

fourth edition

VICTIMS OF CRIME

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SAGE Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/11 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Acquisitions Editor: Jerry Westby
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Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Victims of crime / editors, Robert C. Davis, Arthur J. Lurigio, Susan Herman. — 4th ed.

p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4522-0320-1 (pbk.)

1. Victims of crimes--United States. I. Davis, Robert C. (Robert Carl) II. Lurigio, Arthur J. III. Herman, Susan.

HV6250.3.U5V54 2013
362.880973—dc23 2012023276

This book is printed on acid-free paper.



12 13 14 15 16 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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15 Reducing the Risks and Consequences of Crime Victimization in Schools

Jeffrey A. Butts
Douglas Evans
Jocelyn Fontaine

Recent surveys of school administrators and students indicate that school crime is falling in the United States. In 2009–2010, the rate of victimization among students was half what it had been in the 1990s. Still, three-quarters of all schools that year reported at least one violent incident in which a student had been the victim of a criminal act (Roberts, Zhang, & Truman, 2012). Some schools in America are still not safe for all students. School administrators and educators require effective strategies for enhancing school safety. Research on school-based crime prevention has generated some guidance for policy and practice, but the evaluation literature is still emerging. Studies have yet to demonstrate unambiguous support for any particular strategy. Additional research is needed to provide clear evidence of program impact, and much is still unknown about how program design and implementation affect program success. The need for better evidence about school-based crime prevention programs remains as urgent as it was a decade ago when evaluation research was far less available than it is today (D. C. Gottfredson, 2001). Policymakers and practitioners deserve better information about school safety and how to ensure it.

Trends in School-Related Victimization

Much of the news is encouraging about victimization in and around schools. For nearly two decades, America's schools have been growing safer. According to data from the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education, the odds of

a student being victimized at school in the United States are less than half what they were in the early 1990s (Roberts et al., 2012). Despite a small number of horrific and well-publicized violent episodes, school crime has declined considerably. Between 1992 and 2010, the rate of nonfatal victimization in schools dropped nearly 74%, from 53 to 14 victimizations per 1,000 students (see Figure 15.1). This figure includes all forms of violence, including simple assaults with little to no injury. The rate of serious and violent victimizations, however, fell just as steeply, from a peak of more than 13 per 1,000 in 1994 to slightly more than 4 per 1,000 in 2010 (Roberts et al., 2012).

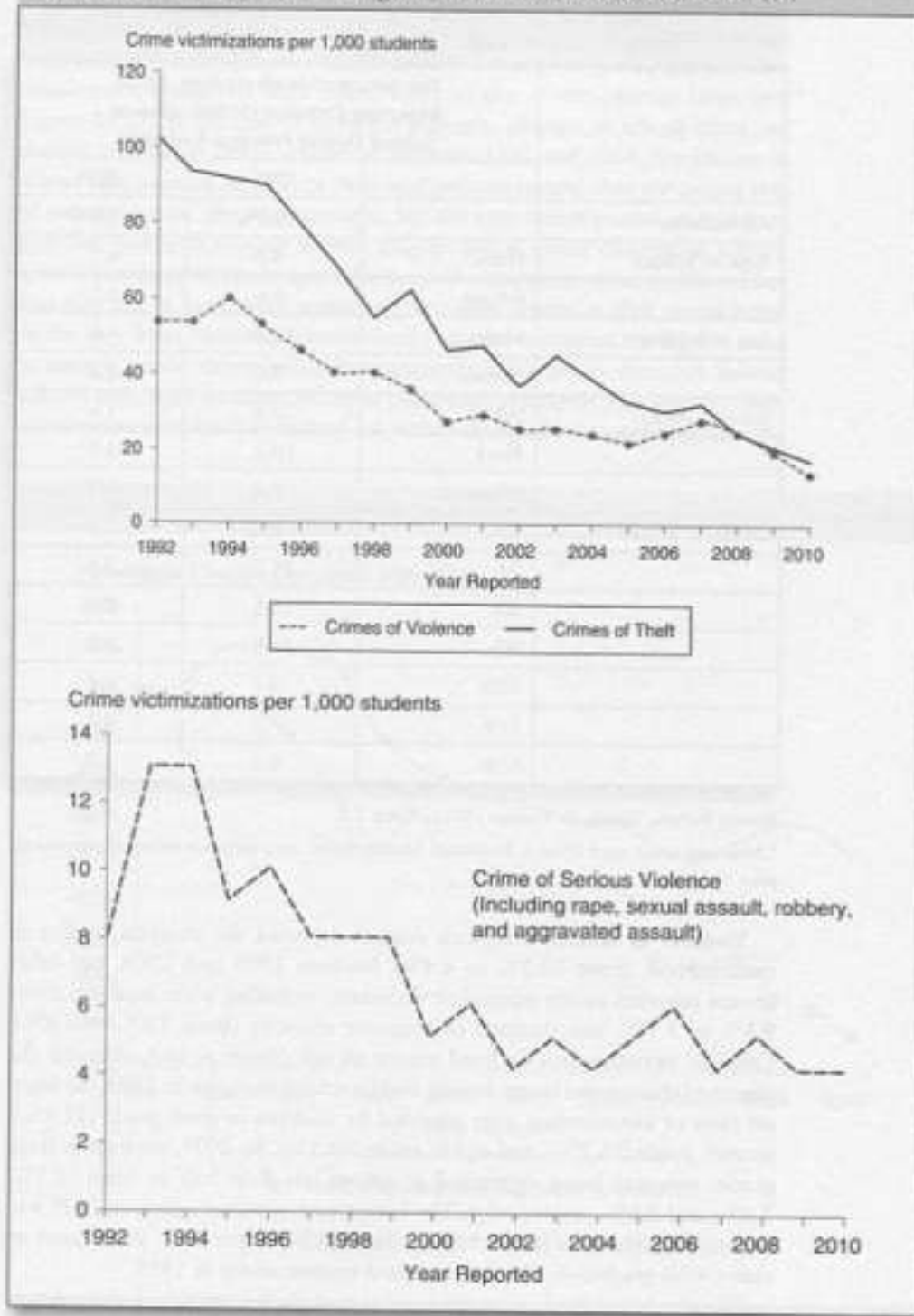
The most severe form of victimization—violent death—is very rare in the school environment. Recent statistics show that less than 1% of the homicides and suicides among children ages 5 to 18 are associated with school or school attendance. Yet according to school victimization data disseminated by the Departments of Justice and Education, students in the United States reported more than 358,000 violent crimes in 2010, including robbery and sexual and physical assaults (Roberts et al., 2012).

