 19, Gould et al. (2004) found that suicidal youths were more likely than non suicidal

peers to endorse maladaptive attitudes about help-seeking such as, “If you are depressed, it’s a good idea to keep these feelings to yourself.” Approximately 33% of the students in this study who exhibited suicidal, depressed, or substance abusing behavior thought that people should be able to handle their own problems without any outside help. These findings extend to the academic arena as well; low achieving students tend to ask fewer questions as they proceed through school (Good, Slavings, Harel & Emerson, 1987), as do students with lower feelings of self-efficacy (Newman, 1990). There is often an inverse relationship between adolescents’ reported distress and willingness to seek professional help (Seiffge-Krenke, 1989).

Individual Level Factors and Help Seeking

Why do some adolescents seek help while others do not? What factors influence the decision to approach adults at school with a problem? With regards to violence at school, there are several reasons why students may be reluctant to seek help from a teacher. Students who learn of threats of violence at school often do not come forward because they do not want to “snitch.” The controversy over snitching gained national attention in 2004, when basketball player Carmello Anthony appeared in a DVD entitled “Stop Snitching.” The video showed the basketball star and his friends holding guns and making threats about what they would do to anyone who informed the police about drug sales in their neighborhood (Kane, 2005). Since the production of this video, anti-snitching campaigns have become a national movement, with high profile rap artists like Busta Rhymes writing songs on the topic and many accused drug dealers wearing t-shirts with the “stop snitching” slogan in courtrooms (Hampson, 2006). The stop snitching

movement has extended to school-aged populations, as evidenced by xbox games and compilation music albums with anti-snitching themes (Hampson).

Social prohibitions against snitching are combined with conflicted youth attitudes about seeking help from adults. Students may be embarrassed to seek help at school. Kanetsuna et al. (2006) interviewed 121 high school students in both England and Japan. The authors found that 28% of students cited some form of embarrassment as a reason for not telling teachers about bullying, regardless of gender and nationality. When asked why peers do not approach teachers about being bullied, students provided answers such as, "because they do not want to be seen as a 'baby,' 'wimp,' or 'grass.'" Adolescents especially experience a heightened fear of embarrassment and greater attention to the costs and benefits involved in seeking help than do younger students (Newman, 1990). Newman has demonstrated that, with age, beliefs about potential cost take on a more prominent and causal role in student decisions to seek academic help. Adults at school who encourage students to report incidents of bullying and threats of violence may be able to reduce the embarrassment associated with asking for help.

Students also report that they are reluctant to seek help for bullying because they believe that teachers are unfair, untrustworthy, or will not be able to help. Over the course of their 30-minute interviews with adolescents, Kanetsuna et al. (2006) found that 28% of students reported that peers do not seek help for bullying because they do not have an adult at school that they can trust with the information: ''because they have no one to rely on,'' "because although they try to get some help from others, the situation is not changed and they give up trying.'' Many students in this study believed that telling a

teacher would not accomplish change or would make the bullying worse. When asked why many students do not report bullying, 60% of the high school students gave answers such as, “because they think whatever they do, the bullying cannot be stopped,” or ‘‘because they think if they do something or tell someone about it, bullying just gets even worse anyway.”

Rigby and Bagshaw (2003) utilized a written questionnaire that assessed students’ relationships with their peers. The questionnaire was administered in Australian schools that had administrators who were interested in learning about bullying among their student populations; 7,099 14-year-olds and 4,472 16-year-olds completed the survey. In response to the question, “Do you believe that teachers at this school are interested in trying to stop bullying?” 40% of the adolescents surveyed endorsed the option “not really.” When asked about the utility of teachers and students working together to stop bullying, 20% of students reported that teachers made the situation worse when they got involved, and 26% believed that teachers responded unfairly when bullying was reported. Students who do not believe their teachers will take reports of bullying seriously are less willing to report victimization (Hunter et al., 2004).

In summary, students appear to feel that seeking help may violate a social norm, such as a prohibition against snitching or appearing weak. Teachers that encourage student requests for help may be able to alter social norms about help seeking. Additionally, students appear to believe that teachers are not are not interested in helping victims of bullying, are not competent to stop bullying, or will not respond fairly to

bullying. Teachers who feel supported and able to respond effectively to requests for help may be able to increase students' amenability to help seeking.

Models of Help Seeking

The definition of help seeking as a positive and adaptive process is a relatively new concept. Early research on student help seeking defined the behavior as a sign of immaturity and incompetence (Newman, 1990). In the academic context, raising one's hand and asking for help were studied as variables that maintained student dependence on others. However, in the early 1980s, Nelson-Le Gall (1981, 1985) began distinguishing between dependent and adaptive help seeking. Nelson-Le Gall asserted that help-seeking behavior can function to move students towards mastery and autonomy. Adaptive help seeking is the process by which students ask questions that allow them to become more independent learners.

In his continuation of the study of adaptive help seeking, Newman (1998) identified both social-interactional and cognitive processes that contribute to adaptation. Help seeking as a social-interactional process includes affective factors, such as how students feel about potential helpers. Research in this area is useful for understanding how teachers may be able to influence student help-seeking attitudes. Help seeking as a cognitive process includes student rationalizations and reasoning about obtaining assistance. Research in this area is useful for understanding how school rules and norms can influence help-seeking attitudes and behaviors.

Supportive School Climate and Help Seeking

Help seeking, when described as a social-interactional process, focuses on how students' feelings about potential helpers influence their decision to seek help (Newman, 1998). Specifically, student perceptions of teacher encouragement predict student willingness to seek academic help in middle school. For example, Newman and Schwager (1993) asked 177 3rd, 5th, and 7th grade students if they perceived their teachers as someone with whom there was "mutual liking and friendship" or someone who "directly encourages and answers task related questions." They then asked these same students how likely they would be to ask their teacher for help with a math problem. For students of all ages, perceptions of friendship were predictive of help seeking. However, for older students, perceptions of teacher encouragement predicted help seeking above and beyond perceptions of friendship.

Encouragement includes the explicit message that help seeking is acceptable, as well as the implicit communication of availability, caring, and willingness to provide help. LeMare and Sobat (2002) conducted semi-structured interviews with 115 secondary school students, 46 of whom were in sixth or seventh grade. Participants were asked to consider any experience of asking for help in the classroom that was salient to them from the past or present. Interviewers asked questions such as, "What is it about a teacher that makes it difficult to ask him/her for help?" and "What is it about a teacher that makes it easy to ask him/her for help?" Students identified willingness to provide help as the most important factor in approaching an adult. Students reported that they knew teachers were willing to help when they listened carefully and encouraged students to approach them.

Students identified a lack of willingness to help when teachers had poor listening skills or were too busy to answer questions.

Research on non-academic help seeking with older adolescents consists primarily of qualitative interviews about positive helper characteristics. For example, Wilson and Deanne (2001) conducted focus group discussions with 23 high school students between the ages of 15 and 17. These students met in groups of 2 or 3 with a moderator who was well known to them and were led in a discussion with questions such as, "Who do you go to when you seek help?" and "If youth seek help for personal or emotional problems, what is the best way for helpful adults and professional help givers to raise and discuss these problems?" Adolescents in this sample reported greater willingness to talk to adults who were trustworthy, available, and willing to help.

Lindsay and Kalafat (1998) conducted focus group discussions with 41 9th grade students. Participants were asked to think of a "personal problem that was really bothering them or had bothered them in the past" and call to mind a person they might talk to about the problem. When asked to describe the characteristics of this person, almost all students used adjectives that indicated respect, genuineness, and empathic listening. Students used phrases such as, "they'll talk to you, not down to you," "Not just go along with what you're saying and just nod their head," "Can't be stuck up or a hypocrite," and "They really think about your problem." The second most common characteristic named was availability; "Teachers who stay after school and help kids care," "Invites you back if you have another problem." The 9th grade students in this study identified both implicit messages (active listening, respect, engagement) and

explicit messages (inviting students back) that help seeking was encouraged as important factors in their decision to approach an adult for help.

Adolescents consistently report that they would be more willing to seek help from teachers who demonstrate supportive qualities such as availability, willingness, and respect. However, no studies have examined whether adolescents who perceive their teachers as having these characteristics actually have more positive help-seeking attitudes for bullying and threats of violence. This study examined adolescent perceptions of supportive qualities in their teachers as well as their help-seeking attitudes. Additionally, academic help seeking literature demonstrates a connection between teacher encouragement and student help seeking. However, no studies on help seeking for bullying and threats of violence have examined teacher reports of how much they offer support. Students use subjective messages of encouragement, such as listening habits and respectful language, to determine whether or not teachers are willing to provide help. This finding underlines the importance of using both teacher and student reports to measure the extent of teacher willingness to help students. This study examined teacher reports of the extent to which they encourage help seeking for their effect on students' help- seeking attitudes.

Among adolescents, the decision to seek help is also linked to students' feelings about a helper's competence and expertise (Lindsey & Kalafat, 1998; Wintre, Hicks, McVey, & Fox, 1988). Lindsey and Kalafat found, in their interviews with 9th graders, that students prefer adults who seem calm, confident, self-accepting, and able to handle their own problems. They also reported that teachers must be knowledgeable and

comport themselves professionally in order to be viewed as potential helpers. When asked what adults could do to break down barriers to help seeking, adolescents in Wilson and Deanne's (2001) sample reported that they should inform students of their expertise, as this was a prominent factor in student choice of counselor. Tartar (2001) surveyed 421 10th grade students about the characteristics that they look for when selecting a counselor. "Counselor expertness" was the second most endorsed quality, second only to "trustworthiness." The help seeking literature clearly indicates that teachers must communicate willingness to help students and expertise in doing so in order to be considered potential helpers, and this study will measure student and teacher perceptions of teacher availability and effectiveness.

Administrators make a significant contribution to perceptions of school climate, as well as student achievement and behavior. Haddad, Samemah, and Dirasat (1999) administered school climate surveys to 63 high school principals and 315 teachers. Principals were divided into two categories: those that described their interpersonal style as supportive of teachers' self-determination and those that described their interpersonal style as controlling of teacher behavior. Teachers who had principals with supportive orientations reported more positive perceptions of school climate and higher levels of job satisfaction than teachers who had principals with a controlling orientation.

Administrators can also affect teacher confidence. For example, Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) surveyed 179 teachers in 37 elementary schools. Teachers who perceived their principals as strong advocates for teachers were more likely to believe in their own efficacy. These teachers more frequently endorsed items such as, "If I try hard,

I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated student" and "If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him or her quickly." Perception of principals as strong advocates accounted for as much of the variance in teacher efficacy (5%) as did teacher experience and education level (4%).

It was hypothesized that administrative support would also improve teachers' confidence in responding to student help seeking. Support for this hypothesis can be found in studies on the relationship between administrative support and the quality of teacher student relationships. Hoy, Smith, and Sweetland (2002) surveyed high school teachers across 97 schools in Ohio regarding the extent to which their principals provided collegial leadership ("The principal treats all faculty members as his or her equal," "The principal puts suggestions made by faculty into operation"). They found that collegial leadership was positively associated with teacher professionalism ("Teachers 'go the extra mile" with their students" and "Teachers in this school exercise professional judgment"). Together, collegial leadership and teacher professionalism predicted teacher trust in students ("Teachers here believe what students say").

Administrative support has also been correlated with more positive discipline outcomes for at-risk students. Mukuria (2002) surveyed 65 predominately African American, urban middle schools in Louisiana and conducted a case study of the two schools with the highest average suspensions rates over the previous three years and the two schools with the lowest average suspension rates over that same time period. In interviews, principals in low suspension schools expressed the belief that it was their

responsibility to provide moral and instructional support to teachers and to respect their judgments and opinions with regard to discipline. These principals involved teachers in the creation of school discipline policies. In contrast, principals in high suspension schools did not believe that teacher opinions about discipline were important and did not involve teachers in enforcing uniform discipline policies throughout the school.

This study was not designed to directly assess the relationship between administrative support and teacher efficacy, or teacher-student relationships. However, it was hypothesized that teacher perceptions of administrative support and discipline fairness would be correlated with other measures of supportive school climate, such as teacher encouragement of help seeking and student perceptions of support from teachers. It was further hypothesized that teacher perceptions of administrative support would be positively related to student help seeking.

The first research question in this study addressed the correlation between teacher and student perceptions of supportive school climate. The first research question also investigates whether climates that are perceived as supportive are associated with increased student help seeking.

Gender, Race, and Help Seeking

Studies on physical illness, counseling, substance abuse, and personal relationships have all found that girls are more likely than boys to seek help for these problems (Quadrel & Lau, 1990; Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992; Balding, 1997; Dekovic and Meeus, 1995; Silverman et al., 1995). Likewise, studies demonstrate that girls are more likely than boys to seek help for bullying and threats of violence. The gender

difference in help seeking seems to emerge in late elementary school (for a review, see Ryan, Pintrich, & Midgeley, 2001). Newman et al. (2001) presented 128 third and fourth grade students with 10 vignettes in which peers were stealing something from them, teasing them, or using physical aggression against them. An interviewer then asked the students what they would do in the given situation. No gender differences in help seeking were found among third grade students. But, among fourth graders, girls reported that they would seek help from the teacher in response to an average of 7 out of 10 vignettes, whereas boys reported that they would seek help in response to 5 out of 10 vignettes. McDonald et al. (2007) surveyed 265 fourth and fifth grade children and found that girls reported wanting more help with peer conflict. Girls were 20% more likely to endorse the items "I would like help learning how to get other kids to pick on me less" and "I would like help learning how to make friends."

Gender differences in help seeking for bullying and threats of violence appear to remain as students grow older. Hunter et al. (2004) surveyed 830 students ages 9 to 14. The researchers presented students with a list of aggressive behaviors such as "you were threatened by someone," "you were hit or kicked," and "you were forced to do something that you did *not* want to do." Students were asked to report how often they had told someone when these events occurred. Across all grade levels, only 64% of boys told someone when they were bullied, as opposed to 86% of girls. Gender accounted for 9% of the variance in help seeking behavior. In a study of middle school students, Unnever and Cornell (2004) asked 898 victims of bullying from six schools whether or not they had told anyone about being bullied. They found that the predicted odds of a boy telling

anyone that he had been bullied were approximately two thirds the odds of a girl telling, and that the predicted odds of a boy telling an adult were also two thirds that of a girl telling an adult.

One theory commonly put forth about why girls seek more help than boys is that it is more socially acceptable for girls to express distress or dependency on others (Nadler, 1998). Support for this theory is evident in studies about how boys feel when they seek help or think about seeking help. For example, Timlin-Scalera, Ponterotto, and Blumberg (2003) found that most of the suburban, high school boys that they interviewed spoke of a strong social pressure to avoid seeking help in order to fit in and be seen as successful. As one boy stated, "I don't think it's really expected for guys to have a problem, like emotional problems. It's sad but that's the way it is" (p. 344).

Eiser, Havermans, & Eiser (1995) surveyed 548 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 15. The authors found that adolescent boys who reported physical and psychological complaints rated themselves as less competent on measures of self-confidence and self-efficacy. Boys who described physical and psychological complaints to their parents or doctors were less likely than girls who made these same reports to endorse items such as, "I am good at schoolwork," "I find it easy to get on with others," and "I like the way I look." It seems that, for adolescent males, asking for help may be associated with feelings of weakness.

Boys consistently report more negative attitudes about help seeking than girls do. For example, boys are more likely to endorse statements such as, "It's a good idea to keep your problems to yourself" (Gould et. al, 2004; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996).

Schools that send a clear message to students that help seeking is acceptable and encouraged for all students may be able to mitigate the influence of gender stereotypes and shame on boys' willingness to seek help.

There is less available evidence for the existence of racial differences in help-seeking attitudes. Minority students are less likely to seek help for drug abuse and depression (Windle et al., 1991; Sen, 2004), and many studies have shown that minority populations are less likely to seek help from professional counselors (McMiller & Weisz, 1996; Nickerson, Helms, & Terrell, 1994). However, the likelihood that minority students will seek help for bullying and threats of violence has not been well studied.

Unnever and Cornell (2004) surveyed 898 victims of bullying across 6 middle schools; 47% of the sample identified as non white. Race did not contribute to the variance in victims reporting that they had told an adult about being bullied. Likewise, Williams and Cornell (2005) surveyed 542 middle school students and found no racial differences in student endorsement of statements such as "If another student was bullying me, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school" and "If another student brought a gun to school, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school."

