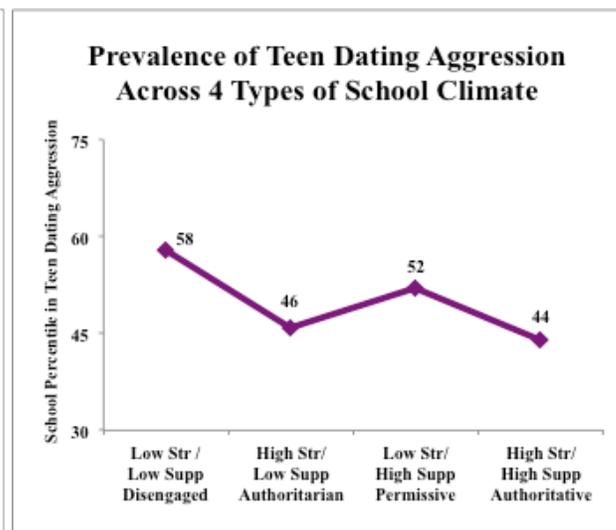
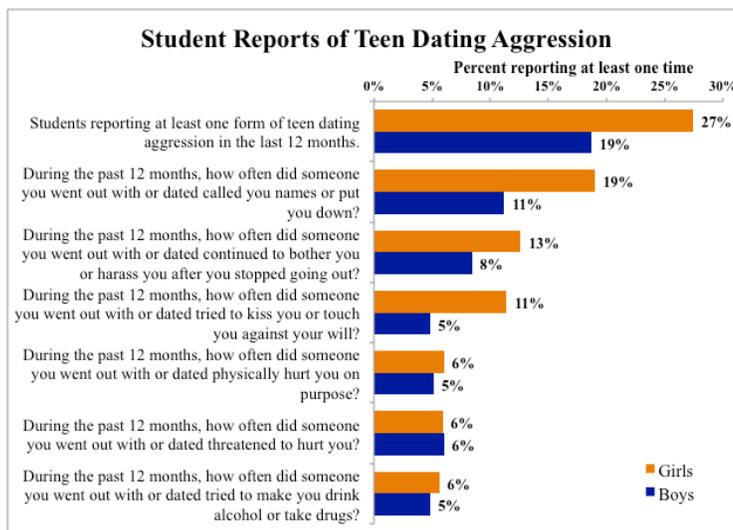


Authoritative High Schools Have Less Teen Dating Aggression

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Education issued a memo through the Office of Safe and Healthy Students (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/oshs/teendatingviolence-factsheet.html>) urging schools to be informed of teen dating aggression in their schools and implement appropriate prevention and intervention programs. We adapted six questions to measure teen dating aggression from the Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships scale (CADRI; Wolfe et al., 2001).

In spring 2016, the high school survey found that both male and female students report substantial levels of dating aggression. The survey was completed by 62,679 students in grades 9-12 in 320 Virginia public schools. The six items were summed into a total score for each student, and the average for all students in a school was used to determine each school's percentile relative to the state. Our research found that high schools with an authoritative climate report less teen dating aggression than other high schools. As described in Issue 1, an authoritative school is one in which students report that their teachers are strict but fair in their discipline (high structure) *and* concerned and respectful toward them (high support). In contrast, schools with high structure but low support (authoritarian), high support but low structure (permissive), and low structure and low support (disengaged) had higher levels of teen dating aggression. These results are consistent with other findings that in authoritative schools students are more engaged in school, engage in less risky behavior such as substance use, and interact with one another with less bullying and peer aggression.



Practical Suggestions. Schools should educate students about behaviors that constitute teen dating aggression, how they can obtain help, and ways to support peers. A U.S. government website dedicated to informing youth and educators about forms of dating aggression and the need for fostering safe school climates is available: <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/teen-dating-violence>. To build an authoritative school climate, teachers and school authorities should communicate disciplinary expectations that are strictly but fairly enforced. In addition, they should build supportive relationships so students feel cared for and respected.

Wolfe, D. A., Scott, K., Reitzel-Jaffe, D., Wekerle, C., Grasley, C., & Straatman, A. L. (2001). Development and validation of the Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory. *Psychological Assessment, 13*, 277–293. <http://doi.org/10.1037/1040-3590.13.2.277>

Study Overview. The Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey (including scales from the Authoritative School Climate Survey) was administered as a component of the Virginia School Safety Audit program carried out by the Virginia Center for School Safety of the Department of Criminal Justice Services, in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Education. The survey was designed to yield practical information on school climate and safety conditions that can be used to improve conditions for learning. The survey was developed by researchers (P.I. Dewey Cornell) at the Virginia Youth Violence Project of the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia. This project was supported by Grant #2012-JF-FX-0062 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and Grant #NIJ 2014-CK-BX-0004 awarded by the National Institute of Justice, both from the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice. This is a correlational study that can support, but not prove, causal relationships. More detailed analyses are available from the Virginia Youth Violence Project: <http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu>.