Primary Interventions: Crime Prevention in the Family and Schools

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INTRODUCTION

Early intervention programs designed to reduce crime rates have shown promising results in studies conducted over the past few decades. Primary prevention programs have gained attention because of their effectiveness in reducing social problems as well as their potential to save taxpayer dollars (Farrington, 2000; Karoly et al., 1998; Welsh & Piquero, 2012). The main objective of early, placed-based delinquency prevention programs is to prevent not only juvenile delinquency but also adult criminality by reducing the prevalence of *risk factors* associated with delinquent behavior and strengthening *protective factors* that insulate youths from situations that may favor the development of delinquent behavior (Farrington, 2000; Shader, 2003). Reducing the prevalence of risk factors should have an impact on the frequency and seriousness of delinquent offending. With this approach, the incidence of crime should decrease, thus providing benefits for society, potential crime victims, and even potential offenders. Two critical social institutions provide the setting for such programs: the family and the school. This chapter first discusses family-based crime prevention initiatives and then describes school-based programs.

There is a common assumption that family training programs and school-based initiatives such as Project DARE (a drug abuse and resistance education program) will have a positive impact on youth development and will promote prosocial outcomes; however, evaluations of such programs show that this assumption may be overly optimistic. The sometimes disappointing results of these program evaluations underscore the need for a strong evaluation design that will determine whether or not a program works as intended. McCord (2007) notes that program outcomes may fall along a continuum, from intended positive outcomes to unintended negative outcomes. In this sense, a program may not only fail to produce a positive outcome but also yield negative outcomes. In other words, an intervention may produce more harm than good. For example, the Cambridge Somerville Youth Study program had good intentions, a theoretical model, and a sound implementation plan, but long-term evaluation results indicated that the program did more harm than good for its participants (McCord, 2003, as cited in McCord, 2007). Likewise, an evaluation of Project DARE indicated that students who completed the program used drugs more and disliked the police more than did their counterparts who did not participate in DARE (Rosenbaum & Hanson, 1998).

FAMILY-BASED CRIME PREVENTION

Society offers few occupations that may be taken up without any training or experience, but becoming a parent is the obvious exception. Families, and particularly parents, play a major role in the socialization and development of children (Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Welsh & Piquero, 2012). Parents have the primary role in the physical, mental, and social development of the child, but how well they perform that role and how well their families function should not necessarily be viewed as a dichotomy of either good or bad. A more apt assessment scale would be a continuum. Between good and bad, the family environment shapes not only a child's early development within the family but also his or her trajectory in life. Positive early experiences in a loving, supportive family that provide developmentally appropriate challenges improve a child's trajectory from infancy to adulthood. Conversely, a family environment marked by parental discord, parental violence, parental criminality, alcohol and drug abuse, physical and emotional abuse, apathy or indifference toward children, and inadequate supervision of children has a negative impact on the social trajectory of young family members.

Since there are no educational prerequisites for parenthood, how does a parent develop his or her parenting style and repertoire of parenting skills? Since most new parents have only their own experience as the children of parents, educational and support services offer a means of filling this critical need for parenting skills that will encourage positive development. Early parenting programs can have multiple connected goals. Some have a delinquency prevention component that begins very early; efforts to prevent teen pregnancy constitute one example, because being born to a teenage mother increases the risk that a child will later engage in delinquent behavior. Likewise, home visitation programs seek to improve parenting skills and expose expecting or new parents to community resources that will support their efforts. Teen pregnancy prevention and home visitation programs fall under the heading of "primary prevention" of delinquency. Unlike these primary prevention programs that focus on early family situations or even forestalling family formation, secondary prevention programs focus on youth who are seen as at-risk for offending, and tertiary programs seek to prevent first-time offenders from committing subsequent offenses. Thus, primary prevention programs seek to strengthen protective factors and minimize risk factors among a broad population.

As noted above, primary prevention programs offer potential benefits not only for individuals but for society as a whole. Preventing crime means that taxpayers potentially see reduced spending on criminal justice activities and social services. Consumers might even see lower insurance costs. Victims may also avoid experiencing loss and possible harm. Primary prevention efforts might raise some political concerns, however, perhaps by giving the appearance that society is being soft on crime; such programs emphasize a shift from formal control, such as the incarceration of individuals, to a more sustainable social structure. Society spends vast sums of money responding to crime after the fact, but primary prevention programs have the potential to divert some individuals from a life of crime and thus to save taxpayer money in the long run. Welsh and Piquero (2012) note that the long-term financial savings generated by primary prevention programs theoretically allow society to pay for those programs by saving money that otherwise would have been spent responding to crime.

One of the drawbacks of programs that seek to prevent delinquency is that the results of the program, whether positive, negative, or statistically insignificant, would not be available for 10–15 years or more. With such long time horizons, especially compared to the types of programs—such as juvenile drug court initiatives—that McDonald and Bush discuss in Chapter 12 of this volume,

these programs may not hold much appeal for key decision makers, who often have much shorter time horizons in which to measure success or failure.

Risk Factors

The criminal justice field has borrowed the terminology and philosophy of the public health approach most commonly identified with a medical model of prevention (Farrington, 2000), specifically with the emphasis on risk and protective factors. Shader (2003) notes that the presence of multiple risk factors in a family setting increases the likelihood that a youth will engage in delinquent acts. Specific risk factors that have been correlated with delinquency include inadequate prenatal nutrition, prenatal drug use; family resources/poverty; poor parental supervision of children; harsh, lax, or indifferent discipline; poor parent–child attachment; and parental deviance (Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Shader, 2003; Welsh & Piquero, 2012).

    Prenatal drug, tobacco, and alcohol use. A high-risk mother is one who has a child or is pregnant with a child while experiencing one of the following disadvantages: no employment/low socioeconomic status, low education level, no marital partner, a history of drug or alcohol abuse, or a history of physical or sexual abuse. Drug use by expectant mothers can have a profound impact on the future of an unborn child. Feldman, Minkoff, McCalla, and Salwen (1992) analyzed drug tests conducted on urine samples from 1,111 inner city pregnant women who later gave birth in a city hospital in New York City. Their results indicated that 14% of the women tested positive for drugs. In addition, the majority (70%) of the drug users also smoked cigarettes. Based on these findings, they concluded that 20–30% of premature deliveries were due to drug use by the mother, and smoking cigarettes contributed to these premature births. Likewise, in a telephone survey of 1,550 white women ages 20–44 in 1986, only 39% of smokers quit smoking while pregnant, either when they found out they were pregnant or shortly into their pregnancy (Fingerhut, Kleinman, & Kendrick, 1990). That study also found that women with fewer than 12 years of education were five times more likely to smoke but were only one-fourth as likely to quit smoking during their pregnancy. Younger and unmarried women were also more likely to smoke compared to women who were older or married. It is reasonable to conclude that drug education and smoking cessation programs can be more fully integrated into parenting education programs so that expectant mothers have additional opportunities to learn about the impact drugs have on an unborn child.

    Low birthweight babies. According to the March of Dimes (2010), babies born weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces, are considered low birthweight, and nearly 1 in 12 babies born in the United States each year is considered low birthweight. Probable causes include expectant mothers' poor health habits such as smoking, lack of proper nutrition, and lack of adequate health care. Underweight newborns are much more likely to have developmental, educational, medical, and behavioral issues later in life. For instance, low birthweight may impede age-appropriate development, which negatively impacts school performance, and strong performance in school is a strong insulator from delinquency. Therefore, low birthweight would not be seen as a direct cause of delinquency but as a factor associated with the development of additional risk factors. Efforts to reduce the incidence of at-risk babies might include improving the quality of pregnancies or responding to the social problems associated with risk factors for low birthweight babies, such as prenatal smoking or lack of health care.

    Teen mothers. Many programs have focused on reducing the incidence of teenage parenthood not because of the moral aspect of the issue but because teenage mothers are at additional risk for child poverty and dependency on public assistance. Waller, Brown, and Whittle (1999,

p. 468) state that "an early pregnancy is typically just one more constricting factor in a life path full of social and economic obstacles." While teen births have been trending downward, there were still 434,758 births for mothers aged 15–19 years recorded in 2008 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010a). Also, about 70% of teen births are to unwed mothers. The at-risk status for teen mothers is correlated with higher unemployment rates, lower levels of education, and a higher percentage of low birthweight infants (Nguyen, Carson, Parris, & Place, 2003). Teen mothers often face additional pressures due to limited economic circumstances. In addition, teen mothers are more likely to have experienced sexual abuse than are older mothers because there is a greater likelihood that the pregnancy resulted from intercourse with an older male, which raises the question of whether or not the encounter was consensual (Waller, Brown, & Whittle, 1999). Young mothers are also at a higher risk for stress, social isolation, and substance abuse, leading to a greater incidence of child abuse and child neglect (Nguyen, Carson, Parris, & Place, 2003). In addition to suffering more abuse and neglect, the children born to teen mothers also have greater health and medical risks than children of the average adult mother. Teen mothers are more likely to face the economic disadvantages of single parenthood, have limited education, and poor parenting skills, all of which may lead to later problems for both the mother and child.