These studies suggest that minority students are not less willing than non-minority students to seek help from teachers at school for bullying and threats of violence. However, the students in these studies may not represent the typical experience of minority students at school. For example, Unnever and Cornell's (2004) study took place in a geographical region that was almost 50% non-white. Williams and Cornell's (2005) study took place in a middle school with an African American principal and an

established bully prevention program. Environmental factors in these schools may have helped minority students feel more comfortable approaching adults for help than students in areas with fewer minority students or administrators and less encouragement of help seeking. This study provided a large, representative sample to examine the existence of racial differences in help-seeking attitudes for bullying and threats of violence. Based on racial differences in help seeking in other literatures (Windle et al., 1991; Sen, 2004), it was expected that minority students would report more negative help-seeking attitudes than non-minority students.

Among studies that demonstrate racial differences in help seeking, several theories have been posited about these differences. For example, Constantine, Wilton, and Caldwell (2003) surveyed 108 African American and Latino students at a predominately Caucasian university in the northeastern United States. Among both African American and Latino students, satisfaction with informal social support networks negatively predicted willingness to visit the campus counseling center for symptoms of mental illness. In other words, students who were happy with the amount of support they received from family and friends did not visit professional counselors. Other studies have also indicated that African American and Latino college students prefer to rely on family relationships and religious organizations for social support rather than on mental health counselors or school personnel (McMiller & Weisz, 1996; Kaniasty & Norrie, 2000). Teachers who effectively communicate support and encourage help seeking may be able to present themselves as a viable alternative for assistance to minority students.

Mistrust of white counselors has also been found to account for minority students' reluctance to seek mental health services. Nickerson, Helms, and Terrell (1994) surveyed 105 African American undergraduate students enrolled in a predominately Caucasian university in the southwestern United Stated. The authors found that cultural mistrust predicted help seeking attitudes. Cultural mistrust was measured by items such as, "Whites are usually fair to all people regardless of race" and "A Black person can usually trust his/her White co-workers." Help seeking was measured by students' expectations that seeking help from a Caucasian counselor would be productive. Duncan (1996) found that cultural mistrust was a significant predictor of African-American college students' desire to seek help exclusively from African American counselors.

Cultural mistrust may also be present in secondary schools. Marsh and Cornell (2001) surveyed 7, 848 students in grades 7, 9, and 11 in order to understand how their experiences influenced rates of high risk behavior at school. In response to the question, "How many adults at school could you talk to about a personal problem?" African American and Asian American students were significantly less likely than Caucasian students to reply that they could talk to one or more adults at school. Teachers who effectively communicate support and encourage help seeking may be seen as more trustworthy by minority students.

The second research question in this study investigated gender and race differences in help seeking among a large, representative sample of 9th-grade students. This question also investigated whether perceptions of supportive school climate could mitigate the influence of gender and race on help seeking.

School Discipline Practices and Help Seeking

School rules and procedures determine what types of behavior are problematic and what courses of action are available to students involved in problematic behavior. From this perspective, cognitions are influential in guiding help seeking. Models that describe the decision to seek help as a cognitive appraisal process are referred to as *process* or *stage-process* theories. These models emphasize steps such as recognizing the problem, determining that something can be down about it, and choosing a course of action (Butcher & Crosbie, 1977, Greenley & Mullen, 1990, Shapiro, 1984).

Shapiro (1984) introduced a cognitive theory to explain the process of help-seeking within organizations, stating that individuals must (a) decide they need help, (b) decide to seek help, (c) decide from whom to seek help, and (d) decide how to seek help (p. 215). Likewise, Greenley and Mullen (1990) posited a model for individuals who seek help for mental health problems that included (a) the occurrence and recognition of symptoms as problematic, (b) the definition of the symptom as indicating mental health problems, (c) the decision to seek help, and (d) the choice of a particular source of help (p. 329–30). Cognitive models can be found in the academic help-seeking literature as well. Newman (1991; 1994) proposed that help seeking in the classroom involves students' meta-cognitive awareness of task difficulty, assessment of available options, and choice to seek help. Cognitive models have been used to explain why people do not seek help for mental health issues, and to guide therapists in engaging reluctant patients (Vogel, Wester, Larson, & Wade, 2006).

Murray (2005) found traditional cognitive models unsatisfactory in explaining adolescent decision making and proposed the addition of "problem legitimization" to stage process models of help seeking. In his examination of qualitative data from 55 interviews with 13-to 14-year-old adolescents in mainstream schools in Scotland, Murray found that young people often approach adults for a pronouncement about whether their problems are legitimate or deserving of assistance. Furthermore, Murray found that this process of problem legitimization often *preceded* the determination that a problem existed. The inclusion of this step in cognitive models places an emphasis on the importance of schools communicating that certain events, such as bullying or threats of violence, are legitimate problems for which students should seek help. Students may not always consider bullying to be a significant problem. In a study of Australian adolescents asked about the types of problems that merited help seeking, many gave answers such as, "The best thing to do if it's something minor is just pain it out." "Getting hassled" was one of the main examples used as a problem that students considered minor (Wilson & Deane, 2001). School rules and policies that communicate that bullying and violence are serious events for which students deserve help may be able to increase student willingness to ask for help.

Other theorists have addressed the process of determining whether or not a problem requires assistance. Lazarus (1966) identified cognitive appraisal as integral to the decision to seek help in response to stressful events. According to this theory, once an event has been appraised as benign or stressful, individuals appraise the event for harm-loss (amount of damage already accrued), threat (expectation of future harm), and

challenge (the opportunity to achieve growth and mastery). Hunter et al. (2004) surveyed 830 students ages 9 to 14 and found that higher challenge appraisals, or the assumption that telling a teacher would result in a positive resolution, led to more help seeking. Students who endorsed items such as "the bully will be punished" were more likely to report having told an adult that they were bullied. This finding suggests that, if schools can effectively communicate that violent behavior will be resolved, they can increase student help seeking for violence.

Research on the effect of school rules on help seeking for bullying and threats of violence suggests that schools can increase help seeking if they (a) communicate that bullying and violence are serious events for which students deserve help and (b) communicate that help seeking will result in a resolution of violent behavior. How might zero tolerance policies relate to these messages? Behavior that results in a disciplinary consequence is more likely to be seen as unacceptable to students and likely to provoke a response from teachers. Therefore, firm rules that are strictly enforced may encourage student help seeking. As studies of bullying interventions demonstrate, schools that clearly prohibit bullying can increase victim reporting (Rigby & Bragshaw, 2003; Olweus, 1991). However, rules that are excessively strict or inflexible may have a negative influence on messages regarding the resolution of violent behavior. One prominent reason adolescents in Lindsay and Kalafat's (1998) study gave for not approaching adults at school was the evaluative or disciplinary role teachers played. Students identified punishment as a potential negative consequence of confiding in teachers. Schools that employ harsh or inflexible discipline consequences may increase

the perception that approaching teachers for help will make the problem worse because it will result in excessive punishment for either the victim or the perpetrator.

History of Zero Tolerance

The term "zero tolerance" came into usage as part of the drug enforcement policies of the 1980s. Print news media first recorded the term in 1983, when the Navy reassigned 40 crewmen from the submarine Spadefish for suspected drug abuse ("Drug Probe Hits Submarine," 1983). A spokesman for the Atlantic Fleet cited "zero tolerance" for drug abuse when explaining to reporters that the crewmen had been suspended pending investigation. In 1986, U.S. Attorney Peter Nuñez introduced a program specifying that seagoing vessels carrying even trace amounts of drugs were to be impounded; he titled the program Zero Tolerance. By 1988, customs officials had been authorized to seize the boats, automobiles, and passports of anyone crossing the border with even trace amounts of drugs. Zero tolerance began receiving national attention as private citizens had their boats, cars, and even bicycles seized (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). National attention to Nuñez's Zero Tolerance program led to the application of the term in many areas. As part of the Reagan administration's war on drugs, U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese used the term to propose mandatory drug testing in the workplace and mandatory drug testing as a condition of pretrial release for alleged criminals ("Meese to Require Drug Testing," 1988).

A confluence of events contributed to the application of zero tolerance policies in schools. The cabinet-level National Drug Policy Board, under the direction of Meese, discussed whether to endorse withholding federal aid from colleges and universities that

did not adopt a zero tolerance approach to drugs. The board also considered having students sign documents stating that a drug conviction would result in loss of student loan money ("Zero Tolerance Efforts," 1988). During the same time that the notion of employing zero tolerance in higher education settings was introduced, rates of youth violence were on the rise. The increase in violent crime among youth in the early 1990s (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2004) created a demand amongst educators for strict discipline policies regarding weapons in public schools. In late 1989, school districts in Orange County, California and Louisville, Kentucky were the first to call for immediate expulsion for drugs and gang-related activity (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). By 1993, school boards across the country had adopted some form of zero tolerance for drugs, weapons, and even smoking and school disruption (Skiba & Peterson).

In 1994, the Clinton Administration signed the Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) into law, and zero tolerance became an official national policy. The GFSA requires that each state receiving Federal education funds must, "have in effect a State law requiring local education agencies to expel from school for a period of not less than one year a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to school" (20 USCS § 7151; 2005). During the 1996-1997 school year, the first year for which schools were required to document expulsions under GSFA, the U.S. Department of Education estimates that 6,093 students were expelled from public schools for bringing a firearm to school (Sinclair, Hamilton, Gutmann, Daft, & Bolcik, 1998).

Although the language of the act defines a firearm as a, "gun or destructive device...[which] shall not include any device which is neither designed nor redesigned for

use as a weapon…or any device which the Attorney General finds is not likely to be used as a weapon" (18 USCS § 921), many school boards have interpreted the definition of firearm more broadly. The discipline code for the state of Virginia includes firearm possession offenses termed "Other Weapon," "Weapon/Look-Alike," and "Weapon Expels a Projectile." These categories include items such as BB guns, paintball guns, pellet guns, water pistols, and live ammunition carried independently from a gun. During the 2005-2006 school year, only 39% percent of the students in Virginia who were expelled under GSFA were expelled for possession of a handgun, rifle, or shotgun. This means that 61% were expelled for possessing firearms that fell into the alternative categories listed above. Although the exact breakdown of these items it unknown, it appears that the majority of students who were expelled as a result of GFSA were in possession of an object that may not have posed a serious threat to the safety of other students (Virginia Department of Education, 2007).

The language of the GFSA code gives the "administering officer of the school," which is most often the local school board, the authority to modify the expulsion requirement on a case-by-case basis. However, as can be seen from the Virginia statistics on zero tolerance expulsions, many school districts do not take advantage of this flexibility. The result is that, in some extreme cases, students receive harsh punishment for minor offenses that do not pose a threat to other students. For example, a 17-year-old student in Chicago was arrested and expelled for using a sling shot that he had created out of a paper clip and rubber band (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). A 10-year-old student in Longmont, Colorado was expelled after she turned in a small knife that her mother had

left in her lunchbox to cut an apple (Cauchon, 1999). In one highly publicized case, police in St. Petersburg, Florida handcuffed and arrested a 5-year-old girl who hit her kindergarten teacher while throwing a temper tantrum (Ksdk.com, 2005).

A task force for the American Psychological Association recently defined zero tolerance in educational settings as:

> …a philosophy or policy that mandates the application of predetermined consequences, most often severe and punitive in nature, that are intended to be applied regardless of the apparent severity of the behavior, mitigating circumstances, or situational context. Such an approach is intended to deter future transgressions by sending a message that no form of a given unacceptable behavior will be tolerated under any circumstances. (Skiba et al., 2006, p. 26)

The focus on using punishment as a form of deterrence, and thus on enforcing severe consequences for both major and minor offenses, is the defining feature of zero tolerance policies in schools (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Extreme cases of punishment that are not proportionate to the offense, such as those described above, have led organizations across the political spectrum to publicly oppose zero tolerance policies. Some of these organizations include The American Bar Association, The American Civil Liberties Union, The Rutherford Institute, The Harvard University Civil Rights Project, The Juvenile Law Center, and The Advancement Project (Cornell, 2004).

High profile school shootings, such as the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, have contributed to the widespread enforcement of zero tolerance policies for major and minor offenses alike. National media attention to these events raises fear among principals and superintendents about both the likelihood of gun violence and potential law suits (Cornell, 2006a). This fear contributes to the use of zero

tolerance for firearms and the expansion of the policy to include other types of discipline infractions that are perceived as threatening to school safety. One report from the National Center on Education Statistics found that 94% of all schools have zero tolerance policies for weapons or firearms, 87% for alcohol, and 79% for violence or tobacco (Heaviside, Rowand, Williams, & Farris, 1998). In Virginia, 65% of high schools enforce some form of zero tolerance above and beyond the federally mandated requirement (Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, 2005).

Zero Tolerance and Student Outcomes

Despite the popularity of zero tolerance policies in the United States, there is currently no evidence that they create safer schools (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Skiba & Noam, 2001; Skiba et al., 2006). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandates that schools use interventions that have proven effective in improving student outcomes under rigorous experimental conditions. Disciplinary policies have the potential to affect a variety of student outcomes and should be subject to similar research-based standards. To the author's knowledge, no controlled research studies exist on the effectiveness of zero tolerance in reducing school violence, bullying, or other risky behavior. A recent review of zero tolerance policies produced by a task force of the American Psychological Association also reported a lack of controlled research on the effectiveness of zero tolerance (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force; Skiba et al.).

Because experimental research on zero tolerance does not exist, the impact of suspension and expulsion is the closest available indicator of how zero tolerance policies

may affect student behavior. If suspension and expulsion were effective deterrents for delinquent behavior, then one would expect that students who had been suspended or expelled would demonstrate a decrease in discipline infractions over time. However, studies of out-of-school suspension show high rates of repeat offending. Up to 35 to 42% of students who are suspended have a record of multiple suspensions (Bowditch, 1993; Costenbader and Markson, 1998). Rafaelle-Mendez and Knoff (2003) examined suspension data from all 142 schools in a school district in west central Florida serving approximately 146, 000 students. At the time, this public school district was the 2nd largest in Florida and the 12th largest in the country. Analysis revealed a significant discrepancy in the rate of overall suspensions and the percentage of students involved in those suspensions. For example, there were 127 suspensions per 100 black, middle school males, but only 49% of black middle school males received a suspension. It is possible that up to 100% of students who were suspended experienced at least two suspensions, and a minimum 25% could have experienced more than two suspensions.

Suspension has also been associated with increased rates of discipline infractions over time. Tobin, Sugai, and Colvin (1996) followed 17 students who had received a discipline referral during the first term of their sixth grade year. Of these students, 7 were not suspended for the infraction and 10 were suspended; no significant differences in the severity of the infractions were noted. As a group, students who had not been suspended averaged 4 discipline referrals over the next two years, whereas students who had been suspended averaged 14 discipline referrals over the next two years. The authors

concluded that students with existing behavior problems are not responsive to suspension as an intervention.

The results of these studies suggest that suspension does not have a positive influence on students who are engaging in negative behaviors. Likewise, it is suspected that suspension and expulsion will discourage students from seeking help. However, examining the impact of suspension and expulsion rates on help seeking is not synonymous with examining the impact of zero tolerance policies. Many other factors may contribute to high rates of suspension in schools. For example, unsatisfactory school management is a significant predictor of the probability of a student being suspended at least once in their school career (Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). This study asked principals to report the number of expulsions in their schools that were the result of a zero tolerance policy, in order to more directly measure the influence of zero tolerance on student help seeking.

Zero Tolerance and School Climate

Another argument made in favor of zero tolerance is that removing disruptive students from school improves school climate for students who remain in school (Skiba, 2001). From this perspective, the inflexible nature of zero tolerance policies could be beneficial. The anticipation of being treated unfairly is one reason students do not approach adults at school regarding bullying and violence (Kanetsuna et al., 2006; Rigby & Bragshaw, 2003). Punishment delivered without regard for individual circumstance signals equal treatment for all students and could result in a discipline policy that would increase student perceptions of fairness and support. However, studies suggest that zero

tolerance policies, as well as high rates of suspension and expulsion, are adversely related to school climate.

