Authoritative School Discipline: High School Practices Associated With Lower Bullying and Victimization

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In this study we examined authoritative discipline theory, which posits that 2 complementary aspects of school climate—structure and support—are important for adolescents’ safety in school. Using a statewide sample of over 7,300 ninth-grade students and 2,900 teachers randomly selected from 290 high schools, we showed, using hierarchical linear modeling, that consistent enforcement of school discipline (structure) and availability of caring adults (support) were associated with school safety. Structure and support were associated with less bullying and victimization after we controlled for size of school enrollment and the proportion of ethnic minority and low-income students. These findings suggest that discipline practices should not be polarized into a “get tough” versus “give support” debate because both structure and support contribute to school safety for adolescents.