Younger children under age 15 were more likely to report violent victimizations at school in 2010, while older youth were more likely to report violent victimizations away from school. Among students ages 12 to 14, there were 18 violent crimes per 1,000 students reported at school; among students ages 15 to 18, there were 11 violent crimes per 1,000 that occurred at school. Younger students reported 10 violent victimizations per 1,000 away from school, while older students reported 12 violent crimes per 1,000 away from school.

The most recent federal statistics show that nearly one in three high school students is involved in a physical fight each year, either at school or away from school. Nearly one-quarter of students ages 12 to 18 report gangs at their schools, with higher reports of gang activity among black and Hispanic students compared to white and Asian students. Nearly one in three 12- to 18-year-old students reports being bullied. Furthermore, 10% of high school males and 5% of high school females report that they were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property during 2008–2009. Schools in urban neighborhoods and those serving more disadvantaged students report the highest rates of violent crime and gang activity (Roberts et al., 2012).

On the other hand, the trends are moving in the right direction. The percentage of students who reported having been the victim of any crime—including theft—in the past six months dropped from 9.5% in 1995 to 3.9% in 2009 (see Table 15.1). The decline was more dramatic among students in private schools, where victimizations decreased to 1.8% in 2009 from 6.6% in 1995. Public school students reported far higher rates of victimization, but they also benefitted from falling rates (from 9.8% in 1995 to 4.1% in 2009). The percentage of male students experiencing victimization fell to 4.6% in 2009 from 10% in 1995, while females reporting victimization declined from 9% to 3.2%.

Figure 15.1 Schools report falling rates of victimization since the 1990s.



Data source: Roberts, Zhang, & Truman (2012), Table 2.1.

Table 15.1 Students Reported Less Victimization in 2007 Than in 1995, but 1 in 25 Students Was the Victim of a Property Offense or Violent Crime

		Percentage of Students Ages 12–18 Reporting Criminal Victimization at School During Previous 6 Months	
		1995	2009
All Students		9.5%	3.9%
Type of School	Public	9.8	4.1
	Private	6.6	1.8
Sex of Student	Male	10.0	4.6
	Female	9.0	3.2
Race/Ethnicity*	White	9.8	3.9
	Black	10.2	4.4
	Hispanic	7.6	3.9
Grade in School	6th	9.6	3.7
	7th	11.2	3.4
	8th	10.5	3.8
	9th	11.9	5.3
	10th	9.1	4.2
	11th	7.3	4.7
	12th	6.1	2.0

Source: Robers, Zhang, & Truman (2012), Table 3.1.