Bickel and Qualls (1980) administered school climate surveys to 1, 634 ninth grade students, 74 ninth grade teachers, and 23 administrators in order to examine climate differences among schools with high and low suspension rates. Eight schools from the Jefferson County Public School district in Kentucky were chosen to participate, 4 with the highest rates of suspension in the county and 4 with the lowest rates of suspension in the county. On average, students, teachers, and administrators from low suspension schools responded more positively to questions about school climate than their counterparts in high suspension schools. Ninth graders in schools with low suspension rates reported that teachers used more nonverbal cues to encourage them than ninth graders in schools with high suspension rates. Teachers in low suspension schools responded more positively to questions about their administrator's leadership skills and discipline practices than teachers in high suspension schools. And, administrators in low suspension schools more frequently endorsed items related to mutual respect between faculty and students, friendliness towards school staff, and lack of fear among students than administrators in high suspension schools.

Skiba et al. (2003) surveyed 267 elementary, middle, and high school principals in Indiana regarding their attitudes toward zero tolerance policies, suspension, and expulsion. The researchers factor analyzed a 60-item questionnaire and found evidence for six scales related to principal attitudes towards discipline that co-varied in predictable ways. Principals who believed that zero tolerance is an effective form of school discipline

also believed that certain students are a burden on the school system, that they should be removed, and that home influences are primarily responsible for student disruption. In contrast, principals who believed that excluding students from school had negative consequences also believed that school prevention programs could positively influence student behavior, that discipline should be used as a teaching tool, and that discipline should be administered based on individual student need. Results from this factor analysis suggest that the use of zero tolerance in schools may be inversely correlated with efforts to support students, or at least with the priority that administrators place on supporting students.

The authors examined the relationship between administrator attitudes and student support practices in order to investigate the influence of zero tolerance on support to students. Principals who endorsed attitudes associated with the belief that suspending students from school has negative consequences reported greater use of a variety of prevention programs such as anger management, peer mediation, bully prevention, and counseling. The authors also examined the relationship between principal attitudes and school suspension rates. Principals who believed in the effectiveness of zero tolerance had higher rates of suspension, as measured by state records, than principals who believed that suspension was harmful; this difference existed even after controlling for the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch. These results suggest that a belief in zero tolerance does not result in improved student behavior, but in an increase in student exclusion from school and a decrease in support to students.

Although these findings present an argument that schools with high rates of suspension provide less support to students and have less supportive climates, they do not demonstrate that discipline practices are the cause of low levels of support. It may be that students in schools with less supportive environments are more apt to engage in risky behavior, and it is their behavior that is responsible for high suspension rates. This study built upon previous research by testing a directional relationship between the discipline practice of zero tolerance and perceptions of support in the school climate.

As Authoritative Discipline Theory contends, both support and structure are necessary to promote positive outcomes for students. This study hypothesized that zero tolerance policies are inconsistent with efforts to support students and negatively impact student help seeking. The third research question in this study examined the influence of zero tolerance expulsions on support and help seeking in schools.

This study examined student attitudes towards help seeking for bullying and threats of violence. Existing literature suggests that supportive school climate promotes help seeking among elementary school students and help seeking for general problems, but does not specifically address adolescent populations and help seeking in response to bullying and threats of violence. Existing theories about gender and racial differences in help seeking, such as stigma and cultural norms, point to supportive climate as a possible intervention strategy to reduce discrepancies. However, no studies have specifically addressed whether or not supportive climate is associated with smaller discrepancies in help seeking. Finally, zero tolerance literature suggests that these policies are negatively associated with principals' priorities to support students. Studies have not yet investigated

how zero tolerance expulsions influence perceptions of support among teachers and students. Additionally, there is debate in the literature about the influence of zero tolerance policies on student willingness to confide in school staff; proponents state it increases student cooperation and critics assert it reduces trust. There is a need to investigate the relationship between zero tolerance and student willingness to seek help for safety concerns. This study examined these three questions (1.) How is supportive school climate associated with student help-seeking attitudes?, (2.) How is supportive school climate associated with gender and race differences in student help seeking?, and (3.) How are zero tolerance expulsions associated with supportive school climate and help-seeking attitudes?

Chapter 3

Methods

Sample

This sample was obtained as part of a larger study conducted by the Virginia Youth Violence Project in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Center for School Safety of the Department of Criminal Justice Services. The study was funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice. Three hundred and fourteen public high schools in the state of Virginia were eligible for participation. Eligible schools had to include grades 9-12, provide the opportunity to earn a high school diploma, and serve a majority of students under the age of 18. Educational programs were not eligible if they were housed in a juvenile detention facility, if students attended for less than ½ the school day, or if the majority of the student population had a handicapping condition that would prevent them from being able to take the survey.

Of the 314 schools that were eligible, 289 schools submitted all required teacher, student, and principal surveys. Ninth grade enrollment among these schools ranged from 6 to 864 with an average enrollment of 348 students. Total enrollment ranged from 33 to 2,881 with an average enrollment of 1207 students. Enrollment distribution for participating schools is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Ninth Grade Enrollment for Participating Schools

	Number of schools	Percentage of sample
<25	1	<1%
25-100	27	11%
101-299	73	33%
300-499	65	30%
>500	62	25%

Table 2

Total Enrollment for Participating Schools

	Number of schools	Percentage of sample
<500	50	20%
500-999	66	23%
1000-1499	58	22%
1500-1999	54	20%
>2000	42	15%

Non-participating schools tended to be smaller than participating schools, with an average 9th grade enrollment of 185 (range 1 to 812) students. The distribution of school size did not differ significantly from the distribution of participating schools. With a few exceptions (e.g., small rural schools), each school selected around 25 ninth grade students

from their enrollment list using a set of random numbers generated for each school based on class size. From each school about ten ninth grade teachers were selected using a similar set of random numbers based on the estimated number of ninth grade teachers in each school.

Students

A total of 7,431 9th-grade students completed the Virginia High School Study Survey. Of these students, 49% were girls and 51% were boys. The student sample was 63% Caucasian, 22% African American, 5% Hispanic, 3% Asian American, 1% American Indian, and 5% Other. This distribution does not differ substantially from the high school population in Virginia as a whole, which a 2005 survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics measured as 68% Caucasian, 20% African American, 6% Hispanic, 5% Asian American, <1% American Indian, and <2% Other. The mean age of participants was 14.8, with a range of 12-17 years. Table 3 presents the distribution of participant ages.

Table 3

Age Distribution for Participating Students

	12	13	14	15	16	17
Number of Students	1	12	2272	4175	790	181
Percentage of sample	<1%	<1%	31%	56%	11%	2%

Teachers

A total of 2,353 9th grade teachers completed the teacher version of the Virginia High School Safety Survey. Of these teachers, 62% were female and 38% were male. Eighty-three percent of the teachers were Caucasian, 12% were African American, 2% were Latino, 1% were Asian American, 1% were American Indian and 1% were Other.

Principals

Two hundred eighty nine principals completed the state's School Safety Audit survey as required by the Department of Criminal Justice Services. This survey concerns school safety conditions, including the use of zero tolerance policies. No personal information was collected concerning the principals.

Procedure

Student and teacher survey data were collected during the spring of 2007. Principals for every eligible high school were mailed an instruction packet in March 2007. The packet contained a written explanation of the school safety study, paper copies of the teacher and student surveys, a sample permission letter for parents, and instructions for randomly selecting participants. The packet also contained a CD ROM with separate video instructions for the principal, teacher, and student surveys.

Principals were contacted via email one week after the packet was mailed to ensure receipt, answer any questions pertaining to survey administration, and confirm their scheduled administration date. Principals who did not respond to this email were called. Representatives from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services contacted any principals who did not respond to phone calls. Any schools that did not

submit surveys after the date they had scheduled administration were contacted again by phone and reminded that survey completion was a mandatory part of the school safety audit process.

Principals were instructed to choose 25 students and 10 teachers using personalized random number sheets that were generated based on the number of 9th grade students and teachers at each school. In the event that students were absent or for some other reason unavailable to complete the survey, principals were to select an alternate using the next random number available. Parents were mailed a letter that informed them of the study and offered them the opportunity to contact their school if they did not want their child to participate. Alternate students were selected in the event that parents opted out of their child's participation.

Principals were asked to show all 25 students the appropriate video instructions and then have them complete the survey electronically. Principals were asked to instruct their teachers to watch the appropriate video and complete the survey independently some time during the same week that students were administered the survey. All surveys were administered anonymously.

Measures

Help-Seeking Attitudes Scale. This 8-item scale was adapted from a measure of student attitudes about seeking help from teachers for bullying or other threats of violence (Williams & Cornell, 2005). Students responded either *1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3=Somewhat Agree,* or *4=Strongly Agree* to the eight statements presented in Table 4 (next page). Williams and Cornell (2005) used an earlier version of

this scale in a study showing that gender, grade level, and student attitudes toward aggression affected student willingness to seek help for bullying and threats of violence.

The standardized alpha coefficient for this scale was .78. With a minimum possible score for each respondent of 8 indicating negative attitudes towards help seeking, and a maximum possible score of 32 indicating positive attitudes towards help seeking, response means at the individual level ranged from 8 to 32 (M = 22.2, SD = 4.66). School level averages ranged from 17 to 22 (M = 22.2, SD = 1.67). A distribution chart for this scale at both the individual and school level is shown in Figures 2 and 3. Distribution charts for individual items can be found in Appendix A.

Table 4

Help-Seeking Attitudes Scale

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 this 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.
Students tell teachers when other students are being bullied.
Teachers here make it clear to students that bullying is not tolerated.
Students here try to stop bullying when they see it happening.

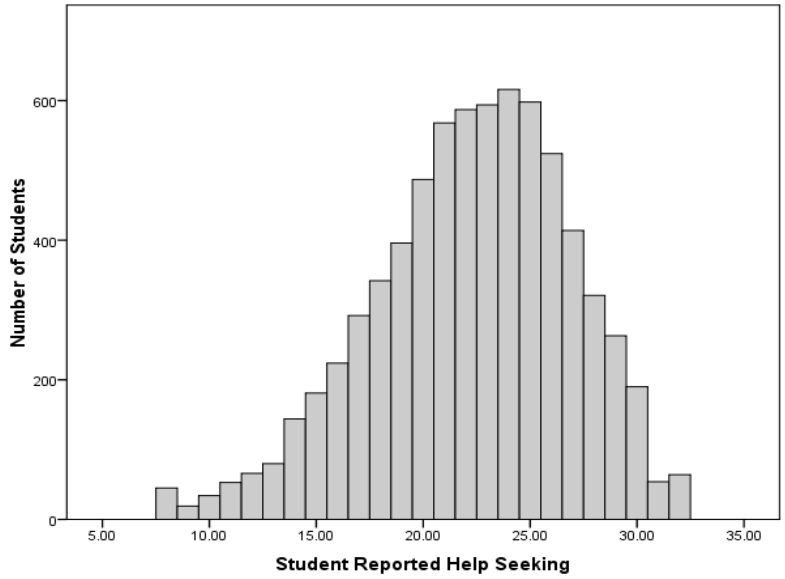

Figure 2. Distribution of help-seeking attitudes scale at the individual level.

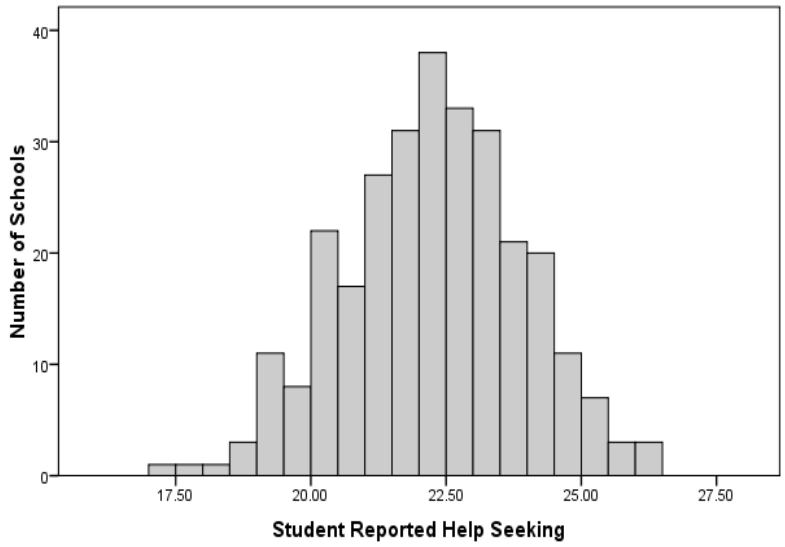

Figure 3. Distribution of help-seeking attitudes scale at the school level.

Supportive Climate Scale-Student Report. The supportive climate scale measured the extent to which students perceive that adults at school care about students, respect

them, and want them to do well. Austin and Duerr (2005) developed this scale in order to assess student perceptions in the California public schools. Students were asked to state whether they *1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat Agree, 4-Agree,* or *5-Strongly Agree* with the statements presented in the Table 5.

Table 5

Supportive Climate Scale-Student Report

Adults in my school…
Really care about all students
Acknowledge and pay attention to students
Want all students to do their best
Listen to what students have to say
Believe that every student can be a success
Treat all students fairly
Support and treat students with respect
Feel a responsibility to improve the school

Responses at the individual level ranged from 8, indicating low perceptions of support from teachers, to 40, indicating high perceptions of support from teachers (M= 27.3, SD=6.79). Supportive environment in our analyses is used as a school-level variable. Response averages at the school level ranged from 20 to 33 (M = 27.3, SD = 2.24). The standardized alpha coefficient for this scale was .92. A distribution chart for this scale at the school level is shown in Figure 4.

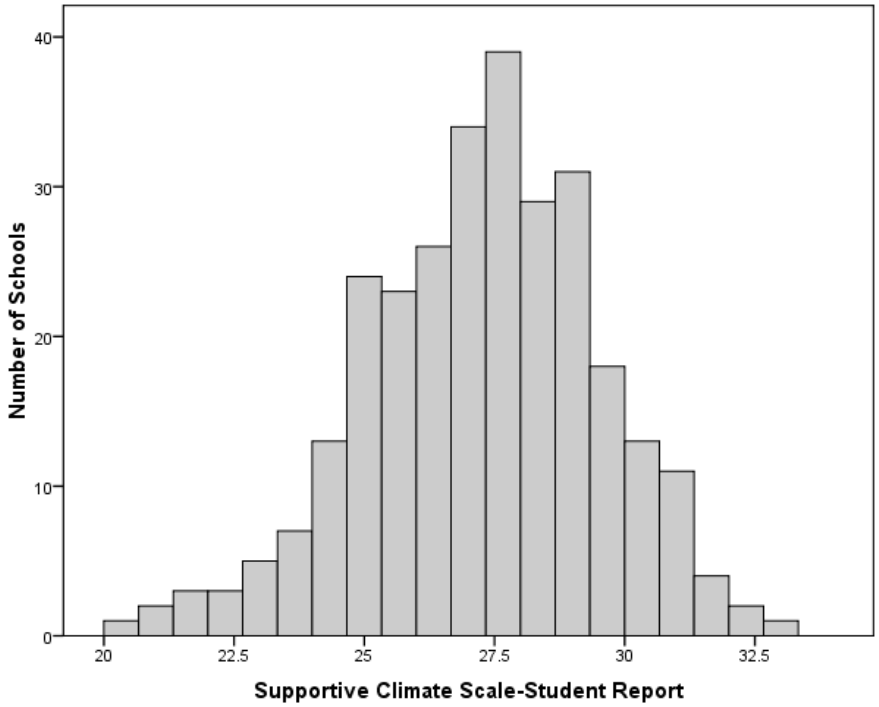

Figure 4. Distribution of the supportive climate scale (student report) at the school level.

Supportive Climate Scale-Teacher Report. For the purposes of assessing teacher perceptions of support from the administration, the questions on the student support scale were reworded to assess how teachers perceive their administrators. This is the first time that this scale has been adapted for the purposes of assessing teacher perceptions of the school environment. Administrative support to teachers includes effective disciplinary actions as well as fairness and respect. Hoy and Feldman (1987) developed an inventory of school health and found that *principal influence*, including executing administrative and managerial duties, was a key element in school health. To incorporate the important role that disciplining students plays in administrative support to teachers, three additional questions related to discipline were added to this scale. All items are presented in Table

6. Teachers were asked to state whether they *1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat Agree, 4-Agree,* or *5-Strongly Agree* with each item.