Waller, Brown, and Whittle (1999, p. 467) claim that, despite considerable policy focus on the issue and many educational programs designed to prevent unwanted pregnancies among teenagers, once a teen becomes pregnant, she is "dropped from the world agenda." They propose a cost-effective alternative approach to these "top-down" measures: a community-based mentoring program. In their view, teen pregnancy is not a cause of poverty but a symptom of a series of social problems illustrated by economic and social hardships. Waller, Brown, and Whittle contend that most adult figures in a pregnant teenager's life—parents, relatives, teachers, clergy—judge and reject them. These authors propose that each teen mother have a mentor to provide guidance and, more importantly, social support. They contend that "many of the risk factors associated with early pregnancy and child maltreatment may be significantly altered by the social support that mentoring relationships provide" (Waller, Brown, & Whittle, 1999, p. 471). The mentor should encourage prenatal and postnatal care, as well as urge the young mother to continue her education and thus break the cycle of poverty. They detail appropriate training for mentors, which would include teaching them techniques to develop rapport and basic education regarding child development, family violence, and pregnancy issues. Their evaluation strategy focuses on outcomes for both the youth and the mother.

Home Visitation Programs

Home visitation programs have been promoted as a promising means of preventing negative health and developmental issues for the children of program participants (Olds & Korfmacher, 1998). These programs seek to equip participating mothers with life skills that will help families—both parents and children—have more positive life course trajectories. Program objectives include improving multiple positive outcomes, such as better health, better education, and employment success. A common form of the program involves a professional, such as a nurse or social worker, entering the home to provide structured training and education over a substantial period of time, perhaps from early in the mother's pregnancy until the child is of preschool age. The professionals who work with the mothers receive training in various areas, which include not only service delivery but also honing the communication skills necessary to develop rapport with the mother. Typical home visitation programs also supply the mother with information on child development, educat-

ing her as to what kinds of behaviors and skills to expect of children at various ages. In addition, a home visitation program can include the provision of assistance or resources such as transportation for medical checkups, parenting classes, and social/educational learning groups for the children.

The Elmira Study

Among these home visitation training programs is the Elmira Parent/Early Infancy Project, considered by some to be a landmark program. It is one of the first programs to support the view that home visitation can be an effective means of preventing child abuse and neglect. Its goals are to improve the outcome of the pregnancy, to improve the quality of child care that parents provide, and to improve the woman's own life course development (Olds et al., 1997). The Elmira Project is of particular interest because the original controlled experimental design included 15 years of follow up on the participants, thus generating valuable long-range data.

Between 1978 and 1980, 400 women in Elmira, New York, volunteered to participate in the program. Each of them was less than 30 weeks' pregnant with her first child (Olds et al., 1997). The majority of the women were considered high risk because of some preexisting circumstance, such as economic disadvantage, young age, and/or status as a single parent. In the sample, 85% of the participating pregnant women had at least one risk characteristic. Specifically, 48% of the participants were younger than 19 years old, 62% were unmarried, 59% were from households classified as having low socioeconomic status, and 11% were African American (Olds et al., 1997).

There were four groups in the experimental design: two control groups and two treatment groups. Each of the children in the four control groups received screening for developmental and sensory problems at 12 months and 24 months of age, with subsequent referral for additional assistance if warranted. This screening was given to all groups. The first control group (group 1) received no additional screening, training, or treatment. The second control group (group 2) received, in addition to the screening, transportation vouchers enabling participants to have regular prenatal exams by a physician as well as well-child pediatric medical care through age 2. Researchers eventually combined groups 1 and 2 for the subsequent analysis. Group 3 received the developmental screening plus free transportation vouchers and home visits from a nurse every 2 weeks during the mother's pregnancy. Group 4 received the developmental screening as well as home visits from a nurse not only during the mother's pregnancy but also, at a reduced frequency, during the first 2 years of the child's life (Olds et al., 1998).

The researchers noted positive results for the group that had home visits through the child's 2nd year, and the 13-year follow up provided data enabling the researchers to determine whether there were more lasting positive impacts of the program. According to Olds et al. (1997), visiting nurses sought to develop a close working relationship with the mother as well as any other family members present. The nurses helped expectant mothers to set manageable goals and develop problem-solving skills in an effort to improve their education and employment status as well as the overall family dynamic. The goal-setting effort focused on short-term achievability—goals that could be accomplished between visits—to help build the mother's self-confidence. Out of the 400 women who participated in the original home visitation program, 324 were eligible for a follow-up study and agreed to participate in that study, conducted when the children were 15 years old. Researchers asked the mothers to complete a life history calendar designed to help them recall major life events of the previous 13 years, such as births, marriages, divorces, employment, and residential moves. The follow-up study also called for the women to estimate the number of months they received any Medicaid and food stamp assistance and any contact with the criminal justice system (Olds

et al., 1997). Researchers also asked participating mothers about alcohol and drug use and, with the subjects' consent, examined child protective service records on the youth.

The researchers then compared results from the two groups (combined control groups 1 and 2 and treatment group 4). Results of the follow-up study showed that women whom the nurses visited up to the child's 2nd birthday had fewer subsequent pregnancies, used food stamps for fewer months, were arrested fewer times, had fewer instances of substance abuse, and were cited for fewer instances of child abuse/neglect (Olds et al., 1997). The researchers also note that the finding of fewer instances of child abuse/neglect is noteworthy, considering that the group receiving nurse visits was under a higher level of supervision; the regular presence of visiting nurses in the home should, in theory, result in higher detection of certain behaviors. Karoly et al. (1998) note that the Elmira Project produced substantial cost savings; they estimate savings of just over $18,000, although the actual lifetime total would likely be higher since this calculation considered only the youths' first 15 years of life.

Researchers also examined the nature and extent of differences in antisocial behavior among juveniles in the program during the 15-year follow-up (Olds et al., 1998). Data included both self-reports and comparisons with official records from social service agencies, police departments, and the schools. The children of group 4 (which received regular nurse visits until age 2) reported more stops by the police but did have fewer arrests, convictions, and violations of probation (Olds et al., 1998). The children in group 4 also had fewer sexual partners, smoked fewer cigarettes per day, reported fewer incidents of running away, and consumed alcohol on fewer days during the 6-month period prior to the interview. The children in group 3 of the design (nurse visits only during pregnancy) did not have as many positive results as the youths in group 4, which would seem to indicate the importance of home visitation after the child is born, not just during the mother's pregnancy. With the exception of illegal drug use, group 4 showed more pronounced positive results for youths of lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, which may indicate additional benefits of the home visits for particular populations.

The original Elmira Project participants were later subject to an additional analysis, this time to find out if domestic violence would decrease the effectiveness of home visitation in preventing child abuse and neglect (Eckenrode et al., 2000). Researchers offer several reasons why children who live in households with domestic violence could be at risk for abuse or neglect. For example, while male abusers may be the cause of some neglect, mothers who are in a violent relationship may lash out violently and, due to mental impairments, may have reduced capacity to respond to their children. Children who witness domestic violence may exhibit behavioral problems, which can make them more challenging to parent. Just under half of the mothers in the Elmira study had experienced some form of domestic violence since the birth of their child (Eckenrode et al., 2000). The follow-up study findings showed that families who received home visitation during the mother's pregnancy and the child's infancy (group 4) had significantly fewer child maltreatment reports involving the mother as the perpetrator, but that the beneficial effects of the nurse visits decreased as the level of domestic violence increased. Interestingly, home visitation did not have an impact on the amount of domestic violence. Results indicate that additional resources and supervision may be warranted in family situations in which the mothers are at risk for domestic violence.