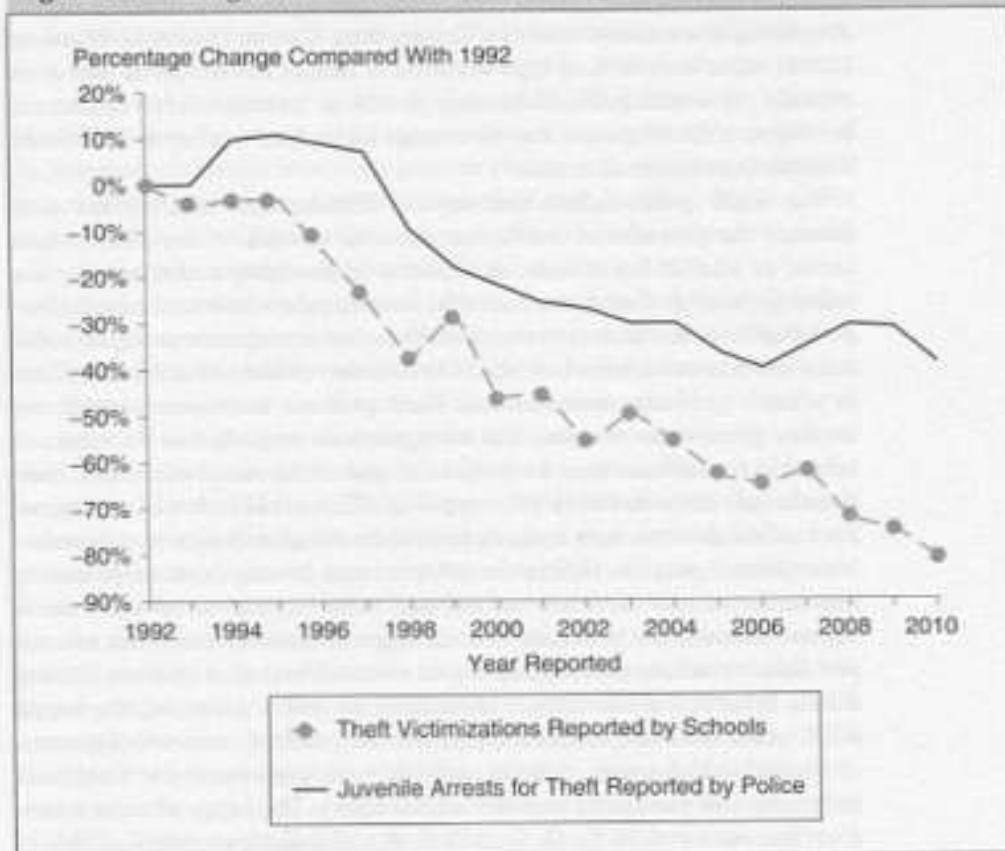
*Asian and other races (Native American, Alaska Native, etc.) were not recorded consistently prior to 2005.

Students of African-American descent reported the sharpest decline in victimization (from 10.2% to 4.4%) between 1995 and 2009, but other groups reported nearly equivalent decreases, including white students (from 9.8% to 3.9%) and students of Hispanic ethnicity (from 7.6% to 3.9%). Criminal victimizations declined among all age groups as well, although the degree of change was larger among middle school students. In 1995, the highest rates of victimization were reported by students in ninth grade (11.9%), seventh grade (11.2%), and eighth grade (10.5%). By 2009, students in these grades reported being victimized at school less than half as often (5.3%, 3.4%, and 3.8%, respectively). The lowest rate of victimization in 2009 was reported by students in the 12th grade (2.0%). More than three times as many 12th graders (6.1%) had reported victimizations in 1995.

The trends in school crime are positive or at least promising, but important challenges remain. The key question for educators and policymakers is, are

schools actually more effective at preventing crime and reducing student victimization, or are they merely reaping the benefits of falling crime rates in general? When victimization reports in schools are compared with juvenile crime data in general, it is clear that the changes observed in schools during the past two decades are consistent with crime rates in the community at large (see Figure 15.2). In the case of theft, for example, changes in school crime are parallel to those in crime in general. Between 1992 and 2008, the decline in school victimization reports for theft was perhaps steeper than the falling rate of juvenile arrests (for larceny-theft), but the two trends moved in the same direction and with roughly similar magnitudes. If recent changes in school-related victimization are simply reflections of community crime trends, educators may not be in as much control of their own destiny as they would hope. At the very least, however, schools should take advantage of the relative calm in today's public safety policy environment. While crime rates are falling, schools may want to invest in crime prevention programs and improve their effectiveness in order to withstand any future changes in the general crime rate.

Figure 15.2 Falling victimization rates in schools may be due to changes in communities.



Data source: Roberts, Zhang, & Truman (2012), Table 2.1.

Interventions to Reduce School Victimization

School administrators face considerable challenges as they work to prevent crime and reduce the impact of victimizations among students. School-related crime takes many forms across multiple settings. Violence, for example, is multifaceted, including a range of behaviors from bullying and hitting to group fights and even deadly violence. Students may become victims on school property and during school hours, while they are traveling to or from school, during after-school programs, or while participating in school-sponsored activities. How are educators to respond to widely varying forms of school crime and victimization? Is each manifestation of crime and violence a unique problem requiring its own solution? Or will one program model work for a range of victimization situations?

Responses to school violence are diverse, including the introduction of technology, such as cameras and metal detectors; the addition of staff positions focused on preventing and responding to school violence, such as school resource officers and in-school security; and programs to shape student behavior, such as cognitive-behavioral interventions. The efficacy of school violence interventions varies, but some strategies are widely accepted. According to a national study by Crosse, Burr, Cantor, Hagen, & Hantman (2001), more than 90% of high schools and middle schools use at least some violence prevention methods that they identify as "best practices." Cantor and colleagues (2001) reported that the average high school used up to 10 different violence prevention activities.

For many policymakers and school officials, their first instinct is to increase the presence of law enforcement in schools. Police officers have served in schools for decades as a means of providing added security and safety for staff and students. Recently, however, the number of school-based police officers has increased considerably, often in response to highly publicized incidents of school violence. The addition of law enforcement officers in schools produces mixed results. Their presence may increase staff and student perceptions of safety, but some research suggests that the tactics of school police officers may be ineffective and could even cause more harm than benefit (Brown, 2006). Having police officers deal with student misconduct rather than teachers and administrators transforms acts of misconduct into criminal actions. Officers in schools must be cognizant of presenting themselves as role models in school and must be cautious of their use of aggression and force in the line of duty. Aggressive tactics may foster mistrust and defiance among students and create more crime than it prevents (Brown, 2006). Schools and educational researchers are still investigating the impact of increased law enforcement presence on staff, students, and school systems.