Table 6

Supportive Climate Scale-Teacher Report

Administrators in my school…
Really care about all teachers
Acknowledge and pay attention to teachers
Want all teachers to do their best
Listen to what teachers have to say
Believe that every teacher can be a success
Treat all teachers fairly
Support and treat teachers with respect
Feel a responsibility to improve the school
Disciplinary consequences for students at this school tend to be too harsh
I trust that my administration will handle discipline fairly
When I refer a student to the office for a discipline problem, I feel confident that it will be handled appropriately

The standardized alpha coefficient for this 11-item scale in our sample was .96. With a possible minimum of 11 indicating low teacher perceptions of support and fairness in discipline from the administration, and a maximum of 55 indicating high

teacher perceptions of support and fairness, responses at the individual level ranged from 14 to 52 (M = 40.4, SD = 7.96). Supportive climate as reported by teachers is used as a school-level variable in analyses. School averages ranged from 25-50 (M = 31.3, SD = 3.61). A distribution chart for this scale is shown in Figure 5.

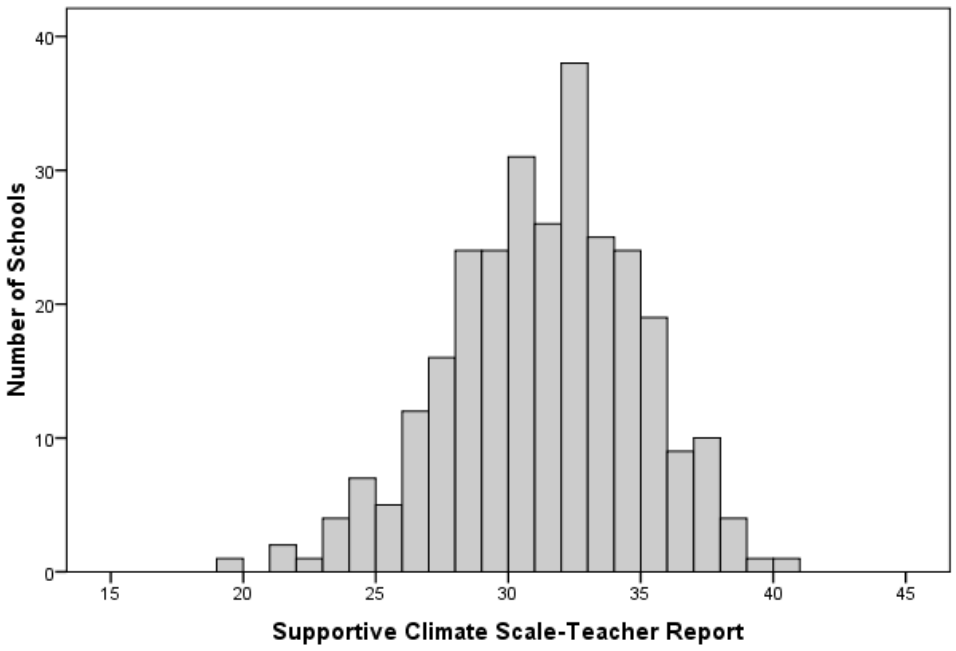

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Figure 5. Distribution of supportive climate scale (teacher report) at the school level.

Teacher Encouragement of Help Seeking Scale. Teacher support for student help seeking was assessed using a 7-item scale developed for this study. Teachers were asked to report whether they *1-Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Agree, 4- Strongly Agree* with the statements presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Teacher Encouragement of Help Seeking Scale

I encourage all students to come to me for academic help.
I let students know that I am available to talk outside of class.
I encourage students to turn to me with personal problems.
I encourage students to tell me if they are being bullied.
I encourage students to come forward if they have information about a gun at school.
I encourage students to come forward if they have information about a student who plans to hurt him/herself or someone else.
I believe that teachers should be mentors as well as instructors.

The standardized alpha coefficient for this 6-item scale in our sample was .84. The minimum possible score for this scale was 6, indicating that teachers did not encourage students to seek help and the maximum possible score for the scale was 28, indicating that teachers strongly encourage student to seek help. School averages ranged from 21 to 27 (M = 24.4, SD = 1.05). A distribution chart for this scale at the school level is shown in Figure 6.

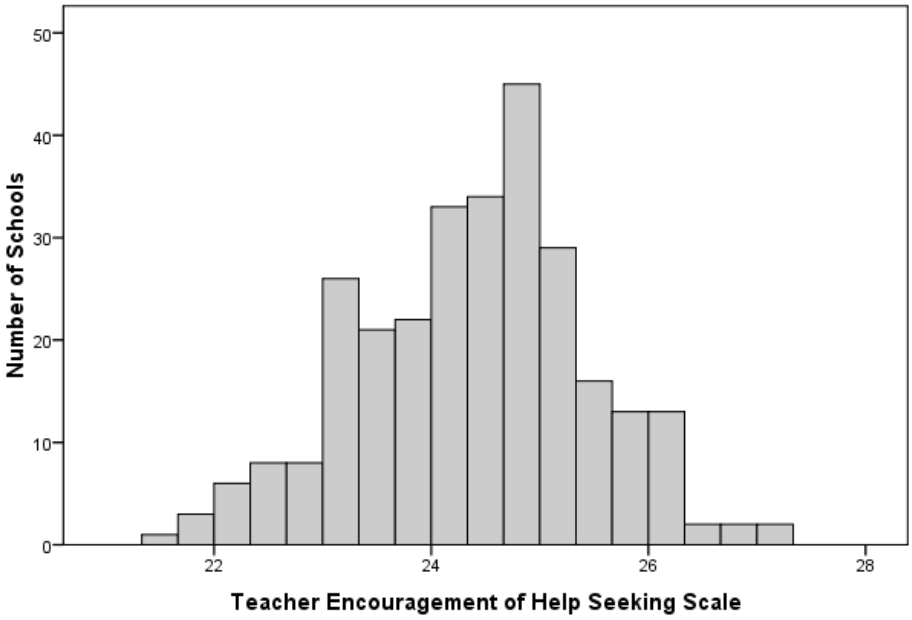

Figure 6. Distribution of the teacher encouragement of help seeking scale at the school level.

As is evident from this figure, there was little variation at the school level in teacher encouragement of help seeking. Responses at the individual level also had little variation, ranging from 7 to 28 (M = 24.35, SD = 3.07, skewness = -.885).

Closer examination of the Teacher Encouragement Scale at the individual level revealed that almost all teachers reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with various statements about whether or not they encouraged students to seek help for various reasons. Percentages of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed with each item are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Percentages of Positive Responses on Teacher Encouragement of Help Seeking Scale

How much do you agree with the following statements…	Percentage of Teachers who Agree or Strongly Agree
I encourage students to come to me for academic help.	99%
I let students know that I am available to talk outside of class.	97%
I encourage students to turn to me with personal problems.	78%
I encourage students to tell me if they are being bullied.	92%
I encourage students to come forward if they have information about a gun at school.	93%
I encourage students to come forward if they have information about a student who plans to hurt him/herself or someone else.	94%
I believe that teachers should be mentors as well as instructors.	98%

It was suspected that the strong social desirability of these questions accounts for the lack of variation in teacher response. One item in this scale did have some variation. In response to the question, "I encourage students to turn to me with personal problems," 1.2 % of teachers strongly disagreed, 20.8% disagreed, 50.5% agreed, and 27.5% strongly agreed. However, this single item did not correlate with the other support variables or the help seeking variables. Because of the limited range of responses, this scale was excluded from further analysis.

Zero Tolerance. The extent of zero tolerance policies enforced in each school was assessed using principal report. The principal survey provided the following definition of zero tolerance: "A zero tolerance violation is defined as engaging in a prohibited behavior that results in expulsion, although there may be provision to use an alternative disciplinary consequence if it is deemed appropriate." Principals were then asked four questions about the existence of this policy in their schools. These questions are presented in Table 9, with their corresponding numbers and percentages.

Table 9

Principal Reported Zero Tolerance

Survey Question	Number of students
How many students in total did you recommend to the school board for expulsion this past school year, 2006-07?	2,017
How many of these students were recommended for expulsion because of zero tolerance offenses?	1,279 (63% of 2,017)
Based on the legislative authority granted to the school board, how many students from your school were expelled for zero tolerance offenses?	571 (45% of 1,279)
How many students from your school were not expelled, but received an alternative disciplinary sanction for zero tolerance offenses?	1014 (79% of 1,279)

When added together, the number of students who were expelled for zero tolerance offenses and the number of students who received an alternate consequence for zero tolerance offenses exceeds the number of students recommended for expulsion due to zero tolerance offenses. Closer examination revealed that sixty-seven principals were responsible for this discrepancy. Examination of principals with discrepant reports does

not reveal a clear pattern. It appears that these principals misunderstood the questions asked.

The "number of students recommended for expulsion due to zero tolerance offenses" was chosen as the most reliable indicator of zero tolerance policies in schools for two important reasons. First, answering this question correctly did not require principals to understand any questions that came before it. Second, the number of students recommended for expulsion most closely reflects school policy, as opposed to the independent decisions of regional school boards. Responses to this question ranged from 0 to 42 (M = 4.6, SD = 7.24). A distribution these responses in presented in Figure 7.

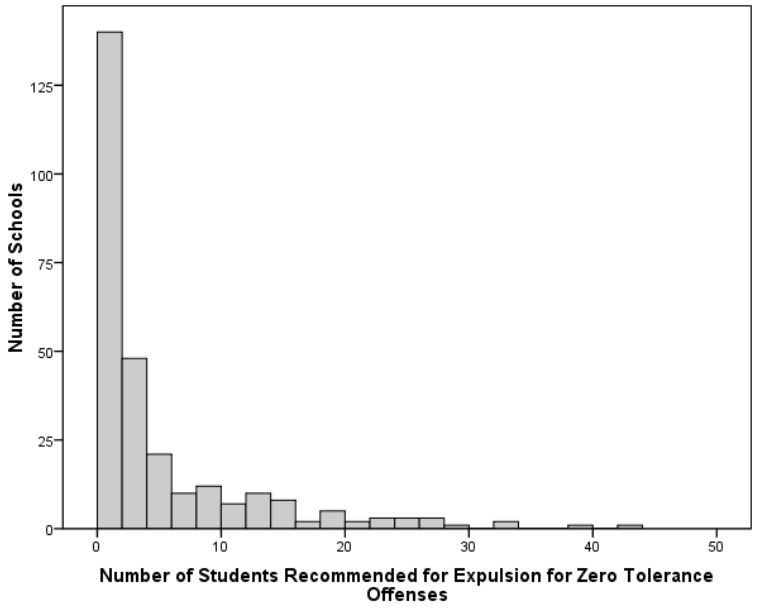

Figure 7. Number of students at each school recommended for expulsion due to zero tolerance offenses.

Control Variables

All analyses in this study controlled for the following school composition variables because of their potential influence on student willingness to seek help.

School Size. As reported previously, total enrollment in participating schools ranged from 33 to 2,881 with an average enrollment of 1207 students. Student enrollment for each school was divided by 100 to create a school-size-in-hundreds control variable.

Proportion African American. Both percent minority and percent African American were investigated as possible controls. These variables were highly correlated ($r = .88$, $p < .05$). African American students were the only racial group whose help-seeking attitudes differed significantly from other students' (see results section). It was therefore considered most important to control for the proportion of African American students, whose experience with regards to help seeking appears to differ from other minority groups.

Proportion of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Priced Meals [FRPM]. FRPM was used as a control for poverty. FRPM ranged from 0 to 100%. The average proportion in schools was 30%, with a standard deviation of 16%.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis was conducted at both the individual and school levels. To assess the relationships among help seeking, supportive climate, and zero tolerance, multiple linear regressions were conducted at the school level. Individual student and teacher data was aggregated so that each school received a score on the supportive climate scales and a score on the help-seeking attitudes scale that was the average of all reporters from that

school. School level analysis allowed for the control of school composition variables, as well as the examination of school-level perceptions of supportive climate.

For each multiple regression analysis, school composition variables were entered at step 1 and measures of supportive climate were entered at step 2. Possible collinearity between control variables was investigated. Particular concern was present about an overlap between the proportion of African American students and the proportion of students eligible for free and reduced priced meals. Separate analyses were conducted with each control variable individually and all controls as a group and no differences in significance were noted. Therefore, all three control variables were used.

Because the measures of help seeking and supportive climate are both based on student report, there was a risk that any relationship found would be the result of shared method variance and lack of independence among reporters. To address this issue, split sample analysis was conducted. Individual student responses from each school were randomly divided into two groups in order to create two student samples nested within schools. Perceptions of support in the first sample were then used to predict help seeking attitudes in the second.

Hierarchichal linear modeling was used to investigate the potential for supportive climate to moderate gender and race differences in help seeking. Hierarchichal lineal modeling accounts for the effect of school-level differences in composition and climate on individual differences in help seeking.

Chapter 4

Results

Research Question 1: How are perceptions of support within schools associated with help-seeking attitudes?

The relationship between perceptions of support and help seeking was examined at the school level. Student and teacher perceptions of supportive climate were correlated ($r = .28$, $p < .05$). Both student ($r = .75$, $p < .05$) and teacher ($r = .15$, $p < .05$) perceptions of supportive climate correlated positively with student-reported help-seeking attitudes. Table 10 presents correlations between study variables at the school level.

Table 10

Correlations Among Study Variables

	Help Seeking Attitudes	Supportive Climate-Student Report	Supportive Climate-Teacher Report	Zero Tolerance
School Size	-.20**	-.18**	-.23**	.43**
Proportion African American	-.35**	-.38**	-.29**	.09
FRPM	-.08	-.12*	-.02	-.18**
Help Seeking Attitudes	1.00	.75**	.15**	-.10*
Supportive Climate-Student Report		1.00	.28**	-.18**
Supportive Climate-Teacher Report			1.00	-.17**
Zero Tolerance				1.00

*p < .05, ** p < .01

In a regression analysis controlling for school size, proportion African American, and proportion of students eligible for free and reduced price meals (FRPM), student perceptions of support predicted help seeking (β = .72, p < .05). This scale accounted for 44% of the variance in help-seeking, above and beyond the contribution of school composition variables.

In a simple regression, teacher perceptions of support also predicted student help seeking (β = .07, p < .05) and accounted for 3% of the variance in help seeking. However, after controlling for school size, proportion African American, and FRPM, this relationship was no longer significant (β = .04, p > .05). Results of multiple regression analyses are presented in Tables 11 and 12. These analyses are at the school level. The three control variables were entered at step 1 of the analyses and supportive climate was entered at step 2.

Table 11

Multiple Regression Analyses for Student Reported Climate and Help-Seeking Attitudes

	β	p value	R^2 Change	F	p value
Control Variables (Step 1)			.15	16.42	.00
School Size	-.14	.03			
Proportion African American	-.34	.00			
FRPM	.02	.75			
Supportive Climate-Student Report	.72	.00	.44	295.39	.00

Table 12

Multiple Regression Analyses for Teacher Reported Climate and Help-Seeking Attitudes

	β	p value	R^2 Change	F	p value
Control Variables (Step 1)			.15	16.73	.00
School Size	-.14	.04			
Proportion African American	-.35	.00			
FRPM	.03	.72			
Supportive Climate-Teacher Report	.04	.51	.00	.43	.51

One limitation of these analyses is that both support and help seeking were obtained from student report on the school safety survey, so that their correlation may be inflated by shared method variance and lack of independence among reporters. For these reasons, separate analyses using a split sample were conducted. Splitting the sample into two creates independent reporters for measures of support and help seeking. Correlations between like variables in the two samples are presented in Table 13 (next page).

In a regression analysis at the school level controlling for school size, proportion African American, and FRPM, student perceptions of support in group 1 predicted help seeking in group 2 ($\beta = .34$, $p < .05$). Perceptions of support in group 1 accounted for 10% of the variance in help-seeking in group 2, above and beyond the contribution of school composition variables. Results are presented in Table 14 (next page).

Table 13

Correlations Among Variables Across Split Sample

	Help Seeking Attitudes-Group 1	Help Seeking Attitudes-Group 2	Supportive Climate-Group 1	Supportive Climate-Group 2
Help Seeking Attitudes-Group 1	1.00	.50**	.72**	.38**
Help Seeking Attitudes-Group 2		1.00	.40**	.72**
Supportive Climate-Group 1			1.00	.43**
Supportive Climate- Group 2				1.00

*p < .05, ** p < .01

Table 14

Multiple Regression Analyses for Help Seeking with Split Sample

	β	p value	R^2 Change	F	p value
Control Variables (Step 1)			.10	9.93	.00
School Size	-.05	.48			
Proportion African American	-.32	.00			
FRPM	.08	.29			
Supportive Climate-Group 1	.34	.00	.10	36.72	.00

Research Question #2: Can supportive school climate moderate the association between gender, race and help seeking?