With numerous early intervention programs available, questions remain as to the effectiveness of various models. Nguyen, Carson, Parris, and Place (2003) report results from an experimental design comparing the Nursing–Family Partnership model to the Public Health Field Nursing (PHFN) Program for a sample of Hispanic teens. The expectant mothers in the control group received only three visits from a traditional public health field nurse in the PHFN Program. The

intervention group received weekly home visits for the first 4 weeks after they entered the program (during pregnancy), visits every other week until delivery, weekly visits for the first 6 weeks after delivery, visits every other week until the child was 20 months old, and monthly visits until the child was 24 months old. The home visits by public health nurses with advanced training in the Nursing–Family Partnership model were 60–90 minutes in duration and focused on a range of topics, including maternal and child health, child development, family dynamics, and information about existing health and human service agencies. Both groups experienced positive results with respect to premature births, which occurred at a rate of less than half of the state's average. The mothers in the Nurse–Family Partnership group had a lower percentage of low birthweight babies compared to the control group. Although the authors note fairly favorable results, roughly 22% of the mothers effectively dropped out of the program by missing an excessive number of appointments or because of other factors related to the fact that this population tended to have significant residential instability. The research findings also stress the importance of cooperation and sustained interest on the part of the expectant mother as well as the difficulties in successfully working with at-risk mothers who can easily drop out or fail to meet program requirements.

Ammerman et al. (2006) share this concern about the active engagement of program participants. They studied the impact of the home visitation program on 515 first-time teen mothers taking part in Healthy Families America. About 32% of the 515 mothers ended their participation by the first month, which, the authors note, was prior to the establishment of a strong rapport between the mother and the home visitor. The authors offer a number of reasons why women might drop out of the program: inexperience in making or inability to schedule appointments, a perception of duplication in program services, lack of rapport with the visiting professional, moving out of the area, and even a lack of privacy during the visit because of living arrangements. Many mothers might consider the home visits redundant due to the nature of the information being conveyed. Ammerman et al. (2006) contend that it is critical that the home visitor keep the visits engaging, with each visit including new material that evolves as the child grows. In addition, there must be a continuity of professionals to maintain a rapport between the mother and the visiting nurse. The researchers note that among the variables that seemed to predict more sustained involvement with the home visitation program included the mother being white, a history of criminal behavior, mental illness, or substance abuse, lower levels of social support, and multiple stressors.

A 2009 study using data collected from 806 at-risk, first-time mothers enrolled in a home visitation program addressed the mental health issues of participating mothers. Researchers collected data on self-reported depression symptoms at enrollment and again 9 months later (Ammerman et al., 2009). Their findings indicate that 45.3% of mothers had experienced clinically elevated depression symptoms at some point in the first 9 months of their home visitation program. Of particular interest, 74% had experienced an interpersonal trauma prior to beginning the home visitation program. More than half of the expecting mothers were clinically depressed at the start of their participation but were no longer depressed at the nine-month interval. This study also showed higher rates of depression among African American mothers. Mothers with self-reported depression may find it more difficult to participate in an extended home visitation program, and simultaneously treat their depression. Adding to this challenge is the likelihood that participants who present symptoms of clinical depression may also have some coexisting mental disorders. Because of the apparent prevalence of depression and other mental health issues among at-risk mothers, effective home visitation programs should integrate mental health screening and service referral.

Hammond-Ratzlaff and Fulton (2001) discuss the knowledge that mothers gain when they participate in home visitation programs. Previous studies have noted that mothers who participate

in home visitation programs expand their knowledge in many areas, including childbirth, child care, social support services, home safety, and health awareness. Children of these mothers also experience positive outcomes, such as fewer emergency room visits and fewer behavioral problems in schools. Hammond-Ratzlaff and Fulton found that the 47 mothers in the program they studied also increased their knowledge of child development.

Perry Preschool Project

One early intervention program aimed at preschool age children is the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, which has been in operation for 40 years (Parks, 2000). The program began with an experimental design involving random assignment of 123 high-risk youths. Youths were matched based on gender, age, IQ, and SES. One group participated in the program while the other became the control group. The experimental group attended a daily preschool program Monday through Friday that focused on cognitive development, such as enhanced thinking and reasoning abilities. In addition, the school staff made weekly home visits. Program enrollment was for 2 years. By age 19, members of the experimental group had experienced fewer arrests than the control group (31% compared to 51% of the control group), and by age 27, the experimental group had half as many arrests on average relative to the control group. The control group also had a higher percentage of frequent offenders, defined as five or more arrests, than did the experimental group (35% compared to 7%). Parks (2000) notes that more than 70% of the experimental group graduated from high school, while only 54% of the control group graduated. The cost benefits of the program were estimated to be just over $88,000 (including savings to crime victims) per youth in the program or a savings of $7.16 for every dollar spent on the program.

Incredible Years Training Series

The Incredible Years Training Series is designed to identify and reduce behavioral problems among children 2–10 years old (Webster-Stratton, 2000). The program uses video modeling, discussion, and rehearsal intervention techniques to increase the competence of adults, such as parents and teachers, who work in various capacities with youths. There are five programs in the series, each based on the age of the youth and the program target audience: (1) Incredible Years BASIC Parent Training, (2) Incredible Years ADVANCED Parent Training, (3) Incredible Years EDUCATION Parent Training, (4) Incredible Years Teacher Training, and (5) Incredible Years Child Training. The BASIC program, based on social learning theory, is for parents. It lasts 12 weeks and presents various scenarios in video format. Discussion follows the scenario presentations so that parents can begin to develop a repertoire of response options appropriate to a variety of family situations. The ADVANCED program, also for parents, emphasizes the building of interpersonal skills, such as communication and problem-solving techniques. The EDUCATION program teaches parents techniques to strengthen their role in their child's educational experience, such as supporting homework efforts and encouraging children to read. The Teacher Training program similarly emphasizes the role of positive techniques, such as incentives, praise, and rewards. The Child Training program reinforces positive social skills and behaviors for the child to model, such as conflict resolution techniques. According to Webster-Stratton (2000), one of the main goals of the program is the development of social competence skills, which serve as a protective factor for youths. The Incredible Years Training Series seeks to minimize a focus on negative reinforcement and emphasize a more proactive and positive manner of supervision and discipline.

The BASIC program teaches parents how to play with their children and to recognize the importance of children's play for their development. It also emphasizes the importance of play in minimizing disruptions caused by a child's boredom. Another important aspect of the program deals with how and when parents should praise and reward children. Webster-Stratton (2000) describes effective parental praise as an art requiring finesse. For example, parents must avoid praising only "perfect" behavior. Similar insights are brought to bear on developing an effective reward system, one in which parents understand the difference between rewards and bribes. In addition to teaching parents how to provide positive reinforcement and suitable alternatives, the program's training objectives include helping youths to accept limits and showing parents how to handle children's noncompliance with rules and limits, including what penalties, such as "time out," are appropriate.

The Incredible Years programs for parents are designed to be delivered by one or two leaders guiding the activities of a group of 12 to 14 parents. Webster-Stratton (2000) notes that the program format consists of approximately 15% teaching, 25% video presentation, and 60% discussion. The videos show parents interacting in positive ways with their children and lead to an opportunity for structured discussion within the group. The Incredible Years programs also integrate role-playing activities to complement scenarios depicted in the videos. Webster-Stratton notes that experimental designs testing the effectiveness of the program have shown positive results in three key areas: parents' social competence, positive methods of discipline, and child management skills.

SCHOOL-BASED CRIME PREVENTION

Once children reach school age, they spend a considerable amount of time away from the direct supervision of their parents. The school, much like the family, is the focus of several contemporary theories in criminology. For instance, Hirschi's (1969) social control theory emphasizes a youth's attachment to and involvement in school. Youths who have better grades, more attachment to school, and see value in education are less likely to be delinquent. Agnew's (1992) general strain theory identifies a number of sources of strain in youths, including failure to achieve positively valued goals, the removal of positively valued stimuli, and the presence of negative stimuli, all of which may occur in a typical school setting. Negative outcomes are likely if youths cannot respond to strain using prosocial mechanisms. Typical school settings also lend themselves to situational crime prevention. While attending school, youths are sometimes under fairly close supervision, such as while in a classroom; at other times, there is much less direct supervision of youths, such as in restrooms, locker rooms, hallways, and stairwells.

Youths experience a much higher rate of victimization than do other age groups. In 2008, youths 12–15 years old were victimized at a rate of 42.2 per 1,000 individuals, while individuals 65 and older had a victimization rate of 3.1 per 1,000 (Rand & Truman, 2010). In addition, youths commit a disproportionate number of offenses. Schools present a situation where likely offenders and potential victims interact with one another under varying degrees of supervision.