Beyond added police presence, schools have implemented a number of programs and policies to enhance school safety. The range of these strategies was reviewed by G. D. Gottfredson and colleagues (2000, 2004) in the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools. Funded by the Department of Justice, the study included a comprehensive national assessment

of school violence and violence prevention activities. Using multiple methods of data collection, the study found that school prevention activities tended to focus on direct services to students, families, and staff; the organizational and environmental arrangements of schools; or discipline and safety management. Direct services included curricula, instruction, and training programs as well as recreational activities, mentoring, tutoring, and coaching for students. Direct services programs found to be effective in reducing violence included those that taught social skills, conflict resolution, and communication skills (Crawford & Bodine, 2001; Derzon, Wilson, & Cunningham, 1999; Sprague, 2007). Meta-analyses have shown that cognitive-behavioral techniques in particular are effective in reducing aggression and problem behavior among youth (Armeliou & Andreassen, 2007; G. D. Gottfredson et al., 2000). The use of cognitive-behavioral techniques includes teaching students social competence and helping youth to develop socially appropriate responses to difficult situations using constructive rewards and incentives.

Research has shown that well-implemented peer mediation programs can improve student understanding of the effects of some types of victimization, specifically bullying (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Paluck & Green, 2006; Powell, Muir-McClain, & Halasyamani, 1995). Peer mediation training leads students to get involved in constructive efforts to maintain student relationships and foster mutual respect while improving the school atmosphere and preventing and intervening in school violence (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 1996). A systematic review of 43 peer mediation studies found that 93% of the programs showed at least some positive effects, with an average estimated reduction in school violence of 68% (Burrell, Zirbel, & Allen, 2003). Other research suggests that peer mediation is most effective in the context of school-wide intervention strategies (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999).

Organizational and environmental interventions include those designed to improve classroom organization and management, structural arrangements, and instructional methods or practices. Much of the literature in this area is focused on the utility of smaller schools and class sizes, which are thought to decrease violent victimizations through the elimination of anonymity between students and the fostering of close relationships among students and between students and faculty (Klonsky, 2002). Cotton (1996) found mixed evidence in a review of 14 studies linking school size to a range of poor social and behavioral student outcomes, including aggressive behavior, theft, and gang participation. Some observers have argued that strong social bonds between students and between students and faculty are more effective than hard security measures like security cameras and metal detectors in preventing violence (Garbarino, 1999; Klonsky, 2002; Meier, 1996). Researchers have pointed out that small schools may reduce violence (Cotton, 2001; Duke, DeRobertto, & Trautvetter, 2009; Gladden, 1998; Jimerson, 2006; McRobbie, 2001; Vander Ark, 2002), but others question the magnitude of the beneficial effect of school size on violence and aggression outcomes (Duke et al., 2009; K. A. Johnson, 2002; Stevenson, 2006).

Interventions that focus on discipline and safety management usually rely on enhanced enforcement of school rules and regulations as well as improving

security and surveillance of school space. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the most common security strategy used in public schools is controlling access to the building and the school grounds, followed by the use of student badges or picture identification cards (Roberts et al., 2012). Crime prevention through environmental design (through the use of security cameras and two-way communication systems) is an increasingly common method of dealing with violence among children in school settings (Sprague, 2007). As noted earlier, the use of school resource officers is an increasingly common strategy. Nearly half the schools in the United States use a police officer or security guard on a regular basis (Roberts et al., 2012). School resource officers (SROs), typically staffed by the local police department, are believed to be effective at improving school safety for both students (McDevitt & Panniello, 2005) and principals (May, Fessel, & Means, 2004). Still, the effectiveness of in-school police has not been clearly established (Brown, 2006).

The introduction or expansion of security hardware (e.g., cameras, metal detectors, door locks) and personnel-based security (e.g., guards, officers) is a common response to concerns of victimization in schools. Yet some experts believe the increased use of security measures creates an institution-like environment for students that is more conducive to disorder, misconduct, and violence (Mayer & Leone, 1999; Monahan & Torres, 2009). The prevalence of security cameras in schools has more than doubled since 1999 (Roberts et al., 2012). Approximately 10% of all urban schools use metal detectors occasionally to screen students and staff; about 4% use them daily (Roberts, Zhang, & Truman, 2010). Despite the widespread expansion of security measures, research is not clear on their effectiveness in improving school safety (Addington, 2009; Brown, 2005; Garcia, 2003; Sugai & Horner, 2002). Shreck, Miller, and Gibson (2003) found that guards, metal detectors, hallway supervision, and drug education were significantly related to more rather than less victimization within high schools and middle schools. Of course, the presence of hard security measures may be simply a reflection of the fact that schools that are more disorderly are more likely to implement these security measures.