Race and gender differences in help seeking are presented in Table 15 (next page).

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine the significance of mean differences in help seeking among racial and gender groups. As predicted, girls were more likely to endorse help seeking than boys ($F = 97.2$, $p < .05$). Significant differences in help seeking also existed between racial groups ($F = 28.03$, $p < .05$). Follow-up Tukey comparisons revealed that African American students endorsed less willingness to seek help than White, Hispanic, and Asian students. African American students were therefore compared to all other students in subsequent analyses.

Hierarchichal Linear Modeling (HLM) was used to account for the effect of school level differences in composition and climate on individual differences in help seeking. Level 1 of the HLM model represented individual student level factors. Within a particular school, outcome variable *Yij* at the student level (help-seeking attitudes) was affected by gender and race (African American vs. not African American). The effects of individual level factors were captured by the coefficients *B1j* and *B2j*.

Level-1 Model:

Y = B0 + B1*(Gender) + B2*(Race) + R

Table 15

Means and Standard Deviations by Race and Gender

	Help-Seeking Scale					
	N	Mean	SD	F value	p value	ω^2
Gender				97.2	.00	.01
Male	3681	21.7	4.81			
Female	3589	22.8	4.43			
Race				28.03	.00	.02
White	4524	22.6	4.45			
Black	1593	21.3	4.84			
Hispanic	384	22.3	5.04			
Asian	226	22.8	4.36			
American Indian	86	21.2	5.43			
Other	345	21.0	4.86			
Bi-variate Race				83.37	.00	.01
Black	1593	21.29	4.85			
Non-Black	5563	22.23	4.57			

Student reported supportive climate was represented at Level 2. The school composition variables of size, proportion African American, and FRPM were also

controlled at level 2. Teacher reported supportive climate was not included in the model, as it did not predict help seeking after controlling for school composition variables. School level variables were included in the model as the coefficients *γ01, γ02, γ03, γ11, γ12, γ23, γ21, γ22, γ23.*

Level-2 Model:

B0 = γ00 + γ01*(School Size) + γ02*(Proportion AA) + γ03*(FRPM) + γ04*(Supportive Climate-Student Report) + U0

B1 = γ10 + γ11*(School Size) + γ12*(Proportion AA) + γ13*(FRPM) + γ14*(Supportive Climate-Student Report)

B2 = γ20 + γ21*(School Size) + γ22*(Proportion AA) + γ23*(FRPM) + γ24*(Supportive Climate-Student Report)

Table 16 (next page) presents the summary of HLM analysis for the outcome variable of student reported help-seeking. The ICC for this model is 0.088, indicating that 9% of the total variation in help-seeking attitudes occurred between schools.

Individual level differences in help-seeking attitudes were observed in this model. Girls were more willing to seek help than boys (*B1j* = 1.03, $p < .05$) and African American students were less willing to seek help than students from other racial groups (*B2j* = -.86, $p < .05$). Supportive climate at the school level had a significant positive influence in student help seeking at the individual level (γ04 = .59, $p < .05$). No school composition variable (school size, proportion African American, FRPM) significantly influenced help seeking at the individual level. Supportive climate accounted for one fourth of the total variation in help seeking between schools.

Table 16

HLM Analyses at Level-1

Full Model	Parameter	Estimate	SE	*p* value
Fixed Effects-Level 1				
Gender (0: male, 1: female)	*B1j*	1.03	.11	.00
Race (0: Not African American, 1: African American)	*B2j*	-0.86	.14	.00
Fixed Effects-Level 2				
Intercept	γ00	5.47	1.33	.00
School Size	γ01	.00	.00	.64
Proportion African American	γ02	-.40	.55	.47
Proportion Free and Reduced Meals	γ03	.78	.78	.32
Supportive Climate-Student Report	γ04	0.59	.04	.00

Next, the potential for supportive climate to moderate gender and racial differences in help seeking was examined. The results from this analysis are presented in Table 17.

Table 17

HLM Analyses at Level-2

Full Model	Parameter	Estimate	SE	*p* value
Level 2-Gender				
Intercept	γ10	5.79	1.50	0.00
School Size	γ11	-0.05	0.00	0.02
Proportion African American	γ12	-0.00	0.63	0.99
FRPM	γ13	-1.67	0.94	0.07
Supportive Climate	γ14	-0.13	0.05	0.01
Level 2-African American Students				
Intercept	γ20	-1.12	2.06	0.58
School Size	γ21	0.03	0.00	0.22
Proportion AA	γ22	0.62	0.76	0.42
FRPM	γ23	0.55	1.38	0.69
Supportive Climate	γ24	-0.01	0.07	0.89

Student perceptions of higher support in schools reduced the differences in help seeking between boys and girls (γ14= -.13, $p < .05$). School size also moderated gender differences in help seeking, such that larger schools had smaller gender differences (γ11= -.05, $p < .05$). Higher perceptions of support did not significantly reduce racial differences in help seeking (γ24 = -.01, $p > .05$).

Increases in supportive climate were associated with increases in help-seeking attitudes among both boys and girls, but help seeking among boys increased at a greater rate so that the discrepancy was reduced. Table 18 (next page) presents a comparison of help seeking among boys and girls in low (bottom third) and high (top third) support schools. The gender difference in help seeking remained significant under all levels of support. However, as compared to all schools, the slope of the difference was greater in low support schools and smaller in high support schools.

Research Question #3: How are zero tolerance expulsions associated with supportive school climate and help-seeking?

As predicted, zero tolerance negatively correlated with both student (r = -.18, $p < .05$) and teacher (r = -.17, $p < .05$) perceptions of support. Zero tolerance was also negatively correlated with help seeking in a one-tailed t-test (r = -.11, $p > .05$).

In regression analyses controlling for school size, proportion African American, and FRPM, the negative relationship between zero tolerance and supportive climate as reported by both students (β = -.11, $p > .05$) and teachers (β = -.11, $p > .05$) did not remain significant. Neither did the negative relationship between zero tolerance and help seeking. Results of these school-level analyses are presented in Tables 19 and 20 (page 78).

Zero tolerance had no direct effect on help seeking; however, the possibility that it would interact with support to affect help seeking was examined. A regression analysis was run in order to determine if the interaction between zero tolerance and support affected help seeking. Neither the interaction between zero tolerance and student-reported support (β =

-.005, $p > .05$, .005), nor teacher-reported support ($\beta = -.05$, $p > .05$), significantly affected help seeking.

Table 18

Comparison of Help-Seeking Attitudes by Gender in High and Low Support Schools

Gender	N	Mean	SD	F value	*p* value	ω^2	Slope
All Schools				97.20	.00	.01	1.08
Male	2445	21.77	4.91				
Female	2400	22.77	4.45				
Low Support Schools				39.80	.00	.02	5.49
Male	1205	20.26	4.95				
Female	1159	21.48	4.48				
High Support Schools				18.17	.00	.00	.31
Male	1240	23.23	4.40				
Female	1241	23.92	4.15				

Table 19

Multiple Regression Analyses for Zero Tolerance and Supportive Climate

	β	*p* value	R^2 Change	F	*p* value
Control Variables (Step 1)			.16	17.74	.00
School Size	-.14	.04			
Proportion AA	-.36	.00			
FRPM	-.01	.91			
Zero Tolerance	-.11	.09	.01	2.94	.09

Table 20

Multiple Regression Analyses for Zero Tolerance and Help Seeking

	β	*p* value	R^2 Change	F	*p* value
Control Variables (Step 1)			.14	15.23	.00
School Size	-.15	.03			
Proportion AA	-.33	.00			
FRPM	.02	.84			
Zero Tolerance	-.01	.84	.00	.04	.85

In order to further examine the possibility of an interaction effect in the most extreme cases, a 2 x 2 ANOVA was also conducted. The impact of zero tolerance in high

support schools (top third) was examined in comparison to the impact of zero tolerance in low support schools (bottom third). Zero tolerance was treated as a dichotomous variable: high zero tolerance (top third) and low zero tolerance (bottom third). This ANOVA revealed that zero tolerance had no impact on help seeking attitudes, regardless of whether or not there were low ($F(1, 90) = 1.25$, $p > .05$.) or high ($F(1, 91) = 1.31$, $p > .05$.) levels of support in the school.

Additional Analyses

As stated previously, approximately 9% of the variance in student help seeking was found to occur at the school level. Exploratory analyses were conducted in order to investigate additional school-level factors that contributed to the variation in student help seeking. First, schools in which students had positive attitudes towards help seeking (top quartile) were compared to schools with less positive student attitudes towards help seeking (bottom quartile) on various descriptive variables. Table 21 (next page) presents these comparisons. Schools with more positive student attitudes towards help seeking were found to have fewer students enrolled and a smaller proportion of minority enrollment. These schools also had higher academic achievement, fewer disciplinary offenses, and fewer suspensions. Interestingly, the rate of expulsions did not differ between schools in which students had positive or negative attitudes towards help seeking.

Table 21

Comparison of High and Low Help Seeking Schools

Quartile	N	Mean	SD	F value	*p* value	Cohen's *d*
School Enrollment				13.21	.00	.61
Top	72	921.44	635.3			
Bottom	72	1326.81	696.0			
Proportion Minority Enrollment				28.67	.00	.90
Top	72	.22	.24			
Bottom	72	.45	.27			
Proportion Free and Reduced Priced Meals				2.22	.14	.24
Top	72	.30	.17			
Bottom	72	.34	.16			
Disciplinary Offenses in Ninth Grade				23.68	.00	.81
Top	72	41.97	30.08			
Bottom	72	71.29	41.33			
Percent Short Term Suspensions				13.14	.00	.71
Top	72	.21	.18			
Bottom	72	.43	.48			
Percent Long Term Suspensions				11.66	.00	.45
Top	72	.0035	.0051			
Bottom	72	.01	.02			
Percent Expulsions				.30	.58	.10
Top	72	.0023	.0043			
Bottom	72	.0027	.0038			
Math Achievement				8.15	.00	.48
Top	72	88.63	5.67			
Bottom	72	85.07	8.89			
Science Achievement				10.32	.00	.66
Top	72	89.00	4.71			
Bottom	72	85.83	4.92			
History Achievement				4.74	.03	.34
Top	72	91.32	4.74			
Bottom	72	89.32	6.17			

Multiple regression analyses were also conducted to determine the percentage of variance in student help seeking explained by other scales related to structure. Regression analyses controlled for the school composition variables of student enrollment, proportion African American, and FPRM. Together, school composition variables accounted for 15% of the between-school variance in student reported help-seeking attitudes ($F = 16.42$, $p < .05$.). Results of four significant regression analyses are presented in Table 22 (next page), and represent the percentage of variance accounted for by each scale above and beyond school composition variables. All four scales together, entered at step 2, accounted for 26% of the variance in student help-seeking attitudes ($F = 31.19$, $p < .05$). Descriptions of each scale are presented in Appendix C.

Table 22

Proportion of Variance in Help-Seeking Accounted for by Additional Survey Scales

	β	*p* value	R^2 Change	F	*p* value
Level 1 (Control Variables)			.15	16.42	.00
School Size	-.14	.03			
Proportion AA	-5.14	.00			
FRPM	-.31	.75			
Level 2 (Hypothesized Variables)					
All Four Scales Below			.26	31.19	.00
Student Experience School Rules	.36	.00	.12	49.08	.00
Student Daily Structure	.32	.00	.09	34.88	.00
Student Belief in School Rules	.50	.00	.23	105.97	.00
Teacher Daily Structure	.14	.02	.02	5.95	.02

Chapter 5

Discussion

Findings from this study indicate that supportive school climate is an important variable in student willingness to seek help from adults at school. Students who perceived their teachers as caring, respectful, and interested in them were more likely to endorse positive attitudes about seeking help for bullying and threats of violence. Student perceptions of supportive climate, aggregated to the school level, accounted for 44% of the variance in student help seeking. The relationship between supportive climate and help seeking in this study is correlational and does not provide evidence that supportive climate increases help seeking. A directional model was tested statistically; however, an experimental design is needed to confirm the theory that supportive climate increases help seeking.

School composition variables (school size, proportion African American, socioeconomic level) explained 11% of the variance in student help seeking. The effect size for supportive climate was found after controlling for these variables, which suggests that providing support to students can make a difference in help seeking in all types of schools. Schools of various sizes, economic levels and racial composition struggle to adapt existing violence prevention programs to suit their needs. Teacher support to students in the form of caring and respect is associated with increased help seeking in any type of school setting.

Supportive school climate was associated with student attitudes towards help seeking for all types of threats. Among individual students in schools with highly supportive climates, as defined by student ratings in the top third of the sample of 289 schools, 61% stated that they would tell a teacher if they were being bullied. This is contrasted with 46% of students in low support schools who said they would tell a teacher if they were being bullied. Ninety-one percent of students in high support schools stated that they would tell a teacher if another student brought a gun to school, versus 78% in low support schools. And, 85% of students in high support schools stated they would tell a teacher if another student threatened to kill someone versus 73% of students in low support schools.

Findings that link supportive climate and student help seeking are consistent with qualitative studies with small samples of students in which students hypothesized that they would be more likely to seek help from adults who possess supportive qualities (Lindsay & Kalafat, 1998; Wilson & Deanne, 2001). This study used a survey methodology in a large, representative, statewide sample and similarly found that, in schools where teachers are perceived as being supportive, students are more willing to seek help.

Shared Method Variance

A limitation of this study is that measures of both help seeking and supportive climate were obtained from the same student self-report survey. Student reporting on both measures raises the possibility that shared method variance inflated the relationship between perceptions of support and help seeking. Additional analyses were therefore

conducted using separate samples of students. In order to create separate samples, individual student responses from each school were randomly divided into two groups to create two student samples nested within schools. Scale scores for each school were created by aggregating the nested individual level data at the school level. School-level perceptions of support in one sample were then used to predict school-level help seeking attitudes in the other. In a multiple regression analysis controlling for school size, proportion African American, and proportion of students receiving free and reduced lunch, perceptions of support in group 1 contributed to 10% of the variance in student help seeking in group 2.

The split sample analysis shows a reduction in the effect size of supportive climate from 44% to 10%. This indicates that shared method variance likely made some contribution to the strength of the correlation. Splitting participants into two samples required that measures of supportive climate and help seeking were based on fewer reporters. Fewer reporters may have resulted in less reliable and accurate measures, which may also have reduced the correlation between variables. Despite the reduction in effect size, these findings still demonstrate an important relationship between support and willingness to seek help. Many studies of student behavior rely on self-report measures. These analyses offer a potentially useful method for future studies to assess relationships that may be confounded by shared method variance.

Teacher Perceptions of Supportive Climate

Teacher perceptions of supportive climate also predicted student willingness to seek help (R^2 change = .03) but did not make a significant contribution to the variance in

help seeking above and beyond school composition variables. Other studies have controlled for demographic variables and demonstrated that teacher ratings of school climate relate independently and meaningfully to student adjustment outcomes (Brand, 2008; Shouse, 1996). There are several possible explanations for the absence of this finding in our sample.

The teacher-reported school climate measure in this study focused exclusively on teacher relationships with administrators, which may only be a small part of the complex construct of school climate. Shouse (1996) studied teacher perceptions of school climate across 23 middle schools. The study measured four dimensions of school climate: Shared Values, Democratic Governance, Teacher Relationships, and Teacher Caring for Students. These dimensions respectively assessed the degree to which teachers agree with leadership decisions (i.e., "How comfortable do you feel with your school's approach to discipline?"), feel empowered by administrators (ie: "When differences arise in your school, how often is your principal responsive to different points of view expressed?"), have positive relationships with other teachers (ie: "How would you characterize the quality of teacher/teacher relationships at this school?"), and have positive relationships with students ("How many of the teachers at this school are willing to help students when they have problems outside of school?"). Items on the Shared Values and Democratic Governance scales most closely mirror the measure of teacher reported supportive climate used in the current study. Surprisingly, these measures were weakly correlated with the teacher perceptions of their relationships with students (.17 to .38). These

findings indicate that teacher perceptions of their relationships with administrators may not relate strongly to their perceptions of relationships with students.