There are a number of excellent sources of data on violence, drugs, and weapons in schools. For instance, the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), administered biannually since 1991 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), monitors specific health-related risk behaviors among youth. In the YRBSS, there are six key areas of health-related risk behaviors: (1) behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; (2) tobacco use; (3) alcohol and other drug use; (4) sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection; (5) unhealthy

dietary behaviors; and (6) physical inactivity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010b). The YRBSS is a school-based survey administered on the national, state, and district level for students in grades 9–12. Some noteworthy results from the 2009 YRBSS for all high school students include the following: 17.5% of students had carried a weapon (e.g., a gun, knife, or club) on at least 1 day during the 30 days before the survey; 19.9% of students had been bullied on school property during the 12 months before the survey; 26.1% of students nationwide had felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 or more weeks in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities; 24.2% of students had had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row (i.e., within a couple of hours) on at least one day during the 30 days before the survey; and 20.8% of students had used marijuana one or more times during the 30 days before the survey.

Crime in Schools

The first national study of school crime was a National Institute of Education 1978 study based on a national sample of 4,014 principals, 23,895 teachers, and 31,373 students. Results indicated that more than 280,000 secondary school students were physically attacked each month and that 8% of junior high and 4% senior high students skipped school due to fear of victimization (cited in Toby, 1983). Less than 1% of the high school students reported being robbed and less than 2% reported being assaulted during the previous month (Toby, 1995).

Another data source for school crime statistics is the National Crime Victimization Survey/ School Crime Supplement (NCVS/SCS). Robers, Zhang, Truman, and Snyder (2010) note that between July 1, 2008, and June 30, 2009, there were 38 school-associated violent deaths. In 2008 alone, 1.2 million criminal victimizations occurred in school settings. This total was roughly split between property crimes and violent crimes. It is interesting to note that the risk of violent victimization for youths was higher away from school than in school. The authors note that about one-third of all students between 12 and 18 years of age reported being bullied at least once at school in the previous year.

As society contends with the negative impacts of numerous high-profile shootings in school settings, communities have taken a critical look at creating and maintaining a positive school climate. For instance, some states such as California, have declared that students have the state constitutional right to attend schools that are safe, secure, and conducive to learning. Michigan granted students the right to transfer from schools that have been deemed persistently dangerous. A constitutional right to attend safe schools potentially makes schools liable for failing to protect students from foreseeable harms. These harms can include the presence of gangs, weapons, bullying, or sexual harassment. The Obama administration elevated the prevention of bullying in schools to a national issue.

There are two fairly broad approaches to school crime and disorder; one approach relies on more formal social control within the school, and the second approach emphasizes informal social control. A number of schools have opted for the formal approach, utilizing such techniques as perimeter security (fences), secured parking areas, closed-circuit television, security guards, uniformed police officers, anonymous tip lines for students to report crimes, metal detectors, removal of all lockers, limiting access to open doors/windows, transparent book bags, Kevlar backpacks, desks bolted to the floor, panic buttons and telephones in the classrooms, drug testing for students involved in extracurricular activities, identification tags or badges, glass block instead of cinderblock walls to allow surveillance, restroom monitoring by staff, random visits by drug dogs, controlled visitor access to the school, and bans on offensive clothing. Other approaches have emphasized high

expectations for performance, positive school climate, increased homework, specialized programs such as conflict resolution, improving student awareness of civic duties and responsibilities, a sense of mission regarding education, the use of place managers to watch over specific areas of the school (shops, gyms, locker rooms, stairs, hallways, and restrooms), handlers for high-risk youths (emphasizing both mentoring and surveillance of potential offenders), and guardians (similar to handlers but focusing on potential victims).

Contemporary schools have a complex mission. Their objectives can include providing proper socialization for students, setting educational objectives, making sure that students master material in order to meet standardized test requirements, providing skills that will prepare students to enter the workforce, academically preparing students to enter college, and providing students with the life skills and social skills needed in order to be active and engaged citizens. School administrators have contemplated enacting a number of policies intended to improve safety and order, but such measures can negatively impact the learning environment, such as the potential for zero-tolerance policies. Many structural and procedural changes can make school seem more like a prison than a place for learning, growth, and dialogue. Some individuals contend that schools should enact measures that advance the learning process, provide students with adequate information about what is expected of them, and enforce rules in a fair and systematic manner.

As research on school experiences and delinquency has shown, what happens to students in school can lead to misbehavior, including delinquency. Factors such as personality, self-control, intelligence, social class, family factors, school characteristics, and community context also play a role. Agnew (2009, p. 241) states that "many juveniles do poorly in school and come to dislike or even hate school. School then becomes a source of strain for them, it exercises little control over them, and it provides a context for associating with other dissatisfied, often delinquent, juveniles." Agnew notes that delinquents are more likely to perform poorly in school (reflected in poor grades and lower academic tracks), be less involved in school activities, have lower attachment to school, have poor relations with teachers (reflected in weak rapport and confrontational attitudes), have lower educational goals, and have higher rates of misbehavior in school.

Some states changed their compulsory education laws in an effort to extend educational opportunities for all students. For example, the New Hampshire state legislature raised the maximum age for compulsory education from 16 to 18. Reports indicate that the annual dropout rate decreased to 0.97% in 2009–2010 (WMUR-TV, 2011). Taking an alternative view, Toby (1995) contends that schools have a "stay-in" problem rather than a "dropout" problem. One of the factors contributing to school disorder, Toby argues, is that schools must deal with the presence of students who have little if any interest in learning and who create distractions for other students.

While serious crime and violence do occur in schools, the majority of criminal acts in school are relatively minor in nature. Most schools do not have problems with weapons, violence, and crime. Toby (1983) contends that serious violent crimes in schools are like a flood or tornado in a typical community; they are difficult to predict and tough to stop. Agnew (2009) notes that delinquency tends to be lower in small schools with good resources, good discipline (e.g., clear rules that are enforced consistently and fairly but are not overly punitive), opportunities for student success and accomplishment, high expectations for all students, a pleasant learning environment, and good cooperation between administrators and teachers. Many of the characteristics of a positive school climate are similar to those of a positive family environment. Large schools where students can remain aloof from activities and anonymous to overwhelmed teachers tend to have a higher incidence of school disorder and crime. Schools that maintain a tight focus on academic standards and achievement have less disorder.

Historical Trends in School Order and Discipline

Toby (1995) contends that formal and informal control within schools has weakened over time. In the past, for better or worse, the authority of many principals was similar to that of a pre-1950 prison warden. Both types of administrators—prison wardens and school principals—had wide authority and discretion in their respective institutions. The courts and communities were reluctant to get involved in the internal matters of schools (or prisons). Principals have seen their authority weakened, in part due to court cases granting due process rights to students in school, thus limiting the authority of principals. Toby notes that, in addition to the decline in the authority of principals, parental support for schools and teachers has decreased, as has the overall structure of the school day and curriculum. These three factors mean that teachers have less authority in the classroom. According to Toby, less teacher authority leads to less control in the classroom, which is associated with lower student performance. Less control in the classroom means that there may be greater opportunities for student misbehavior, such as cutting class, arriving late, and failing to complete assignments. Lower standards lead to weak academic skills. The complete picture is one of a critical mass of uninterested students in a vicious cycle of decreasing involvement. For example, students are given less homework on a regular basis because students who are out of school will not get the assignment, and of those who do get the assignment, some will be absent the next day. Students do minimal amounts of homework and are not reading on a regular basis. There are also a number of "internal dropouts"—students who are technically still enrolled but may skip days or blocks of time on a regular basis and who receive bad grades, have little motivation to improve, and have no stake in conforming to school rules.

Toby (1995) contends that there is a norm for high expectations of good grades (honor roll grades) that does match the true performance of students. International comparisons of performance on standardized tests demonstrate a wide gap in academic outcomes between students in the United States and those in other nations. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provided literacy data for 15-year-old students in the areas of mathematics, reading, and science for 30 participating countries in 2006. The United States ranked 25th out of the 30 nations for the mathematics literacy average and 10th out of the 30 nations in science literacy (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010). Toby describes this condition as the hoax of learning: students get fewer assignments and do less work but continue to receive the reward of good grades. In schools where this downward cycle gains momentum, students and teachers often leave that particular school setting for another school if they have the opportunity to do so. This situation siphons off the most motivated and capable teachers and students, thus perpetuating the cycle. He advocates an end to social promotion, lowering of the minimum age for compulsory education, and allowing young adults who have dropped out sometime in the past to resume their education in a controlled environment rather than rely on the self-motivation needed for nighttime GED classes. Toby (1995) also contends that interrupting the cycle requires that school be more academically challenging. However, this move might lead students who have little interest in serious school work to drop out.