In addition to the growing literature on school safety and violence prevention, there are several larger initiatives that intend to increase school safety. For example, the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) initiative—a grant program established by the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Justice—provides grants to schools to encourage them to coordinate with local law enforcement to assess school conditions and establish safety plans, violence prevention curricula, and staff training programs. This initiative provides a research-based intervention structure and the flexibility to adapt programming to individual school characteristics. An evaluation of SS/HS showed that schools experienced a 15% reduction in student participation in violence and a 12% reduction in student reports of witnessing or experiencing violence (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). The SS/HS initiative is one of several prominent efforts by governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations to address violence and victimization in schools. Others include the Safe and Drug-Free Schools

program, the National Resource Center for Safe Schools, the Hamilton Fish National Institute on School and Community Violence, and the What Works Clearinghouse of the Institute of Education Sciences.

The University of Colorado's Blueprints for Violence Prevention has rigorously assessed hundreds of programs to determine their efficacy in reducing violence among youth (<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv>). The Blueprints advisory board considers a few of the school-aged-youth programs to be "model programs" on the strength of evaluation studies determining their effectiveness. One of the model programs is the Incredible Years series, which includes a set of comprehensive, multifaceted, developmentally based curricula for parents, teachers, and children that are designed to promote emotional and social competence and to prevent, reduce, and treat behavioral and emotional problems in children ages 2 to 10. Multiple randomized evaluations of the teacher training series and child training series showed reductions in disruptive behavior and less peer aggression in the classroom. Another model program is the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America program, which matches youth from single-family households with adult mentors and has been found to reduce children's reports of violence and improve their academic performance, attitudes, and behavior.

Schools across the United States are also increasingly adopting teen courts (also known as youth courts or peer juries) as part of a broader school safety strategy. Teen courts are valued as a means of blending restorative justice concepts with school safety. Teen courts are specialized diversion programs for young offenders that use courtlike procedures in courtroom settings. The teen court model has been shown to be a promising diversion alternative for court-involved youth (Butts, Buck, & Coggeshall, 2002). The typical youth referred to teen court is probably 12 to 15 years old, in trouble for the first time, and charged with vandalism, stealing, or another nonviolent offense. School systems are now bringing the teen court concept inside schools as an alternative method of dealing with rule violations as well as minor assaults, thefts, and other student-on-student crimes. One of the main advantages of teen courts is that the process involves an opportunity for victims to express their feelings and reactions to their victimization and to participate in deliberations over the most appropriate sanctions for each offender in a safe, supervised public forum.

These are just a few of the better-known initiatives designed to improve school safety and reduce student victimization. Three other programs are described in more detail in the following sections.

Safe Harbor

Safe Harbor is a school-based victim assistance and violence prevention program that started in 1991. Safe Horizon, the largest victim services agency in the country, developed the Safe Harbor program to provide support for students, prevent violence in schools, and enhance the safety and

well-being of students in New York City. Safe Harbor is designed to help victims cope with violence and victimization in their lives. It focuses on three levels of intervention. At the individual level, the program seeks to modify students' beliefs, attitudes, and norms to enable them to learn and develop nonviolent behaviors. Interpersonally, Safe Harbor curricula focus on improving relationships between students and their family members and peers to protect them from exposure to violence. The program also targets the social context in an attempt to alter the situations that contribute to violence (U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, 2003).

There are several components of Safe Harbor. In the classroom, program instructors utilize a victim assistance and violence prevention curriculum to explore the impact of violence. The curriculum examines the influence of peers, family, and culture on violent behavior and attitudes toward violence. Instructors also lead classroom discussions that consider the effects of violent victimization on individuals, family members, and the community as a whole. Program instructors use role playing and modeling activities to teach students about effective communication and safety strategies in the event that they encounter a violent situation. Structured group activities allow students to participate in group discussions and skill building activities. The activities are designed to promote positive peer relationships and teach students how to identify problems, devise solutions, and channel stress and anxiety into alternate forms of release, such as physical activity, relaxation, and artistic expression.

Safe Harbor includes individual and group counseling and resources for parents. Counselors are available for students to ask follow-up questions after class in a private setting. Safe Harbor works closely with social workers who can connect students with clinical services both inside and outside of school. Training is available for parents to learn about their role in violence prevention, improve relationships with their children, and cope with the experience of violence in their own lives.

Inside schools, Safe Harbor takes steps to ensure its message is disseminated. Program coordinators launch schoolwide antiviolence campaigns via posters and flyers, invite guest speakers to discuss issues related to victimization and violence, and promote projects that involve the entire student body. These campaigns build a culture of nonviolence and offer leadership opportunities for students.

The "safe room" is a unique aspect of Safe Harbor. Safe rooms are secure areas inside participating schools where students can go at any time of day to receive support services. All students are welcome, whether they have been involved in a fight, have been victimized by bullying or other forms of violence, or have witnessed a violent act and wish to make a report. The safe room acts as a haven for students and gives them a sense of empowerment. Students have the responsibility of handling chores in the safe room and setting the rules of conduct. If the room is large enough, Safe Harbor personnel can use it to conduct classes and parent trainings. It can also be used for counseling and conflict resolution.