Another possible explanation for the weakness of the relationship between teacher perceptions of supportive climate and student help-seeking attitudes is that there was not enough variation in teacher perceptions of support at the school level. Although the minimum possible score on the Teacher Supportive Climate Scale was 11, responses ranged from 25-50 (M=40.3, SD = 4.26). Teachers may have actually perceived high levels of support or they may have wanted to present their schools in a positive light. It is also possible that teachers who perceived administrators as unsupportive did not feel that they could answer survey questions truthfully. Finally, teachers may have genuinely felt that their administrators were supportive in the areas that the measure addressed, but not in other areas that the measure did not address. Whatever the reasons, there was little variation in the lower ranges of this scale, which may have prevented analyses from identifying a more robust relationship.

Gender and Help Seeking

Girls in this sample were more willing to seek help than boys (Cohen's d = .24). This finding is consistent with the multitude of studies that demonstrate that girls are more likely to seek help for all types of problems in school and out of school (Hunter et al., 2004; Unnever and Cornell, 2004). Gender differences in help seeking were investigated using hierarchical linear modeling. This is a nested method that allowed investigation of individual differences while also accounting for the contribution of differences between school environments.

The gender difference in help seeking was particularly notable with regards to bullying. For example, the percentage of boys and girls who stated there were adults at school they could turn to for help were approximately equal (76% versus 72%). However, 59% of the girls in the sample stated they would tell a teacher if they were being bullied as opposed to only 48% of boys.

As hypothesized, supportive school climate moderated gender differences in help seeking. The discrepancy in help seeking between boys and girls in the entire sample was equivalent to an average difference of 1.03 on the Help Seeking Attitudes Scale. Supportive climate moderated this difference such that for every one unit increase on the Supportive Climate Scale, the gender discrepancy in help-seeking attitudes was reduced .13. Expressed another way, in a school with maximum possible support (as represented by a perfect rating of 40 on the Supportive Climate Scale) the average gender difference in help seeking would be reduced from 1.03 to .59. In contrast, in a school with minimum possible support (a rating of 8 on the Supportive Climate Scale), this average difference between boys and girls on the Help Seeking Attitudes Scale would increase to 4.75. This scale included eight items about willingness to seek help (ie: "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."). Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale (*1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3=Somewhat Agree,* or *4=Strongly Agree*). A 1.03 difference represents a rating change of one point (ie: *Somewhat Disagree* to *Somewhat Agree*) on one item on this scale. A

4.75 difference represents a one point change in rating on approximately 5 items on this scale.

Improvements in help-seeking attitudes may be associated with supportive school climate for several reasons. Attitudes towards help seeking for bullying and threats of violence may be particularly sensitive to gendered messages about weakness. An important factor in supportive relationships may be their power to convey normalcy and acceptability of help seeking. Nadler (1998) hypothesized that boys often seek less help than girls because it is less socially acceptable for them to do so, and other studies have documented that boys who seek help perceive themselves as weak or socially ostracized (Timlin-Scalera, Ponterotto, & Blumberg, 2003; Eiser, Havermans, & Eiser, 1995). Martielli (2007) conducted an experiment with 196 male undergraduate students on willingness to seek help for depression. Half of the students were shown a psycho-educational video on the signs of depression in men and the benefit of seeking professional mental health; the other half were shown the same video with the addition of first-person testimonials from men who had sought therapy for depression. Undergraduates who were shown the video with first person testimonials reported a greater change in their attitudes towards seeking mental health treatment. It may be that supportive school climates normalize and re-enforce help seeking interactions. Boys who have had positive help seeking interactions, or know peers who have had such interactions, may be more likely to seek help when they are bullied or threatened with violence.

In addition to conveying that help seeking is acceptable, supportive schools and teachers may also convey that help seeking will be effective. Trembley and L'Heureux (2005) posit that the socialization of men places a strong importance on whether or not help seeking behavior will result in a solution. They propose that, in working with male patients, therapists have more success when they communicate that seeking help will influence outcomes. In focus group research with adolescents, "effectiveness" and "expertise" were repeatedly named as qualities that students look for when seeking help from counselors (Wilson & Deanne, 2001; Tartar, 2001). For boys, the perception that seeking help from teachers will result in teachers taking action against a bully may be particularly important factor in their decision to seek help. In low support schools, only 68% of male students believed a teacher would do something to help if they were being bullied, as opposed to 83% of male students in high support schools. Uniform and active response to bullying are critical and are already a part of many bullying prevention programs (Olweus, 1993). Clear messages to students about the effectiveness of seeking help from teachers can combat the messages that boys receive from other sources that discourage them from seeking help.

Race and Help Seeking

African-American students in this sample were less likely than students from any other racial group to endorse a willingness to seek help from adults at school ($\omega^2 = .10$). The difference found in this study was identified in a large, representative sample across schools of different sizes and levels of minority composition. Hierarchical linear

modeling accounted for differences in individual attitudes that were due to the students' individual school environment.

Previous research on racial differences in help seeking among students has presented conflicting findings. Many studies document racial differences among college students in seeking help from mental health professionals and school counselors (McMiller & Weisz, 1996; Nickerson, Helms, & Terrell, 1994). Studies of help seeking specifically for bullying and school violence in secondary school populations have not demonstrated racial differences; however, existing studies have taken place in small and non-representative samples (Unnever & Cornell, 2004; Williams & Cornell, 2005). It is reassuring that, in the current study, most minority groups do not appear to differ in their attitudes towards seeking help. However, it is worrisome that African American students are less willing to approach adults at school. Perceptions of support from teachers did not moderate racial differences in help seeking. In schools where students reported positive, supportive relationships with teachers, African-American students were still less willing to seek help than students from other racial groups.

One common reason for all students not to seek help is fear of snitching. The "stop snitching" message is found in rap music, youth fashion, and video games (Hampson, 2006). It is possible that cultural prohibitions against snitching are more poignant for African American students. Slavery, and its legacy in our society in the form of discrimination and higher rates of arrest and incarceration among African American citizens, may reduce faith in institutional authority. Research suggests that minority students' mistrust of white counselors accounts for their reluctance to seek mental health

services (Nickerson, Helms, & Terrell, 1994). Duncan (1996) found that mistrust of white authority was a significant predictor of African-American college students' desire to seek help exclusively from African American counselors. African American students also experience higher rates of suspension and expulsion at school, which may make them more apt to believe that disclosure will result in negative consequences (APA Task Force on Zero Tolerance, 2006).

Interestingly, racial differences in willingness to seek help were greatest for high-violence problems. For example, 76% of African American students stated they would tell a teacher about a gun at school, as opposed to 88% percent of students from other racial groups. And, only 74% of African American students stated they would tell a teacher about threats to kill, as opposed to 81% of students from other racial groups. In contrast, there was only a 4 point difference in the percentage of African American (51%) and other (55%) students who were willing to tell a teacher about being bullied. General items about approaching adults at school did not show a meaningful difference between groups. For example, seventy-two percent of African-American students agreed that there is an adult at school they can talk to, as compared to 75% of all other students. Many bullying programs teach the difference between snitching and seeking help, and this lesson may be particularly important for African American students with regards to high stakes offenses. High violence offenses usually carry a greater potential for negative consequences and may be more likely to trigger mistrust in authority among African American students.

Unwillingness to seek help from staff at school could also represent a cultural preference for help seeking at home. Studies demonstrate that minority students often prefer informal social support to seeking help from adults in positions of authority. Constantine, Wilton, and Caldwell (2003) demonstrated that African American college students who reported positive attitudes towards help seeking were more likely to approach family members and clergy than school counselors.

More information is needed about the factors affecting African American students' decisions about help seeking. It is important to understand the barriers these students face in seeking help from adults at school, so that targeted intervention efforts can be made with both teachers and students. School staff may need additional training on the specific fears and hesitations that African American students have with regard to approaching adults at school, so that that they can provide culturally sensitive support. School staff may also need additional training to ensure that racial bias does not influence their enforcement of discipline policy, creating a hostile environment for some students. Finally, African American students may need additional encouragement to report high-stakes offenses. It is important that information regarding threats of violence is shared with teachers and administrators, who are in the best position to create a safety plan that will protect students.

Zero Tolerance

Findings from this study supported the hypothesis that zero tolerance is negatively correlated with supportive school climate. Rates of zero tolerance expulsions correlated negatively with both student (r = -.18, $p<.05$) and teacher (r = -.17, $p<.05$) perceptions of

support. This finding is consistent with research on the relationship between principal beliefs about discipline and school climate. Skiba et al. (2003) found that a belief in zero tolerance was associated with greater student exclusion from school and fewer support programs for students. Students and teachers described more positive school climates in schools with lower suspension rates (Bickel & Qualls, 1980). This study goes beyond these findings to demonstrate that higher rates of zero tolerance expulsions negatively relate to both teacher and student perceptions of school climate. Again, correlational studies do not demonstrate a causal relationship and this finding is open to multiple interpretations.

The relationship between zero tolerance expulsions and perceptions of support did not hold up after controlling for school size, free and reduced lunch, and proportion of minority students. Although this was a two-tailed test that would have been significant n a one-tailed analysis ($p = .073$). This analysis is limited in that rates of zero tolerance expulsions were the only measure of zero tolerance used. This variable did not have a normal distribution; 40% of schools had no expulsions recommendations for zero tolerance offenses (M = 4.6, SD = 7.24, skewness = 2.3).

Future studies would benefit from improved measurement of zero tolerance policies in schools. Additional measures of the experience of zero tolerance in schools, such as how policies are communicated, student and teacher awareness of discipline practices, and the consistency between written policy and actual practice, may have provided a richer picture of the influence that zero tolerance has on school climate. Measures of student and teacher awareness of zero tolerance policies in this study (see

Appendix C) were modestly correlated with each other (r = .19, p < .05) and with rates of zero tolerance expulsion in schools (r = .05, p > .05; r = .03, p > .05). It may be that greater awareness of zero tolerance policies reduces infractions. Future studies would benefit from a more rigorous exploration of the extent of zero tolerance policies in schools. Factors to consider in operationalizing a definition of zero tolerance include written policy, adherence to policy, awareness of policy, and rates of discipline violations.

Additional Measures of Structure in Schools

This study found no direct relationship between zero tolerance and help seeking. However, additional analyses did find that other measures of structure in schools were related to help seeking. Both teacher and student rated Experience of School Rules and Daily Structure at school predicted help seeking attitudes. All scale items are present in Appendix C. Items include statements about how consistently school rules are enforced (e.g., "If a student cut class, how likely would the student be caught?" and "If a student got into a fight at school, how likely would they get caught?") and fairness of school rules (i.e., "The school rules are fair" and "The punishment for breaking school rules is the same no matter who you are."). It may be that the most important factor in encouraging help seeking and preventing school structure from undermining support is not what the rules are, but that they are perceived as fair and consistently enforced. After controlling for school size, proportion of minority students, and proportion of students receiving free and reduced lunch, teacher and student perceptions of rules and daily

structure accounted for 15% of the variance in student help seeking (R^2 change = .15, $p < .05$).

Adolescent perceptions of the clarity and fairness of rules at their school are consistently linked to lower rates of discipline violations (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Hybl, 1993; Welsh, Stokes, & Greene, 2000). Research from the 1995 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey showed that adolescents who reported greater understanding of school rules and consequences experienced lower school crime and violence (Mayer & Leone, 1999). Gottfredson and colleagues (2005) found student perceptions of school rules as clear and fair predicted school-level differences in victimization and delinquency. These school-level influences contributed to student outcomes above and beyond risk factors such as socio-economic status and minority composition of the student body. Research on classroom climate has also demonstrated a direct relationship between perceptions that rules are democratic and fair and students' sense of social responsibility (Flanagan, Bowes, Jonsson, Csapo, & Sheblanova, 1998). Adolescents whose teachers had high expectations and actively intervened to stop instances of intolerance were more likely to report that students were responsible to protect the common welfare (Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007).

Gregory, Cornell, Fan, Sheras, Tse-Hua, and Huang (2008) studied the relative contribution of support and structure to school safety using the same sample as the current study. In their analysis, "structure" was composed of student perceptions that school rules were both fair and consistently enforced. The researchers found that structure made a significant contribution to school safety outcomes such as levels of

bullying and victimization reported by students. This contribution was independent of both support and school composition variables.

Syversten and Flanagan (2009) investigated the relationship between student perceptions of discipline and democratic climate at school and their willingness to intervene in a peer's dangerous plan. The researchers presented 1,933 adolescents from 13 schools with a scenario about a hypothetical peer's plan to "do something dangerous" at school and asked how likely they would be to intervene directly, tell a teacher or principal, discuss it with a friend but not an adult, or do nothing. Positive perceptions of the authority structure at school were negatively related to student beliefs that going to adults for help would result in trouble. In other words, students who believed that school rules were fair and consistently enforced were less likely to believe that approaching adults for help would result in punitive consequences. Likewise, students in the current study who perceived school rules as fair and consistently enforced were more likely to endorse positive attitudes about seeking help for bullying and threats of violence.

These findings have implications for the way that schools communicate, explain, and enforce school rules. Student and teacher acceptance and endorsement of school rules as fair and consistently enforced may influence perceptions of support and willingness to seek help for bullying and threats of violence. Further study is needed on the effect that zero tolerance policies have on student and teacher perceptions of school rules and student willingness to seek help.

Implications and Directions for Future Research

Student perceptions of support from teachers were associated with more positive attitudes towards help seeking, and with a reduction in gender differences in help seeking. Correlational studies do not establish causal relationships and are open to multiple interpretations. Controlled intervention studies are needed to demonstrate that increasing teacher support efforts will result in increased help seeking for bullying and threats of violence.

Low-cost, well-validated prevention programs that target teacher support to students already exist. The majority of these programs were developed with the intent of reducing student drop-out. For example, Felder and Adan (1988) developed a transition program for 9th grade students that they evaluated in a randomized, controlled study with long-term follow-up. This program provided students with a teacher mentor from the first day of school whose job it was to answer informal questions, and with whom they had the opportunity to form a trusting relationship through small-group contact. Longitudinal follow-up of the School Transitional Environment Program revealed that students in the program not only had better grades and attendance records than students not in the program, but these students also reported more positive experiences in the school environment across several dimensions of support (Felner, Brand, Adan, & Mulhall, 1993). Other strategies for improving student perceptions of support from teachers may include teacher delivery of psycho-educational instruction. Many prevention programs include an anti-bullying or anti-violence curriculum that the school counselor delivers. Allowing teachers to deliver psycho-education as opposed to school guidance counselors

may increase student perception that teachers are willing to discuss and assist students with non-academic issues.

This study provides evidence for the importance of teacher support to students. However, support to teachers from administrators was not related to student help seeking outcomes. As mentioned previously, social desirability may have detracted from the validity of this scale. It is also possible that this scale was too narrowly focused to capture the relevant aspects of teacher perceived support. Future studies should investigate factors that allow teachers to provide support to students and factors that interfere with teachers providing support, especially given its demonstrated importance.

Increases in student perceptions of support were not associated with changes in racial discrepancies in help seeking. African American students in high support schools were no more likely than African American students in low support schools to seek help. Directions for future research include developing alternative strategies for increasing help seeking among this group. Although many students have support from home, bullying and threats of violence that occur in school can be most effectively addressed when school personnel are involved. Future studies would benefit from a closer examination of the factors influencing African American students' decisions about approaching adults for help so that teachers can be trained to be more available to these students and so that students can be encouraged to be more open with teachers. Future studies may also investigate the relationship in this subgroup between willingness to seek help from adults at school and willingness to seek help from adults elsewhere in the community so that

direct lines of communication can be established between those adults and school personnel.

Finally, findings from this study support the hypothesis that zero tolerance expulsions negatively affect both student and teacher perceptions of school climate. However, no direct relationship was found between zero tolerance expulsions and student help seeking. Future studies would benefit from a more thorough measure of zero tolerance discipline policies. A broader exploration of the relative contributions of other support and discipline practices to help seeking would also be valuable. This study provided evidence for the importance of student perceptions of school discipline as fair and consistently enforced. Future study should examine the relationship between actual school policy, enforcement procedures, rates of expulsion, and student knowledge and perception of school policy.

Strengths and Limitations

This study examined correlational relationships among measures of support, zero tolerance, and help seeking. Correlational studies do not establish causal relationships and are open to multiple interpretations. This study demonstrated a statistical effect of support on help seeking after controlling for known demographic risk factors and using a model that considers the nesting of student and teacher measures within schools. These findings support an implied causal model. However, causal relationships can not be established without randomized, controlled, experimental study design.