Student Rights

Students have the right to a public education. In fact, with compulsory education laws, they must attend school until they reach a certain age, which varies by state. However, students who remain in school also need to conduct themselves in a manner that does not interfere with the right of other

students to receive an education. The Supreme Court of the United States recognizes that school officials have inherent authority over students and that this authority is necessary in order to maintain an environment conducive to learning. The existence of this authority need not be expressly stated in school manuals, but the courts have recognized it in the concept of "*in loco parentis*," meaning "to stand in the place of parents." Teachers and school administrators thus have authority over youths while they are at school and must ensure an appropriate level of discipline and civility to maintain an environment conducive to learning.

Although the *in loco parentis* concept governing the exercise of authority in the schools is fairly straightforward, complexities arise when it comes to defining the balance between the administration's ability to make and enforce rules and students' ability to enjoy their constitutional rights, such as freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, free speech, and due process. For example, in a landmark school rights case, Justice Abe Fortas (*Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 1969) stated, "It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." He went on to state that, "in our system, state-operated schools may not be enclaves of totalitarianism. School officials do not possess absolute authority over their students. Students in school, as well as out of school, are 'persons' under our Constitution. They are possessed of fundamental rights which the State must respect, just as they themselves must respect their obligations to the State."

Student Privacy Interests

Searching students suspected of possessing contraband, drugs, or weapons is one tactic administrators may employ to minimize crime in school and to enforce school rules. To what extent does the Fourth Amendment, which protects individuals from unreasonable searches and seizures, apply to students? Under what circumstances can school officials conduct searches of students, their belongings, or even their vehicles in the school parking lot? An increasingly prominent issue has been the desire of school officials to discipline students for infractions of school rules during nonschool hours or away from school property.

New Jersey v. T.L.O. **(1985).** "T.L.O." was a 14-year-old female freshman who was smoking cigarettes in the restroom when a teacher caught her in the act. The teacher took her to the principal's office, and upon questioning by the vice principal, she claimed that she did not smoke. A school official searched her purse to recover the remaining cigarettes. The school official found marijuana, rolling papers, a list of names of students who owed her money, a pipe, and a letter she had written to a friend describing her activities selling marijuana at school. School officials notified the police, and the student was later adjudicated delinquent. The decision was eventually overturned by the New Jersey Supreme Court, and the case reached the Supreme Court of the United States. The case featured several issues of key importance. In the majority opinion written by Justice Byron White (*New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, 1985), he noted that the Constitution protects students against unreasonable searches and seizures. The Court noted that the search of T.L.O.'s purse to discover whether school rules were being violated was reasonable at the inception of the search. The search must be justified when it begins; it cannot be justified retroactively, based on what is found or recovered during the search. Of particular importance was the Court's statement that school officials are not held to the same standard as police—the probable cause standard—when conducting a search, and they are not required to obtain a warrant. Her later adjudication and the resulting declaration of delinquency rested on the evidence school officials seized. In its decision, the Court noted that a search of a student by a school official is "justified at its inception when there

are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the search will turn up evidence that the student has violated or is violating either the law or the rules of the school. Such a search will be permissible in its scope when the measures adopted are reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive in light of the age and sex of the student and the nature of the infraction" (*New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, 1985, p. 469 U.S. 343).

Strip searches. The issue of searching students for contraband that school officials believe will negatively affect school safety and detract from the learning environment reappeared with the controversy surrounding the strip search of a 13-year-old female student, Savana Redding, with the intent to uncover prescription ibuprofen (*Safford Unified School District #1 et al. v. Redding*, 2009). A key principle came into play in the controversy over whether the strip search was reasonable given the nature of the infraction and the age and gender of the student. Prior to the search, the principal was aware that another student had become ill after taking another person's prescription drugs and that yet another student claimed to have gotten a pill from Savana. During a search of her person, the student who provided Savana's name to the principal was caught with a blue pill (later determined to be naproxen), several white pills, and a razor blade. The principal searched Savana's backpack and did not find any pills. In the presence of the school nurse, Savana was asked to pull her bra and underwear away from her body, and no pills were found to be concealed. In the majority opinion, Justice David Souter noted that the intrusiveness of the search was not justified given the circumstances. While not creating a prohibition on the use of strip searches, the decision does provide some guidance in terms of when searches would be appropriate in maintaining a safe and secure environment.

School lockers. Do students have a reasonable expectation of privacy in their school lockers? By their nature, school lockers are no doubt perceived as providing some level of privacy and security for students. After all, students may be assigned individual lockers, which do not permit contents to be examined from the outside, and students may be provided with a key or combination lock. These factors can create a reasonable expectation of privacy on the part of students. With a widely perceived expectation of privacy because of the very nature of school lockers, it stands to reason that schools should communicate to students an understanding of the actual level of privacy they can expect with regard to their school lockers. An interesting example of such communication is the Milwaukee Public Schools locker policy, which clarifies the "reasonable expectation of privacy" with an "expressed understanding to the contrary." The policy states,

> *School lockers are the property of Milwaukee Public Schools. At no time does the Milwaukee Public School District relinquish its exclusive control of lockers provided for the convenience of students. School authorities for any reason may conduct periodic general inspections of lockers at any time, without notice, without student consent, and without a search warrant. (Van Hollen, 2007, p. 6)*

An effective policy communication such as the Milwaukee example would ideally be distributed to students and parents as part of the student handbook outlining rights and responsibilities of students.

Metal detectors. In *People v. Dukes* (1992), the New York Criminal Court upheld the use of a walk-through metal detector at a high school. In justifying the need for metal detectors, the school provided documentation that it had confiscated more than 2,000 weapons during a specified time period. The Supreme Court ruled that although individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy in their persons and effects and are also protected against unreasonable searches and seizures, the

government has a legitimate interest in maintaining a safe, orderly, and disciplined environment in schools. As a practical matter though, very few schools utilize metal detectors. They are expensive to operate due to equipment costs, the hiring of personnel to run the machine, training for those personnel, supervision for those personnel, gender and sensitivity issues, and the costs of making the physical setting conducive to the operation. Schools traditionally have many doors and windows because of the long-held view that the greatest danger facing a school is fire and that students need to be able to exit in a hurry. Many points of entry are not conducive to the installation and operation of metal detectors. Furthermore, individuals may bring weapons into the school through windows or side entries and then stash them in drop ceilings, restrooms, lockers, classrooms, and libraries.

Drug dogs. In *United States v. Place* (1983), the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that a search with a drug dog does not necessarily amount to a search under the Fourth Amendment. In the *Place* case, Drug Enforcement Administration agents seized luggage from a passenger when he arrived at LaGuardia Airport and took it to Kennedy Airport, where there was a drug dog. Ninety minutes after agents seized the passenger's luggage, a canine sniff detected the presence of drugs, and agents obtained a warrant to open the luggage, revealing drugs. The Court ruled that the 90-minute seizure was unreasonable, especially since officials knew when the passenger's flight was arriving from Miami, where he had originally raised suspicion. However, the Court did note that the use of a drug dog can be very intrusive and can affect the dignity of those individuals who are searched, especially children.

Drug testing. Drugs in school pose a number of concerns for both students and school officials. The negative impact of drugs can include debasing the school environment and students' health as well as promoting intimidation and the involvement of gangs. Schools face multiple challenges and options when attempting to reduce the presence of drugs in schools and students' drug use in general. One response is to implement drug testing for segments of the student population. In the first of two significant cases involving drug testing for students, the Supreme Court was asked to address whether drug testing for student athletes was reasonable. In *Vernonia School District v. Acton* (1995), the Court upheld the use of drug testing for student athletes as a condition of their participation in school-sponsored athletics. The Court reasoned that the testing procedure outlined in this particular case met a clear, narrowly defined purpose, was objectively administered, and provided student athletes with an appropriate level of due process protection. The school district's policy of testing stated that circumstances must demonstrate a compelling need for drug testing; the program must have clearly defined goals and be limited in scope; the school district must have already attempted less intrusive methods; personnel who administer the program must have limits to their discretion (i.e., who gets tested and why); and the drug test must be used to investigate violations of school rules rather than to seek evidence of criminal activity. The Court also recognized that student athletes have a lower expectation of privacy than do other students since they already undergo physical exams, have a somewhat public image, and interact in a locker room environment.

The Court would later expand the scope of permissible drug testing in public schools with its decision in *Board of Education of Independent School District No. 92 of Pottawatomie County et al. v. Earls et al.* (2002). In this case, the school district's policy required all middle and high school students to consent to drug testing in order to participate in any extracurricular activity, such as athletics, Future Farmers of America, or the band, but school officials used the drug test results to determine the student's eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities and not as part of a criminal investigation against the student.