The Safe Harbor program has shown promise. Assessments indicate that the program improves attendance rates. A middle school principal in

Brooklyn claimed that attendance increased from 78% to 91% of kids attending school as Safe Harbor became ingrained in the school's culture (U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, 2003). Students in Safe Harbor programs demonstrate positive social control, greater use of conflict resolution strategies, and stronger opposition to gang violence. Participating students express a higher regard for respect in their relationships outside of the program, and student attitudes toward Safe Harbor are generally favorable. In a federally supported evaluation, students in Safe Harbor sites reported increased feelings of safety (U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, 2003). Because of the early positive findings, the U.S. Department of Justice named Safe Harbor a promising program. The organization that founded the program, Safe Horizon, later expanded the model with a national replication. Program sites were soon located in Upstate New York, Illinois, Kentucky, California, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

School bullying has a major impact on school safety. Student suicides, violent behaviors, and poor educational outcomes have been linked to incidents of bullying. At least one-third of students ages 12 to 18 acknowledge having been the victim of bullying (Roberts et al., 2010). School administrators and policymakers have explored various methods for reducing school bullying and improving school safety. The available methods can be divided into two categories: those that call for "zero tolerance" and the removal of troublesome students from school, and initiatives that seek to work with disruptive students and socialize them into a positive school culture that discourages violence and bullying. There are risks to zero-tolerance policies that suspend or expel students from school for rule violations. First, studies indicate that schools do not limit the use of out-of-school suspensions to cases of violent behavior or serious rule violations. Suspensions are eventually expanded to include classroom disruption and attendance issues (Losen & Skiba, 2010). Second, suspensions do not appear to reduce disruptive behavior or enhance the safety of the school environment, and they may increase the likelihood of future suspension as well as the likelihood that students will eventually drop out of school altogether (Losen & Skiba, 2010).

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (BPP) is an approach that seeks to improve school environments and reduce bullying. The BPP was developed in response to a severe incident of bullying in Norway that received national attention. The program is intended to help identify bullies in elementary, middle, and junior high schools; reduce existing bullying; prevent future bullying; and create positive peer relations in schools. The program also teaches mechanisms of coping with the effects of bullying and school violence (Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999).

The BPP approach depends on school administrators to introduce and implement core concepts and activities. The program consists of an

implementation guide, computer programs, instructional videos, supplementary classroom materials, and a student questionnaire that assesses the extent and effects of schoolwide bullying. Schools are responsible for purchasing these materials (Olweus et al., 1999). Four levels are addressed by the BPP: school, individual, classroom, and community. In the school, the program begins with a questionnaire (Olweus Bullying Questionnaire) assessment of the nature and prevalence of school bullying. This assessment is followed by a schoolwide gathering in which a newly established Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee discusses issues surrounding bullying, rules prohibiting it, and plans for responding to incidents involving bullying. Staff members undergo training to recognize and respond to bullying so that they can maintain an appropriate school environment that discourages this behavior.

At the individual level, teachers and school officials are instructed to intervene whenever bullying occurs. They hold meetings with students involved in bullying and their parents to discuss ways to handle incidents. School officials create intervention plans for students involved in bullying as victims or perpetrators. In the classroom, the program guide instructs teachers to post school rules against bullying and to enforce them strictly. Regular class meetings with students and their parents help to ensure that the school is achieving its objectives. The BPP relies somewhat on external support from the community to reinforce the school's efforts. The school can encourage community members to be involved in the Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee or advertise the school's message in public. The visibility of antibullying messages around the community helps to raise awareness of the problem and motivate efforts to respond effectively to it.

The BPP boasts appealing results. The program creator claims that the BPP has led to reductions of more than 50% in reported bullying (Olweus, 1993). Students in schools that implement the BPP report fewer incidents of vandalism, school violence, fighting, theft, and truancy. Students also report more-positive relationships with classmates and more-positive attitudes toward school and administrators report improved student discipline (Olweus, 1993). Thousands of schools across the United States and around the world have implemented the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program.

Evaluations of the program suggest that schools have difficulty implementing each component of the BPP. Researchers evaluated the BPP in 13 schools and found that eight of the schools had less than satisfactory program implementation, indicating that they had successfully implemented less than 75% of program components (S. Black, 2007). Schools had the most difficulty accomplishing classroom meetings and encouraging parental involvement. Teachers felt that meetings interfered with the regular classroom curriculum. However, the BPP reduced bullying incident density (calculated using the number of bullying incidents over a given time and the number of students present) by 22%, student reports of bullying decreased 5%, and reports of serious violent incidents decreased 7%. The schools that were more successful in implementing program components showed better outcomes than those that experienced difficulty implementing aspects of the program (S. Black, 2007).

Youth Crime Watch

Youth Crime Watch (YCW) is designed to prevent and reduce crime in schools. The program began in Florida in 1979 as an extension of the Citizens' Crime Watch of Miami-Dade County, which was modeled after Neighborhood Crime Watch programs. Youth Crime Watch operates under the presumption that by acting with law enforcement, law-abiding citizens can prevent crime and violence in their own environment.