A unique contribution of this study was the ability to examine school variation in a nearly complete state population of public high schools. The 92% school participation

rate for this study is noteworthy because schools with high levels of discipline problems or low investment in student support are often less likely to participate in research. Two excellent studies (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, & Gottfredson, 2005; Hanson & Austin, 2003) acknowledged that low participation limited their findings; for example, the Gottfredson study (2005) was limited to just 254 (30%) of the 847 invited schools. The current study is less vulnerable to selection biases found in previous studies.

A weakness of this study is that it only demonstrated the relationship between student perceptions of support and student reported help seeking. Because both variables were based on student report, it is impossible to know how much of this relationship was due to shared method variance. In order to demonstrate stronger evidence for this relationship, a split sample analysis was conducted in which perceptions of support from one half of the sample was used to predict help seeking in the second half of the sample. Future studies may investigate the use of methodology to support findings that may be otherwise inflated due to shared method variance.

Another weakness in this study is that it measured help seeking attitudes and not behavior. Naturalistic observations of elementary school children by O'Connell, Pepler, and Craig (1999) reveal that although 41% of children say in surveys that they would "try to help" if they witnessed a bullying incident, only one in four actually does. The gap between intention and actual behavior suggests that, although young people may have a positive orientation toward intervening, their good intentions do not always lead to action.

Although it is a common practice among help seeking studies to measure attitudes, student-reported attitudes towards help seeking may not be an accurate indication of their actual help seeking behavior. Studies that have attempted to examine help seeking behavior also typically rely on student report. For example, students are often presented with a 2-3 sentence vignette and then asked whether or not they would approach an adult or teacher in the situation described (Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992). Research in the bullying literature often asks students to recount actual incidents of help seeking. Olweus (1993) developed a survey in which students are asked whether or not they have been bullied and then whether or not they told someone about the bullying. Cornell & Sheras (2003) developed a similar format in which students are asked about bullying behavior and reporting practices. These measures are an improvement over measures that ask about hypothetical situations, but they are still based on student report and are not an independent measure of actual behavior. Future studies on help seeking would benefit from an independent measure of student help seeking behavior, such as teacher report of observed help seeking.

Summary

Schools devote many resources to conflict resolution and violence prevention. Individual programs exist to target drug abuse, conflict resolution, dating violence, and many other high risk behaviors. However, help seeking is a common factor in allowing students and authorities to make best use of any school intervention (Broman-Fulks, et al., 2007; Kalafat, 1997; Resnick et al., 1997; Rubenstein, Halton, Kasten, Rubin, &

Stechler, 1998; Rudd et al., 1996). Findings from this study provide guidance to schools about factors that are related to increased help seeking.

Student perceptions of support from teachers were associated with improved help seeking attitudes for several situations involving bullying and threats of violence in schools of different sizes and student compositions. Supportive climate was also associated with a reduction in gender differences in help seeking. These findings suggest that supportive climate may be instrumental in increasing school safety and argue for future studies to investigate a causal relationship between supportive climate and help seeking.

This study found a racial difference in help seeking attitudes among African American students that was not moderated by supportive school climate. This result underscores the fact that not enough is known about how African American students experience their school environments and argues for additional research on who these students approach for help and on the barriers they face in seeking help at school. Knowledge in these areas will allow school staff to increase safety for African American students.

Finally, this study found that zero tolerance expulsions were negatively associated with supportive climate. Zero tolerance discipline policies are in wide use. To date, there is no evidence that zero tolerance increases school safety. The current findings add to the few existing studies that indicate zero tolerance may be detrimental to schools. More thorough study of the relationship between zero tolerance, school climate, and help seeking is needed. To accomplish this, research efforts should be focused on a thorough

examination of zero tolerance that includes written policy, practice, and student and teacher awareness.

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Appendix A

Distribution of Individual Items on the Help Seeking Scale at the Individual Level

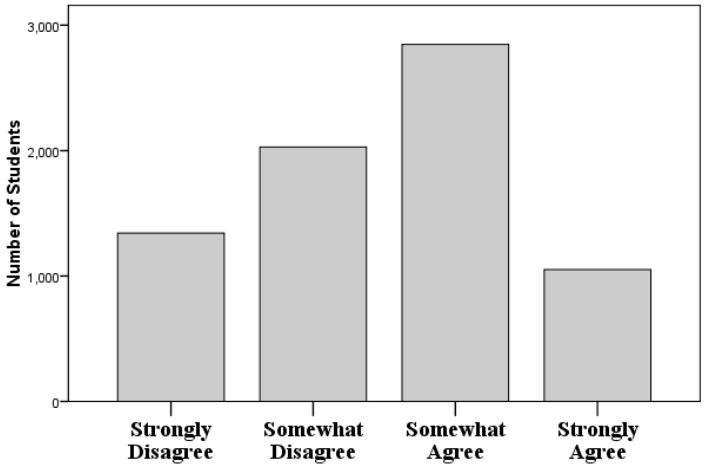

Figure A1. If another student was bullying me, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school.

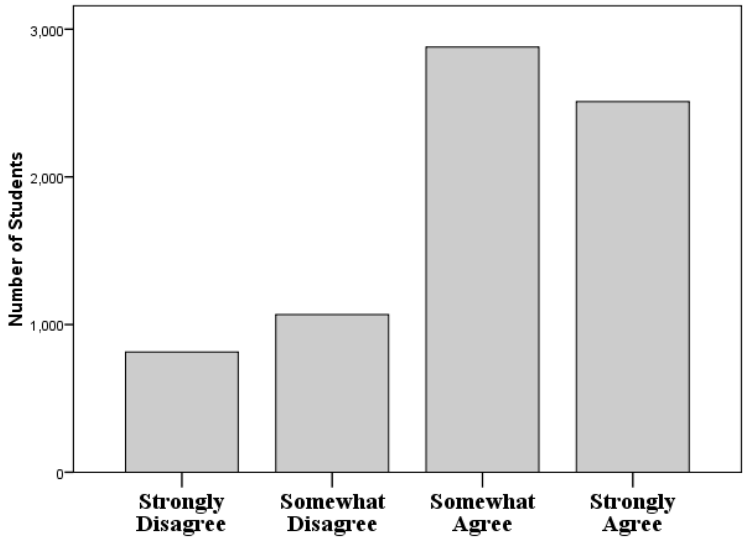

Figure A2. There are adults at this school I could turn to if I had a personal problem.

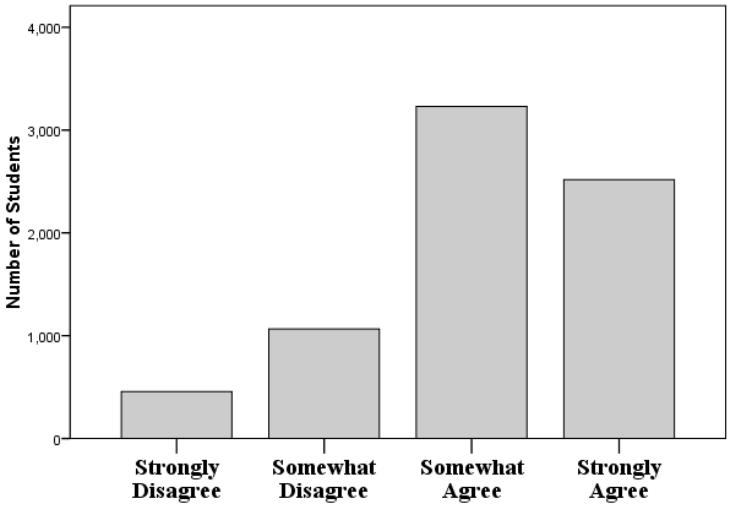

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Figure A3. If I tell a teacher that someone is bullying me, the teacher will do something to help

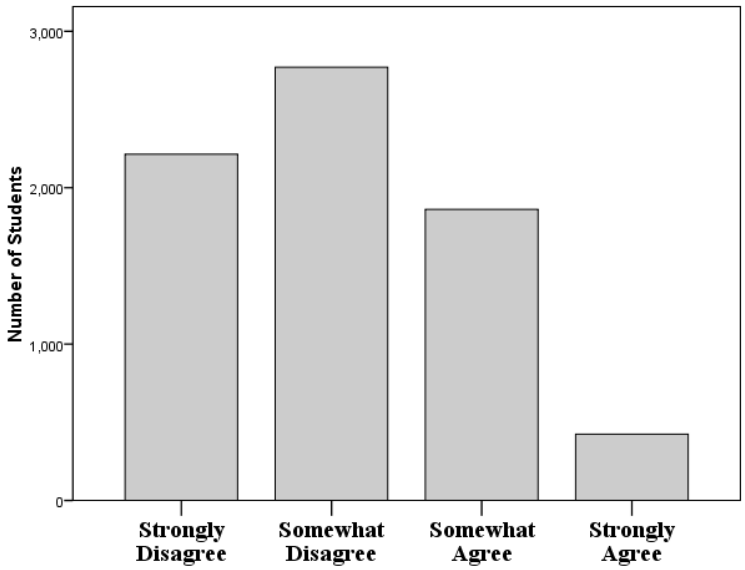

Figure 4. Students tell teachers when other students are being bullied.

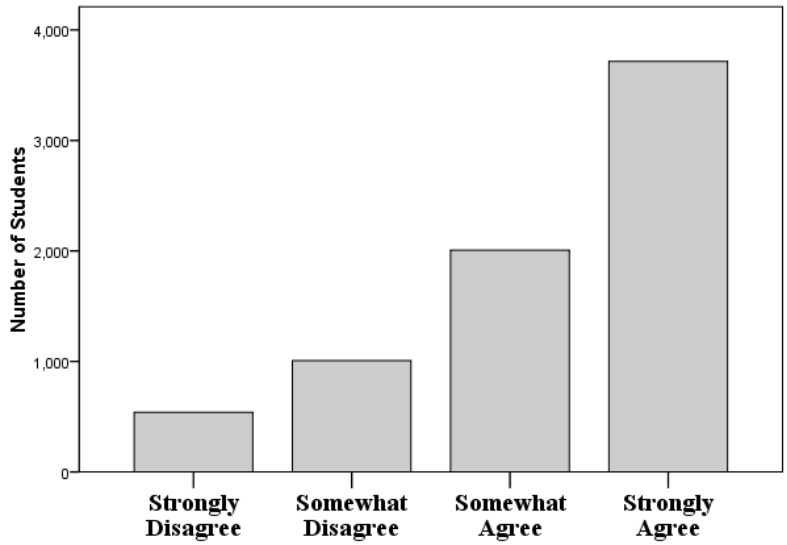

Figure 5. If another student talked about killing someone, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school.

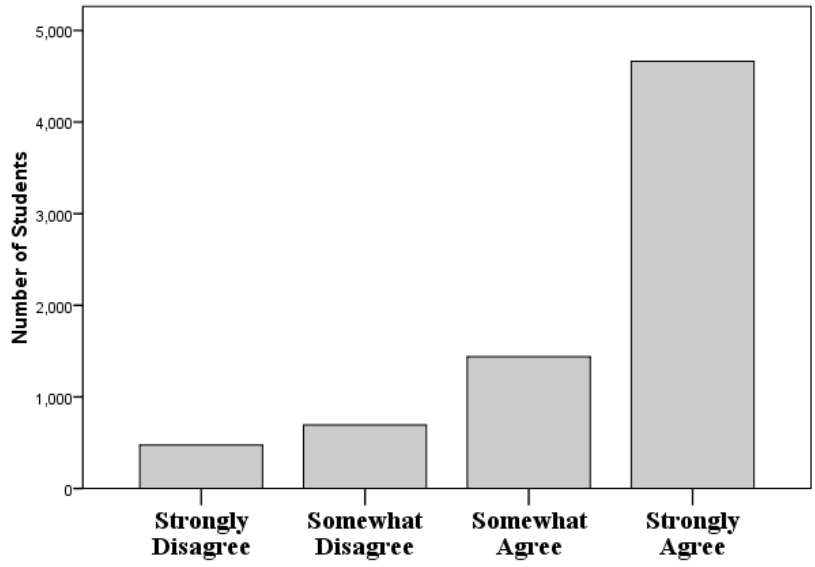

Figure A6. If another student brought a gun to school, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school.

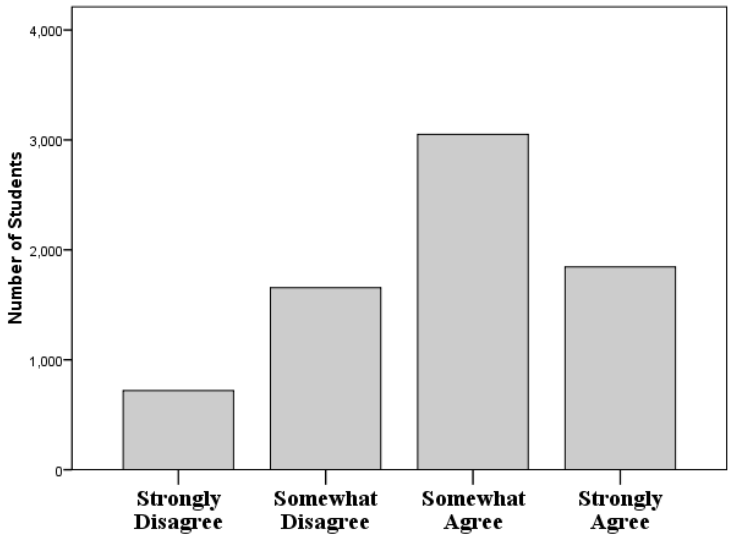

Figure A7. Teachers here make it clear to students that bullying is not tolerated.

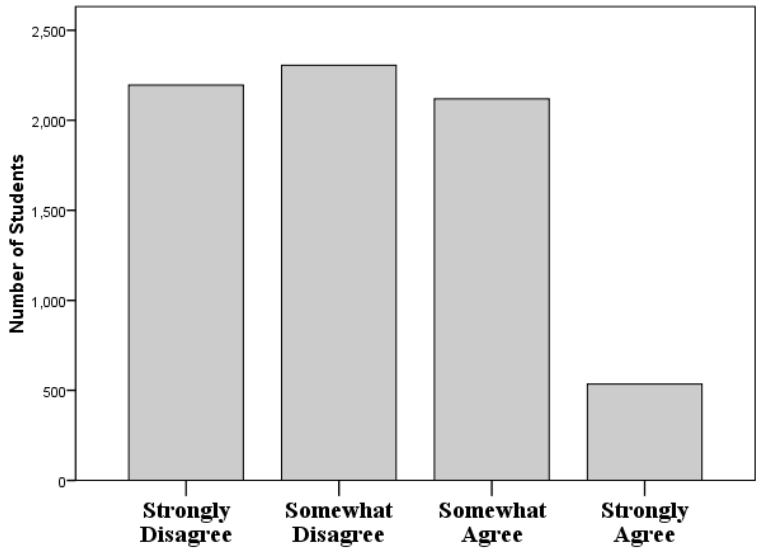

Figure A8. Students here try to stop bullying when they see it happening.

Appendix B.

Scale Descriptions for Additional Analyses

Student Survey Measures

1. *Experience of School Rules* is a 7-item scale that measures perceptions of the school rules as fair and strictly enforced. This scale has been used in the School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCES, 2005).

2. The *Daily Structure* scale (Cornell, 2006b) consists of 6 items devised for this study to measure student perceptions of how strictly rules were enforced for common problems such as cutting class, coming late to class, smoking, fighting, and speaking sarcastically to a teacher.

3. The *Belief in School Rules* index consists of 16 items asking whether the student's friends support breaking various rules such as cheating on tests, getting into fights, and skipping school (Stewart. 2003). This scale indirectly measures the student's acceptance of school rules without asking the student to make an admission of guilt.

Teacher Survey Measures

1. The *Daily Structure* scale (Cornell, 2006b) consists of 6 items devised for this study to measure teacher perceptions of how strictly rules were enforced for common problems such as cutting class, coming late to class, smoking, fighting, and speaking sarcastically to a teacher

Appendix C.

Virginia High School Safety Study Surveys

Student Survey for Virginia High School Safety Study
Parent Review Copy
(The online version of this survey is formatted for easier reading and completion)

The purpose of this survey is to improve the safety and climate of Virginia high schools. We want to understand how students feel about their school. We hope you will give us open and honest answers. This is an anonymous survey, which means that no one will know your name or your individual answers.