Free speech. Students' right to free speech presents a contemporary challenge for some school districts. In the wake of rapid technology change, controversy has centered on the ability

of schools to address web- and cell phone–based bullying and harassment, but two court cases addressing more basic free speech issues are worth noting in addition to one in which new technology takes center stage. The Supreme Court upheld students' free speech rights in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969). The case involved students wearing black arm bands in school to protest U.S. involvement in Vietnam. A teacher told the students to remove the arm bands and cited a recently enacted school policy that prohibited wearing them. In the majority opinion, Justice Fortas stated that, "in our system, undifferentiated fear or apprehension of disturbance is not enough to overcome the right to freedom of expression" (*Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 1969, para. 13). The Court ruled that schools can limit any speech, whether active or passive, that substantially interferes with the learning environment and not just speech that some may find offensive or unpopular. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the students in the *Tinker* case, citing students' free speech rights. The Court later sided with the school in limiting active speech by students in *Bethel School District No. 403 v. Fraser* (1986). The case arose as the result of a speech delivered in front of about 600 14-year-olds by a student whose name had been on a list of potential graduation speakers. One part of the speech (quoted here from Justice Brennan's concurring opinion, para. 1) in particular led the school to suspend the student and remove his name from the list of potential graduation speakers:

> *I know a man who is firm—he's firm in his pants, he's firm in his shirt, his character is firm— but most . . . of all, his belief in you, the students of Bethel, is firm. Jeff Kuhlman is a man who takes his point and pounds it in. If necessary, he'll take an issue and nail it to the wall. He doesn't attack things in spurts—he drives hard, pushing and pushing until finally—he succeeds. Jeff is a man who will go to the very end—even the climax, for each and every one of you. So vote for Jeff for A. S. B. vice-president—he'll never come between you and the best our high school can be.*

Siding with the school's interest in banning speech considered vulgar and offensive, the Court upheld the school's decision.

A more recent case, popularly known as "Bong hits for Jesus," addressed the issue of whether a school can limit student speech that occurs off campus. Prior to the beginning of the 2002 Winter Olympics, in conjunction with a school-sanctioned event, school officials allowed students to watch the Olympic torch relay as it passed in front of the school during the day on its way to Utah. Officials allowed students to watch the event from either side of the street. As the torch and the trailing camera crews neared, students unfurled a 14-foot banner that read "BONG HiTS 4 JESUS." The school principal demanded that the banner be lowered. Later, the principal suspended a student for 10 days for violating the school's policy against advocating the use of illegal substances (*Morse et al. v. Frederick*, 2007).

Students face new forms of harassment and bullying via social networking websites and text messaging, and school officials are grappling with ways to address such abuse. In some student bullying cases, either the perpetrators' actions or school administrators' inadequate responses may violate federal antidiscrimination laws (Ali, 2010). Federal statutes would be triggered if harassment is based on race, color, national origin, sex, or disability and is considered serious enough to create a hostile environment. Ali (2010, pp. 2–3) notes that, "if an investigation reveals that discriminatory harassment has occurred, a school must take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end the harassment, eliminate any hostile environment and its effects, and prevent the harassment from recurring." Additional due process considerations apply for situations involving bullying based on disabilities. Among the scenarios outlined in the U.S. Department of Education memo

(Ali, 2010) depicting a school's failure to recognize civil rights violations, one included a situation in which students posted bullying comments on social networking websites.

New Hampshire is one state that has amended its school safety laws to incorporate protections against cyber-bullying. The relevant section of New Hampshire's Revised Statutes states in part,

> (a) *"Bullying" means a single significant incident or a pattern of incidents involving a written, verbal, or electronic communication, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at another pupil which:*
> *(1) Physically harms a pupil or damages the pupil's property;*
> *(2) Causes emotional distress to a pupil;*
> *(3) Interferes with a pupil's educational opportunities;*
> *(4) Creates a hostile educational environment; or*
> *(5) Substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the school.*
> (b) *"Bullying" shall include actions motivated by an imbalance of power based on a pupil's actual or perceived personal characteristics, behaviors, or beliefs, or motivated by the pupil's association with another person and based on the other person's characteristics, behaviors, or beliefs. (Title XV Education, 2010)*

Key provisions of the law protect youths from cyber-bullying, which can originate off campus, and identify five conditions that would trigger action under the law, including the potential to disrupt the orderly operation of the school. Federal appeals courts have been split as to whether school officials have constitutional authority to limit and discipline students for conduct some people may consider off-campus protected speech.

Due Process Considerations

Schools face several limitations when it comes to disciplining students. As noted above, school principals historically had power and authority very much like those of prison wardens; they could administer a range of punishments without review and appeal. Society gave both principals and wardens considerable power and discretion in running their institutions, and they performed their duties without much public oversight or court involvement. In the 1960s, this situation began to change as a number of court cases introduced due process, or the idea of fundamental fairness, into school discipline proceedings. These cases focused on reducing the arbitrary nature of decision making, thus replacing individual authority with substantive rules and documented procedures to follow. According to the documentation for *Goss v. Lopez* (1975), a student named Lopez received a 10-day suspension for allegedly taking part in a disturbance in the school cafeteria. He was one of 75 students suspended for 10 days without a hearing, without any presentation of evidence or testimony alleging the nature of the evidence for a violation of school rules, and without recourse to an appeal. The case eventually reached the Supreme Court of the United States, which ruled that the suspension was unconstitutional since the school had not held any sort of hearing to consider evidence or testimony.

Corporal punishment in schools refers to the infliction of physical punishments as a penalty for violating a school rule. Can and should schools use corporal punishment, such as paddling, to deter students from violating school rules? The Supreme Court has ruled that school administrators' use of corporal punishment against students does not violate the Constitution (*Ingraham v. Wright*, 1977). About 20 states have legislation authorizing the use of corporal punishment in

schools, but some school districts and individual schools in states that do not have laws prohibiting corporal punishment do not allow it within their own jurisdictions. Of the states that allow corporal punishment in schools, the majority of instances of its use are reported in Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama (Center for Effective Discipline, 2010). An interesting news report on the use of corporal punishment in schools is available at http://cnettv.cnet.com/corporal-punishment-schools/9742-1_53-50048181.html.

School Climate

Even before the advent of high-tech bullying, the National School Safety Center (NSSC) stated that "the days when student-related school problems consisted mostly of a few playground squabbles and some kids playing hooky are long gone" (quoted in Greenbaum & Turner, 1990, p. 2). Such nostalgic views of school disorder have grown increasingly dim as numerous high-profile incidents of serious school violence and shootings have occurred. While society may tend to focus its attention on the more dramatic incidents, we may inadvertently downplay the significance of the more common and routine occurrences that may not be physical in nature but that amount to emotional abuse. While more extreme forms of violence dominate the headlines, it is the minor events that affect the majority of students at some point in their academic careers and some students on a regular basis. Bullying, harassment, and minor victimizations can have a negative impact on the learning environment and are often seen as a public health concern, because an unstable school environment affects the personal well-being and development of the victim. For example, a rash of suicides by individuals who had suffered continual harassment by peers led to a growing focus on the prevention of bullying.

Data from a study addressing the issue of violence and disorder in three high schools in a northeastern state are presented below. The research problem analyzed the relationship between students' perceptions of their school's general climate and their experiences of victimization within the school. The idea of school climate, as utilized in this study, involved students' perception of the quality of their school's social atmosphere and learning environment. Perceptions of school climate included how students at each school viewed the educational process, what social value they obtained from the education they were receiving, their impressions of the school's atmosphere, and the nature of their experiences within the school. In their review of school-based crime prevention, Gottfredson, Wilson, and Skroban Najaka (2006) note the importance of school climate as an indication of the expected level of order within the school. In their view, the clarity of rules and expectations for behavior promote a collective sense of identity.

Hurbanis and Walters (as cited in Odell-Gonder & Hymes, 1994, p. 12) developed four dimensions of school climate: academic, social, physical, and affective. The academic dimension pertains to students' perceptions of instructional norms, beliefs, and practices of the school, such as the emphasis on academic pursuits, expectations for the quality of student work, and the quality of the monitoring of student progress. According to the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1993; see also McDermott, 1980), having a positive school climate involves, at the minimum, having a clear sense of mission, with emphasis on high academic standards and clear expectations for behavior. Schools focusing on academic achievement provide their students and faculty with a common bond and a shared sense of purpose. A central condition of the academic dimension is the perception of safety and order, specifically, how a secure and orderly environment enhances the ability of students and teachers to concentrate on academic efforts. According to Hurbanis and Walters (as cited in Odell-Gonder & Hymes, 1994, p. 12), the social dimension includes the types and quality

of the communication among individuals in the school, whether between students and teachers or among students themselves. In a positive school climate, students have input on school rules and are more likely to view the rule enforcement process as being fair. Increased involvement and investment by students are likely to produce an increase in attachment and belief in the process. Hurbanis and Walters note that the physical dimension addresses students' perception of the school's physical environment, including the level of maintenance and overall condition of the school. The emphasis is not on whether the school building is new or old but whether the environment is clean and maintained to an appropriate level, resulting in a sense of ownership by staff and students. The affective dimension pertains to the feelings and attitudes shared by the students of the school or the existence of a shared system of values and beliefs. The behaviors or attitudes prevalent when values are shared suggest that students have a sense of belonging to and identification with their school. This affective dimension encompasses the behavioral manifestations of a positive school climate, such as trust, rapport, and respect.