The YCW program at Miami Beach Senior High School achieved so much success that it led to the founding of Youth Crime Watch of America, Inc. (YCWA), a nonprofit organization that has developed more than 1,000 programs across the United States. The number of YCW programs has fluctuated over time. At the end of 2000, there were 600 schools or communities with YCW programs. In 2002, YCWA received a grant from the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention that enabled it to expand its efforts to a total of 1,228 schools or communities. Because of YCWA's challenges in sustaining the programs, there were only 662 in operation as of September 2006 (Rich, Carlson, Finn, Olsho, & Rhodes, 2008).

Youth Crime Watch programs depend on the participation of adult advisors and student volunteers. Advisors recruit and train between 10 and 20 volunteers at each school to participate in crime prevention strategies designed to make the school environment safer for students. Youth Crime Watch programs encourage youth to work collaboratively to prevent crime in their schools and neighborhoods. The YCW approach comprises six areas: (a) identifying and preventing crimes that occur in and around schools; (b) encouraging the participation of youth in observing and reporting crime; (c) linking school and community crime watch programs; (d) enhancing student understanding of the justice system; (e) educating youth in crime prevention; and (f) improving communication between youth and law enforcement officers (Knight & Blasik, 1994).

Youth Crime Watch programs encourage youth to engage in crime prevention and crime reduction activities to decrease crime in their schools and neighborhoods. The first objective of YCW is to create a crime- and drug-free environment in schools through youth-led measures. The next objective is to instill positive values, foster wholesome citizenship, and build self-confidence in students. The third objective is to prepare youth to become a valuable resource for preventing crime, reducing drug use, and stopping violence in schools. There are nine YCW components schools can choose from based on their needs and available resources: crime reporting; youth patrols; drug, violence, and crime prevention education; school bus safety; mentoring; conflict resolution; mediation; peer and cross-age teaching; and action projects. There is considerable variability across schools that implement Youth Crime Watch because of the different program components each school chooses to implement.

An evaluation of the Youth Crime Watch program revealed mixed results. A comparison of high schools with and without YCW programs revealed no statistically significant differences in terms of reported rates of

crime and violence. However, middle schools with YCW programs reported crime and violence at a rate 14% higher than middle schools without YCW. It is difficult to draw inferences from these findings about the extent to which YCW deterred crime or increased reporting of crime. Reported rates of crime and violence decreased across all schools in the study, but evaluators could find no consistent differences between YCW and non-YCW schools (Rich et al., 2008). A measure of school climate (student perceptions of safety in school) showed that students in YCW schools felt less safe than students from non-YCW schools. Patrolling activity was associated with increases in school climate ratings, especially when patrolling students carried two-way radios, and YCW programs may increase the likelihood that students report misconduct in school.

Continuing Controversies and Questions

Despite numerous intervention models to prevent and reduce school crime, a comprehensive search of the literature finds relatively few programs for serving and supporting victims of school-related crime and violence. With the exception of bullying programs, and apart from the occasional incident of shocking school violence, the day-to-day risks of school victimization remain hidden from many policymakers and large segments of the public. Schools, however, are fundamental social institutions. Communities depend on schools to provide safe environments for youth learning and socialization. Violence and fear diminish the ability of schools to fulfill their important missions and limit the ability of students to learn and to grow academically. Whether educators seek to reduce school crime or to support victims of crime, they need an answer to central questions: what are the most effective ways to respond to various forms of school crime, how should schools and communities support victims of school-related crime, and how can the safety of schools and the school experience be restored?

School systems have implemented a number of security measures with mixed results. The most visible recent trend has been the juxtaposition of education and law enforcement. The increase in the number of police officers in schools has altered the nature of academic institutions. Administrators, educators, and students may feel safer, but the presence of police officers inevitably modifies acts of misbehavior into criminal acts; schools become akin to police states. Experts worry that school-based police officers actually create more harm than good (Petteruti, 2011). Other security measures like video cameras and metal detectors reflect the continuing shift toward police control of schools. Such measures may give the appearance of safety, but they create an institutionalized, prisonlike environment for students. The impact of such an environment on student behavior is an ongoing debate. Some research suggests that the presence of security measures in schools is not associated with changes in the reporting of school crimes, but it may increase the probability that any crimes that are reported will end up involving the

police (Watkins & Maume, 2011). Could schools be communicating their distrust of youth by relying on physical security controls instead of working with students to cultivate a safe climate?

School size is another factor that may affect safety, but school officials and educational researchers may differ on its causal role in school safety. Some believe that smaller schools are likely to foster close relationships and that close bonds between students and faculty reduce victimization as well as facilitate restorative processes when violent incidents do occur. Research has not supported these assertions conclusively, and even if it could, local governments and school systems may lack the resources to build the number of schools necessary to guarantee all students access to small schools.

There are hundreds of school-based programs that seek to reduce crime in schools. There are very few that focus on the needs of the victims of school crime. Communities and schools need guidance either in adopting or creating programs that have significant benefits for students and that can be sustained over time. The most successful programs are likely to be those that involve the entire school, including administrators, teachers, parents, and students. School safety is a necessary component of effective learning and socialization, and school systems have the responsibility of developing appropriate mechanisms that ensure the safety and well-being of students and faculty.