Please mark the response that best describes you.

What school do you attend? _____
How old are you? _____
What grade are you in? _____
Are you? (Female, Male)
What do you consider yourself to be? (White, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, Other)
Is English spoken in your home? (Yes, No)
Are other languages spoken in your home? (No, Spanish, Other)

Thinking about your school over the last 6 months, would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following...	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
Everyone knows the school rules for student conduct.				
The school rules are fair.				
The punishment for breaking school rules is the same no matter who you are.				
The school rules are strictly enforced.				
If a school rule is broken, students know what kind of punishment will follow.				
We have a strict dress code at school.				
If a student breaks the rules at this school, he or she will be punished.				

Experience of Rules (NCES, 2005) School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey

Does your school take any of these measures to make sure students are safe?	**No**	**Don't know**	**Yes**
Security guards or assigned police officers?			
Other school staff or other adults supervising the hallways?			
Metal detectors?			
Locked entrance or exit doors during the day?			
A requirement that visitors sign in?			
Locker checks?			
A requirement that students wear badges or picture identification?			
One or more security cameras to monitor the school?			
A code of student conduct (written rules for students to follow)?			

Security Measures (NCES, 2005) School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey

Zero tolerance means that a student is automatically expelled or given a lengthy suspension for any violation of the rule. Does your school have zero tolerance for:	**No**	**Don't know**	**Yes**
Bringing a gun to school?			
Bringing a BB gun, pellet gun, or similar gun to school?			
Bringing a toy gun or something that looks like a gun to school?			
Bringing in edged or cutting weapons such as knives?			
Bringing illegal drugs to school?			
Bringing legal drugs, such as prescription drugs and over the counter medications, to school?			
Bringing alcohol to school?			
Belonging to a gang?			
Fighting at school?			
Does your school have zero tolerance for some other reason not mentioned above?			

Awareness of Zero Tolerance Policies (Virginia Dept. of Criminal Justice Services, 2005)

How many minutes do students have for lunch on a normal day? _____
How many minutes do students have when changing classes or going from one class to the next? _____
How many times do students change classes on a normal day? _____

How likely are the following?	**Not at all Likely**	**Not Likely**	**Likely**	**Very Likely**
If a student was wandering in the hallways during class time, how likely would an adult stop the student?				
If a student cut a class, how likely would the student be caught?				
If a student smoked a cigarette at school, how likely would the student be caught?				
If two students got into a fight at school, how likely would they get caught?				
If a student was five minutes late for class, how likely would teachers overlook it?				
If a student said something sarcastic to a teacher, how likely would the teacher overlook what the student said?				

Daily structure (Cornell, 2006b)

How much do you agree or disagree with these statements?	**Strongly Disagree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Somewhat Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
If another student was bullying me, I would tell one of the teachers or staff at school.				
There are adults at this 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.				
Students tell teachers when other students are being bullied.				
If another student talked about killing someone, 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.				
Teachers here make it clear to students that bullying is not tolerated.				
Students here try to stop bullying when they see it happening.				
I am being honest on this survey.				

Developed for this study

How much do you agree that adults in this school...	**Strongly**	**Disagree**	**Somewhat**	**Agree**	**Strongly**

	Disagree		Agree		Agree
Really care about all students.					
Acknowledge and pay attention to students.					
Want all students to do their best.					
Listen to what students have to say.					
Believe that every student can be a success.					
Treat all students fairly.					
Support and treat students with respect.					
Feel a responsibility to improve the school.					

Learning/Working Environment A (Austin & Duerr, 2005)

How much do you agree or disagree with these statements?	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
You like school a lot.				
School is boring to you.				
You do poorly at school.				
You don't really belong at school.				
Homework is a waste of time.				
You try hard at school.				
You usually finish your homework.				
Getting good grades is very important to you.				
Sometimes you do extra work to improve your grades.				

If you could choose on your own between studying to get a good grade on a test or going out with your friends, would you…
(Definitely go out with friends, Probably go out with friends, Probably study, Definitely study)

Commitment to school (Thornberry, Lizotte, Krohn, Farnworth, Jang, 1991)

This section asks you what your friends think, not what you do. In your school, is it OK with your friends to do the following:	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
Be late for school?				
Cut a couple of classes?				
Skip school for a whole day?				
Cheat on tests?				
Copy someone else's homework?				
Get into physical fights?				
Belong to gangs?				
Steal belongings from school, a student, or a teacher?				
Destroy or damage school property?				
Smoke on school grounds?				
Drink alcohol during the school day?				
Use illegal weapons during the school day?				
Bring weapons to school?				
Abuse teachers physically?				
Talk back to teachers?				
Disobey school rules?				

Belief in school rules (Stewart, 2003)

How much do you agree or disagree with following?	**Strongly**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly**

	Disagree			Agree
It feels good when I hit someone.				
If you fight a lot, everyone will look up to you.				
Sometimes you only have two choices: get punched or punch the other person first.				
If you are afraid to fight, you won't have many friends.				
Students who are bullied or teased mostly deserve it.				
Bullying is sometimes fun to do.				
It is sometimes 'ok' to disobey the teacher.				
Students should obey teachers even if it goes against what they want to do.				
Respect for teachers' authority is important for students to have.				
I do what teachers ask me to do, even if I don't want to do it.				
I can trust the way teachers use their power and authority.				
I am telling the truth on this survey.				

Aggressive Attitudes (Cornell & Sheras, 2003) and *Trust in teacher authority (Gregory, 2005)*

During the past 6 months, have you participated in any of the following extra-curricular activities sponsored by your school such as:	**No**	**Yes**
Athletic teams at school?		
Spirit groups, for example, Cheerleading or Pep Club?		
Performing arts, for example, Band, Orchestra, or Drama?		
Academic clubs, for example, Debate Team, Honor Society, Spanish Club, or Math Club?		
School government?		
Service clubs, for example Key Club or other service oriented groups?		
During the past 6 months, have you participated in an extra-curricular activity that is not mentioned above?		

School involvement (NCES, 2005) School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey

How true is this in your school?	**Not at all true**	**Not very true**	**Somewhat true**	**True**	**Very true**
When I've figured out how to do a problem, my teachers give me more challenging problems to think about.					
My teachers press me to do thoughtful work.					
When I'm working out a problem, my teachers tell me to keep thinking until I really understand.					
My teachers don't let me do just easy work, but make me think.					
My teachers make sure that the work I do really makes me think.					
My teachers accept nothing less than my full effort.					

Academic Press (Midgley et al., 2000)

During the past 6 months, how many times have you…	**Never**	**Once or Twice**	**About Once a week**	**Several Times a Week**
Gone to a teacher (or other adult at school) for academic help?				
Asked a teacher (or other adult at school) for advice?				
Told a teacher (or other adult at school) about something that worries you?				
Told a teacher (or other adult at school) about a friend who was in trouble?				

Help Seeking behavior (Developed for this study)

This year in school have any of the following happened to you personally in the school?	**False**	**True**

Damage to personal property worth more than $10.		
Theft of personal property worth more than $10.		
Was physically attacked and had to see a doctor.		
Was physically attacked, but not seriously enough to see a doctor.		
Received obscene remarks or gestures from a student.		
Was threatened in remarks by a student.		
Had a weapon pulled on me.		

Victimization (Gottfredson, 1999)

Now, we'd like to know about gangs at your school. You may know these as street gangs, fighting gangs, crews, or something else. Gangs may use common names, signs, symbols, or colors. For this survey we are interested in all gangs.

- Are there any gangs at your school? (Yes, No, Don't know)
- During the last 6 months, how often have gangs been involved in fights, attacks, or other violence at your school?
- Have gangs been involved in the sale of drugs at your school in the last 6 months? (Yes, No, Don't know)

Gangs (NCES, 2005) School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey

How often have you experienced the following?	**Never**	**Once or twice**	**About once per week**	**Several times per week**
Bullying is defined as the use of one's strength or status to injure, threaten, or embarrass another person. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or social. It is not bullying when two students of about the same strength argue or fight. By this definition, I have been bullied in the past month.				
Physical bullying involves repeatedly hitting, kicking, or shoving someone weaker on purpose. By this definition, I have been physically bullied in the past month.				
Verbal bullying involves repeatedly teasing, putting down, or insulting someone on purpose. By this definition, I have been verbally bullied in the past month.				
Social bullying involves getting others repeatedly to ignore or exclude someone on purpose. By this definition, I have been socially bullied in the past month.				

Bullying (Cornell & Sheras, 2003)

Experiences of bullying	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
Bullying is a problem at this school.				
Students here often get teased about their clothing or physical appearance.				
Students here often get put down because of their race or ethnicity.				
New students are made to feel welcome here by other students.				
Students from different neighborhoods get along well together here.				
There is a lot of teasing about sexual topics at this school.				
Students at this school accept me for who I am.				

Acceptance of Diversity (Cornell & Sheras, 2003)

Have you told anyone that you were bullied in the past 30 days at school?
(I have not been bullied; I have been bullied, but I have not told anyone; I have told someone)

I have told these persons that I was bullied in the past 30 days at school;
(No one, A parent, A friend, A teacher or other adult at school, Someone else)

Thank you for completing the survey!

Teacher Survey for Virginia High School Safety Study
Participant Review Copy
(The online version of this survey is formatted for easier reading and completion)

The purpose of this survey is to improve the safety and climate of Virginia high schools. We hope you will give us open and honest answers. This is an anonymous survey, which means that no one will know your name or your individual answers.

Please note, when we ask you about "school" we mean all grades in your school, and that when we ask about "teachers" or "students" in general, we mean all teachers and students in the school.

Please read each question carefully and click on your answers for each question.

Are you? (Female, Male)

What do you consider yourself to be? (White, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, Other)

How many years have you been teaching? _____

A majority of my teaching is done with? _____

This first section is about your opinion about how things work in your school.

Thinking about your school over the last 6 months, would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following...	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
Everyone knows the school rules for student conduct.				
The school rules are fair.				
The punishment for breaking school rules is the same no matter who you are.				
The school rules are strictly enforced.				
If a school rule is broken, students know what kind of punishment will follow.				
We have a strict dress code at school.				
If a student breaks the rules at this school, he or she will be punished.				

Experience of Rules (NCES, 2005) School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey

Does your school take any of these measures to make sure students are safe?	**No**	**Don't know**	**Yes**
Security guards or assigned police officers?			
Other school staff or other adults supervising the hallways?			
Metal detectors?			
Locked entrance or exit doors during the day?			
A requirement that visitors sign in?			
Locker checks?			
A requirement that students wear badges or picture identification?			
One or more security cameras to monitor the school?			
A code of student conduct (written rules for students to follow)?			

Security Measures (NCES, 2005) School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey

Zero tolerance means that a student is automatically expelled or given a lengthy suspension for any violation of the rule. Does your school have zero tolerance for:	**No**	**Don't know**	**Yes**
Bringing a gun to school?			
Bringing a BB gun, pellet gun, or similar gun to school?			
Bringing a toy gun or something that looks like a gun to school?			
Bringing in edged or cutting weapons such as knives?			
Bringing illegal drugs to school?			
Bringing legal drugs, such as prescription drugs and over the counter medications, to school?			
Bringing alcohol to school?			
Belonging to a gang?			
Fighting at school?			
Does your school have zero tolerance for some other reason not mentioned above?			

Awareness of Zero Tolerance Policies (Virginia Dept. of Criminal Justice Services, 2005)

How many minutes do students have for lunch on a normal day? _____
How many minutes do students have when changing classes or going from one class to the next? _____
How many times do students change classes on a normal day? _____

How likely are the following?	**Not at all Likely**	**Not Likely**	**Likely**	**Very Likely**
If a student was wandering in the hallways during class time, how likely would an adult stop the student?				
If a student cut a class, how likely would the student be caught?				
If a student smoked a cigarette at school, how likely would the student be caught?				
If two students got into a fight at school, how likely would they get caught?				
If a student was five minutes late for class, how likely would teachers overlook it?				
If a student said something sarcastic to a teacher, how likely would the teacher overlook what the student said?				

Daily structure (Cornell, 2006)

How true is this in your school?	**Not at all true**	**Not very true**	**Somewhat true**	**True**	**Very true**
When students figure out how to do a problem, teachers give them more challenging problems to think about.					
Teachers press students to do thoughtful work.					
When students are working out a problem, teachers tell them to keep thinking until they really understand.					
Teachers don't let students just do easy work, but make them think.					
Teachers make sure that the work students do really makes them think.					
Teachers accept nothing less than students' full effort.					

*Academic Press (*Midgley et al., 2000)

How much do you agree or disagree with these statements?	**Strongly Disagree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Somewhat Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
Students feel free to ask for help from teachers if there is a problem with a student.				
Teachers know when students are being picked on or being bullied.				
Students are encouraged to report bullying and aggression.				
Students know who to go to for help if they have been treated badly by another student.				
Students report it when one student hits another.				
Teachers take action to solve the problem when students report bullying.				

Help Seeking (Cornell & Sheras, 2003)

How much do you agree that administrators in this school…	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Really care about all teachers.					
Acknowledge and pay attention to teachers.					
Want all teachers to do their best.					
Listen to what teachers have to say.					
Believe that every teacher can be a success.					
Treat all teachers fairly.					
Support and treat each other with respect.					
Feel a responsibility to improve the school.					

*Learning/Working Environment B (*Austin & Duerr, 2005)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This school collaborates well with community organizations to help address substance abuse or other problems among youth.					
This school provides effective confidential support and referral services for students needing help because of substance abuse, violence, or other problems.					
To what extent does this school...		**Not at all**	**Not much**	**Some**	**A lot**
Foster youth social and emotional development or resilience?					
Provide nutritional instruction?					
Provide opportunities for physical education and activity?					
To what extent does this school...		**Not at all**	**Not much**	**Some**	**A lot**
Provide alcohol or drug use prevention instruction?					
Provide tobacco use prevention instruction?					
Provide conflict resolution or behavior management instruction?					
Provide character education?					
Provide harassment or bullying prevention?					
Provide services for students with disabilities or other special needs?					

Health and Prevention Programs (Austin & Duerr, 2005)

This next section is about your own interactions with students.

How much do you agree with the following statements…	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I encourage students to come to me for academic help.				
I let students know that I am available to talk outside of class.				
I encourage students to turn to me with personal problems.				
I encourage students to tell me if they are being bullied.				
I encourage students to come forward if they have information about a gun at school.				
I encourage students to come forward if they have information about a student who plans to hurt him/herself or someone else.				
I believe that teachers should be mentors as well as instructors.				
Disciplinary consequences for students at this school tend to be too harsh.				
I trust that my administration will handle discipline fairly.				
When I refer a student to the office for a discipline problem, I feel confident that it will be handled appropriately.				

Encouragement of Help Seeking (Developed for this study)

This year in school have any of the following happened to you personally in the school?	False	True
Damage to personal property worth more than $10.		
Theft of personal property worth more than $10.		
Was physically attacked and had to see a doctor.		
Was physically attacked, but not seriously enough to see a doctor.		
Received obscene remarks or gestures from a student.		
Was threatened in remarks by a student.		
Had a weapon pulled on me.		
Was spoken to in a rude or disrespectful manner by a student.		

Victimization (Gottfredson, 1999)

Now, we'd like to know about gangs at your school. You may know these as street gangs, fighting gangs, crews, or something else. Gangs may use common names, signs, symbols, or colors. For this survey we are interested in all gangs.

Are there any gangs at your school? (Yes, No, Don't know)

During the last 6 months, how often have gangs been involved in fights, attacks, or other violence at your school? (Never, Once or twice in the last 6 months, Once or twice a month, Once or twice a week, Almost everyday, Don't know)

Have gangs been involved in the sale of drugs at your school in the last 6 months? (Yes, No, Don't know)

Gangs (NCES, 2005) School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey

Experiences of Bullying	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Bullying is a problem at this school.				
Students here often get teased about their clothing or physical appearance.				
Students here often get put down because of their race or ethnicity.				
New students are made to feel welcome here by other students.				
Students from different neighborhoods get along well together here.				
There is a lot of teasing about sexual topics at this school.				
Students at this school accept other students for who they are.				

Acceptance of Diversity (Cornell & Sheras, 2003)

Thank you for completing the survey!