Furlong, Morrison, and Clontz (1991) also identify four dimensions of school climate: student and staff characteristics, physical environment, social environment, and cultural characteristics. Student and staff characteristics involve the diversity of viewpoints, experiences, and expertise in the school. The physical environment reflects the extent of physical and social disorder within the school. The social environment comprises classroom structure and the level of student participation. The curriculum, included as a component of the social dimension, favors student cooperation in meeting learning objectives rather than conflict and competition among students. Cultural characteristics address affiliation and bonding, traditions of high behavioral and academic expectations, and the opportunity for growth and recognition for positive activities.

In the data from the study of high school violence and disorder presented here, the three northeastern U.S. high schools are identified by pseudonymous community names: Ashton, Westville, and Mayville. Each of the high schools is the only academically oriented public secondary school in its community. The majority of school-aged youths in each community attend the local public school. Ashton was described as an economically developed suburb having 30,000 residents, Westville as an urban center with 70,000 residents, and Mayville as a growth community with 9,000 residents (**Table 2-1**). Each of the three schools has experienced some recent change in its student population due to changes in the demographics of the community. Westville's high school graduating class size decreased about 3% in the few years before the study, while Ashton's graduating class size decreased more than 20%, and Mayville's increased more than 36%. The racial and ethnic characteristics of the three schools are listed in **Table 2-2**. Parental consent for the study was arranged by having the parent(s) or guardian sign and return a consent form that explained the purpose of the study. On the day of the survey, students who received parental consent received the survey instrument. Students who did not have parental consent, who did not wish to participate

TABLE 2-1 Demographic Distribution in Participating Communities

School	Town population	School population	Sample count	Percentage of sample
Ashton	30,000	1,500	190	34.6
Mayville	9,000	400	80	14.6
Westville	75,000	2,000	279	50.8

TABLE 2-2 Demographic Distribution of Student Sample

Demographic	Number	Percentage of total
Gender		
Female	283	51.8
Male	263	48.2
Grade		
9	160	29.4
10	79	14.5
11	163	30.0
12	142	26.1
Race/ethnicity		
White	379	69.5
Black	51	9.4
Asian	45	8.3
Hispanic	32	5.9
Other	38	6.9

after reading the informed consent statement, or who arrived at that conclusion after beginning the instrument were told to use the block of time as study time.

    Victimization. The study assessed victimization levels by asking students to enumerate their experiences as targets of a number of behaviors, including theft without contact, verbal and nonverbal harassment, robbery, aggravated assault and battery, and gang victimization (**Table 2-3**). The range of experiences suggested in the survey may more fully capture the extent of victimization than would a single item. The National Institute of Education study (Toby, 1983), employed similar survey items, as did the National Crime Victimization Survey and Williams, Winfree, and Clinton (1989). See **Box 2-1** for questions posed to students in order to measure victimization.

TABLE 2-3 Victimization Experiences for Student Sample (percentage in parentheses)

	Victimization experience	
Nature of victimization	No	Yes
Nonverbal abuse	379 (70.7)	157 (29.3)
Verbal abuse	358 (66.1)	184 (33.9)
Theft	385 (72.1)	149 (27.9)
Robbery	510 (96.2)	20 (3.8)
Assault	493 (92.7)	39 (7.3)
Aggravated assault	513 (95.7)	23 (4.3)
Gang related	533 (98.2)	10 (1.8)

BOX 2-1 Victimization Items

1. Since the start of this school year, has anything been stolen from you while you were at school and were not around it?
2. So far this school year, has anything been stolen or taken from you by force, threats, or intimidation while you were in school or on the way to or from school?
3. So far this school year, have you been physically attacked or assaulted in school or on the way to or from school?
4. During this school year, how many times has someone threatened or injured you with a weapon, such as a gun, knife, or club, while in school or on school grounds?
5. During this school year, have you been the victim of verbal abuse, such as racial or ethnic slurs, profanity, or sexual comments, while in school or on school grounds?
6. During this school year, have you been the victim of nonverbal abuse, such as obscene gestures, while in school or on school grounds?
7. Have you been assaulted or threatened by "gangs" while in school?

School climate results. Out of the 690 consent forms sent home with students, a total of 549 completed surveys were collected. Overall, there was a 79.5% response rate based on the number of consent forms collected with affirmative parental consent as well as the number of students who were absent the day the survey was administered. In Mayville, of the 90 consent forms distributed to students, 80 surveys (89%) were collected. In Ashton, 300 consent forms were distributed and 190 surveys (63%) collected. In Westville, 300 consent forms were distributed and 279 surveys (93%) collected. The sample was 48% male and 52% female. There was roughly equal representation among 9th–12th graders, although slightly fewer 10th graders participated. Two hundred students (36.4%) reported that they had moved at least once during the last 5 years.

More than half of the sample reported experiencing at least one of the seven types of victimization. A sizable number of students reported experiencing verbal victimization (34%) and nonverbal victimization (29%). In addition, more than 19% of the sample experienced repeated incidents of nonverbal victimization, and more than 25% of the sample experienced repeated incidents of verbal victimization. Theft victimizations were fairly common (28%) among students in the sample. Students were asked to identify the most recent item stolen if they had been the victim of theft while in school, and 141 of the 149 students who reported a theft specified an item. Some items students listed as being stolen were of the type one would expect, while other items were somewhat unusual and others were very unusual. Fifty students reported having money, purses, and wallets stolen; other stolen items of note included jewelry, cellular phones, electronic devices, and even a bong. Almost 40% of the students who had experienced a theft in school did not report the incident to parents, teachers, administrators, police, or anyone else. Victimizations of greater severity were less common among the sample. Ten students (1.8%) reported experiencing a gang-related victimization. Twenty students (3.8%) reported experiencing a robbery. Thirty-nine (7.1%) students experienced simple assault, and 23 students (4.2%) experienced at least one incident of aggravated assault in school (see Table 2-3).

School climate was operationalized as a 23-item scale utilizing a fixed-choice response format (see **Box 2-2** for school climate items). Students were asked to respond to each statement by placing a vertical slash mark through a 10-centimeter line to represent their degree of agreement

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BOX 2-2 School Climate Items

1. In general, I like school.
2. Getting good grades is important to me personally.
3. I try hard in school.
4. I care what teachers think of me.
5. Getting good grades in school will help me get a good job.
6. Doing homework and studying are important to me.
7. Faculty members at this school believe every student can achieve success.
8. Faculty and students demonstrate pride in being a member of this school.
9. If I had a child my age, I would want them to go to this school.
10. If I had the chance, I would have left this school for something better.
11. There are always enough staff in the hallways to make sure no one gets hurt or so that things don't get out of hand.
12. Punishment for violations at this school is fair, so that no one gets special treatment or gets away with anything.
13. The quality of education I receive at this school matches what I think my needs are for the future.
14. I feel teachers, administrators, and staff really do care about my education and my future.
15. Most people get by at this school without even trying.
16. Everyone here takes pride in keeping the school clean.
17. The school is always well maintained.
18. When things are broken at this school, it's a long time before they're fixed.
19. This school places great emphasis on academic achievement.
20. Even slackers get good grades here.
21. Most of the class time here is spent on things other than learning.
22. Teachers don't really care if we learn anything or not because they get paid anyway.
23. Teachers here spend time only on the kids they think want to learn.

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with each statement. The range for each individual item ranges from 0 to 10, thus allowing for 11 possible responses for each item and producing an actual range of 0 to 214 (for additional information on the use of the 10-centimeter line as a rating scale, see Gibbs & Giever, 1994; Mackey & Courtright, 2000; Mackey, Courtright, & Packard, 2006). Similar school climate items have been used by Anderson (1982), Cernkovich and Giordano (1992), Jenkins (1992), and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1993). Six scale items were reverse coded to produce a consistent interpretation of the scale. The recoded items were originally phrased so that a score of 10 would indicate a negative school climate and thus provide a sense of balance in the questionnaire. The reliability of the school climate scale was determined by assessing the extent of internal consistency among the items in the scale using Cronbach's alpha. Alpha for the scale was .86, which is above the minimal level for internal consistency.