Reducing Victimization by Building Stronger Social Bonds

One of the best ways to serve the victims of school crime, of course, is to ensure that schools do everything possible to eliminate school crime. Educators and school administrators should heed the lessons available from the fields of crime control and delinquency prevention. Researchers have labored for decades to understand the conditions that lead to high rates of crime and to conduct evaluations of programs and policies that effectively lower the odds of victimization. One of the foundational tenets of criminological theory has direct relevance to school safety. Researchers refer to this school of thought as “social control theory”—the idea that individuals are less likely to engage in criminal behavior when they are sufficiently “bonded” to the larger group or community to which they belong (Hirschi, 1969).

More than 40 years after Hirschi articulated the social bond perspective on delinquency, social scientists still see it as a credible framework for understanding the formation of delinquent behavior (Jenkins, 1997), and youth justice experts rely on it in designing interventions for youth (Butts, Bazemore, & Meroe, 2010). Theoreticians continue to debate the relative strength or salience of the particular elements of social bonds, but the basic tenets of Hirschi's theory have been supported by rigorous research for decades (e.g., Wiatrowski, Griswold, & Roberts, 1981). The strength of a young person's social bonds to conventional institutions decreases his or her propensity for criminal or deviant behavior. In other words, youth will be less attracted to illegal and harmful

behavior if they are involved with others, learning useful skills, being rewarded for using those skills, enjoying strong relationships and forming attachments, and earning the respect of their communities. As social bonds become internal, they build social control, which deters individuals from committing unlawful acts. Of course, antisocial bonds may be just as powerful (Godenzi, Schwartz, & Dekeseredy, 2001). To improve school safety, schools must facilitate youths' attachment to positive and prosocial groups.

The social bond framework is also useful in thinking about the needs of crime victims. When students feel greater attachment to their schools and communities, they may be more likely to report crimes as well as to seek help and support. This view is supported by the work of D. Black (2010) and others who focus on the interrelatedness of offenders, victims, and bureaucratic organizations. When victims report crimes against them and seek justice, they benefit from greater feelings of connectedness and personal agency.

Personal background factors such as family size and structure, parent educational level, race, gender, and grade level affect the strength of students' social bonds; the components of social bonds (commitment to school, attachment to school, involvement in school, and belief in school rules) mediate the impact of these factors on students' likelihood of skipping school and engaging in crime and misconduct on school grounds. In a study of 754 middle school students, Jenkins (1997) found that

commitment to school and belief in the fairness and consistent enforcement of rules were the most important predictors of school crime. The strongest predictor of school misconduct was school commitment. School commitment and school attachment were the strongest predictors of school nonattendance. (p. 361)

Satisfying social interactions in school are a critical part of facilitating students' development of social bonds with schools. Students who are committed to education, develop attachment with their teachers, and believe in the fairness of school rules are less likely to exhibit delinquent behavior in school.

These concepts suggest that victimization in schools will be reduced most effectively by building strong schools in which administrators and faculty value and reward student participation and when the environment enables students to derive personal satisfaction from being part of the larger school community. School-based crime prevention programs may be most successful if they aim to reduce crime and violence by mitigating the risk factors that contribute to such behavior, including academic failure, social alienation, low commitment to school, association with violent and delinquent peers, and aggressive behavior. But school officials must do more than address common risk factors. An effective school safety agenda will also build protective factors for students, such as the presence of peer groups and communities that emphasize positive social norms, supportive relationships with adults, opportunities to become involved in positive activities, recognition and support for participating in positive activities, and cognitive, social, and emotional

competence (Catalano, Loeber, & McKinney, 1999). When students feel safe and valued, this leads to improved academic achievement and a greater sense of "connectedness" to the school milieu (Hymel & Ford, 2003).

The implications of social control theory and the concept of social bonds suggest that strategies for reducing school crime and supporting the victims of school crime should depend as much as possible on students themselves. Organizations run by students, or in which students play prominent roles, will likely be more effective than those run by adults. The reasoning is simple: by empowering students to make decisions, students become more invested in the impact of those decisions, and they learn to value the safety and quality of their schools and their communities. Having a greater interest in and responsibility for school environments, students become more engaged in school safety than they would be if they played a less central or more passive role or if they depended on adults to keep them safe. These simple ideas are the basis for well-known student-led violence prevention initiatives, including Students Against Violence Everywhere (S.A.V.E.) and the antibullying program "Not in My School." Evaluations find such programs to have positive effects on participant confidence, conflict resolution, and students' knowledge regarding violence prevention (Evaluation and Training Institute, 2002).

Conclusion

School safety is essential for student success. Students who do not feel safe are less able to learn, and their academic performance eventually suffers. When children and youth become the victims of criminal acts, the entire school environment is harmed and the fear of additional victimization interferes with the educational mission of schools. Teachers and other educational staff members are charged with helping students to learn, to build social and emotional skills, and to develop into productive, mature individuals. Schools, however, are microcosms of the larger community where children are exposed to factors such as crime and violence. As in the larger community, individual behavior occurs in a social context. The characteristics of schools and classrooms play an important role in the development of victimizing behavior, and shaping those characteristics through purposeful intervention is an effective way to support youth and facilitate their healthy development. The best partners for teachers and schools as they pursue these goals are students themselves.

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