An analysis was conducted examining the extent of differences in students' perceptions of school climate and their reported victimization experiences (**Table 2-4**). Students who reported experiencing an episode of victimization in school perceived a lower-quality school climate than

TABLE 2-4 T-Tests Examining the Relationship Between Students' Perceptions of the School Climate and Their Victimization Experiences

Victimization	n	Mean	SD	SE of mean	t	p
Nonverbal abuse						
No	379	135.41	32.58	1.67	4.91	.00
Yes	157	120.06	33.86	2.70		
Verbal abuse						
No	357	136.78	33.05	1.75	5.74	.00
Yes	184	119.72	32.23	2.38		
Theft						
No	384	113.39	32.97	1.68	2.64	.00
Yes	149	124.28	36.83	3.02		
Robbery						
No	509	132.06	33.47	1.48	3.44	.00
Yes	20	105.85	32.20	7.20		
Assault						
No	492	132.79	33.09	1.49	3.67	.00
Yes	39	112.46	35.78	5.73		
Aggravated assault						
No	512	132.85	33.26	1.47	4.79	.00
Yes	23	99.13	27.95	5.83		
Gang related						
No	532	131.73	33.60	1.46	4.83	.00
Yes	10	80.10	24.88	7.87		

their peers who did not report victimization. This pattern held constant across all seven types of victimization.

Students were asked to rate their perception of safety in eight specific places in school such as classrooms, cafeteria, student restrooms, hallways, stairways, locker rooms, gym, and parking lot. The operationalization of perception of safety utilized the work of Williams, Winfree, and Clinton (1989). For each item, the response category ranged from completely unsafe to completely safe on a 10-centimeter line. The range for this scale was from 0 to 80. Students were also asked whether they avoided the location due to fear or apprehension. Toby's (1995) emphasis on the importance of order, safety, and informal control present in school has some level of support from the findings presented here. The mean score for the perception of safety scale, with the sum of the perceptions of safety for eight locations (classrooms, cafeteria, restrooms, hallways, stairways, locker rooms, gym, and parking lot), was 52.2, with a maximum score of 80. Six of the eight locations had mean

scores above 6.3. Restrooms and the parking lot had the lowest scores for students' perception of safety. The mean perception of safety score for student restrooms was 5.4. In particular, 164 students (24.4%) rated the safety of restrooms with scores of 3 or lower, with the maximum being a score of 10. Students who reported avoiding restrooms at school due to fear of victimization had a lower rating of the perception of safety than students who did not avoid restrooms at school. Students who reported never having avoided restrooms had a mean score of 5.7, whereas students who avoided restrooms had a score of 3.1. The mean perception of safety score for the parking lot was 5.7, with 144 students rating the level of safety in that location as a 3 or lower.

These results indicate support for the role of teachers in preventing victimization and improving the perception of safety. There was a .28 correlation between school climate item 19 ("There are always enough staff in the hallways to make sure no one gets hurt or so that things don't get out of hand") and the perception of safety scale. There was also strong positive correlation (.44) between school climate item 31 ("If I were to imagine the safest school environment, this school would rank near the top") and the safety scale.

Students experiencing an episode of victimization had lower overall ratings of the school climate than youths who were not victimized. The causal order of the relationship is certainly a point open to discussion, and a number of interpretations of the relationship are possible. For example, students who are victimized at school may withdraw from the setting and therefore have diminished expectations for the value of education, their connectedness with teachers, and a shared positive culture. In addition, isolated students may be easier targets for victimization by their peers. Regardless of the causal order, strengthening the positive dimensions of school climate (a shared sense of norms for behavior, collective identity, meaningfulness of the educational experience, and positive relations in the school) as well as reducing victimization in schools would maximize a student's educational opportunity, which is a protective factor, and would in some states fulfill the obligation to provide safe and disciplined schools.

A basic component of school climate is the degree of order and discipline present in the school. Aside from the liability concerns raised by its absence, discipline contributes to the safety of students and staff and ensures an environment conducive to learning (Gaustad, 1992). Commenting on acceptable levels of discipline, Leriche (1992, p. 77) states, "This is an absolute necessity because if order is not maintained, chaos results, and no positive learning ensues when anarchy reigns." Discipline is a key element of both a positive school climate and a safe school, and maintaining it requires perfecting a delicate balance. Kadel and Follman (1993, p. 21) contend that, to maintain a safe and secure educational environment, schools must balance the coercive and negative aspects of power against the generally more permissive and open qualities associated with learning. This balancing process involves examining the role of discipline in relation to the school's two objectives of preventing violence and promoting educational achievement.

As the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1993, p. 2) has reported, "The best way to reduce youth violence is by creating an atmosphere that encourages students to focus their energies on learning." A basic point in maintaining a degree of order is maintaining a set structure for the class. In this sense, classroom procedures should be clear and consistent; there should be smooth transitions from one activity to another; and rules should be clear and evenly enforced (Goldstein et al., 1995, pp. 10–11). Discipline, student effort, and school climate, according to Toby (1995), are all linked together, and a school climate that is tense can send student discipline and effort into a downward spiral. As the number of uninterested and unmotivated students increases, teacher burnout also increases (Toby, 1983, p. 28). Teachers may be less motivated or become less likely to confront student misbehavior in halls, classrooms, and common areas. The work of Felson

(1995) can provide a relevant framework for specific policy recommendations based on social control theory. Felson bases his approach to reducing crime and victimization in schools on what he calls the two-step control theory. The first step is to attach a "handler" to the particular at-risk youth. The handler serves as a mentor or friend—either formally or informally—who can exert control or influence over the youth, using persuasion and resorting to more coercive or formal methods of control only when absolutely necessary. Felson notes that delinquency or victimization is likely when someone can evade the social rules of a particular setting by not being recognized. In this sense, informal control increases when an individual has a sense of being known and identified by individuals in the setting, thus extending the influence of the handler to other individuals.

Other strategies that can reduce victimization and the perception of fear in specific locations in school include the use of place managers (Felson, 1995). Place managers are responsible for specific locations within the school setting rather than, like the handler, being responsible for guarding potential victims or controlling potentially motivated offenders. For the three schools participating in the study described here, the locations where place managers would provide the greatest impact based on students' survey responses, include the parking lot, restrooms, and locker rooms. These specific locations tend to have less structured surveillance than other places within the school. Any area of the school setting with a lower level of adult supervision will expose students to potentially motivated offenders. Improving school climate can reduce the incidence and prevalence of minor delinquency by increasing the bond between students and the school.

SUMMARY

Primary prevention programs seek to strengthen protective factors and to disrupt the development of risk factors among a broad population. Effective primary prevention programs offer substantial social and financial benefits to society, including reduced crime and victimization and reduced costs for both adjudicating offenders and dealing with the wide variety of damage to life trajectory that may result from victimization. Such programs also provide numerous benefits for would-be offenders, who may experience more positive outcomes in education, employment, and personal relations as well as not experiencing the negatives of entering the criminal justice system. Family-based programs, such as home visitation and parent training programs, have demonstrated a degree of success with respect to preventing future delinquency. These programs have demonstrated their cost-effectiveness as well. Because young people spend a significant amount of time in schools and interact so closely with their peers, educational administrators face numerous challenges in their efforts to maintain a safe, secure environment that is conducive to learning. Schools must balance student rights against safety concerns, and numerous court decisions provide teachers and administrators with information upon which to base their disciplinary policies and actions.

Numerous concerns related to primary prevention remain, however. Only some of the individuals targeted in primary prevention programs would actually go on to have extensive delinquent careers, which means that people who would not go on to extensive criminal careers are subjected to intervention programs. Bearing that criticism in mind, researchers must conduct solid evaluation studies to determine the effectiveness of primary programs. In doing so, they must assess the external validity of the research design, because a program that may be effective in one type of community and perhaps for a particular time period may not be effective in other geographic or temporal settings.

KEY TERMS

Risk factors
Protective factors
Elmira Parent/Early Infancy Project
Perry Preschool Project
Incredible Years Training Program
Bullying
Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)
School climate

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can the state impose behavioral restrictions, such as prohibitions on smoking and alcohol use, on pregnant women to protect unborn children?
2. Are there circumstances when the state should compel participation in a parent training program?
3. Is it a reasonable expectation that all students should graduate from high school?
4. What are ways in which a school can promote a positive school climate?
5. Should schools have the authority to punish student bullying and harassment that occurs away from school grounds?

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