

# **RHODE ISLAND STUDENT SURVEY:**

**PREVALENCE AND FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH BULLYING,  
ADOLESCENT SUICIDALITY AND WEAPON CARRYING IN SCHOOLS  
2017-2018**

**Dorothy Skierkowski-Foster, PHD  
Community Research & Services Team**

# Background (RISS): Who, What, Where, When, How?

## Who:

- N = 22,294 adolescents in school, ages 12-17
- N = 19,327 completed surveys

## What:

- 85-item self-report survey
  - Demographic information
  - Mental health
  - Substance use
  - School climate
  - Parental engagement
  - Social norms
- Items borrowed from other national surveys

## Where:

- 25 school districts
- 55 schools
  - N = 33 to 1,216 students per school
- Providence NOT included
- 9% 'urban core'; 35% 'urban ring'; 56% 'suburban,' per RIDE designations

## When:

- February – April, 2018

## How:

- Sampling strategy based on:
  - school board willingness to participate
  - contractual obligations to State by municipalities
- Online using tablets provided by administrator
- Available in Spanish
- Passive consent

# Objectives: RI Youth ages 12-17 (Combined, MS, HS samples)

## Study 1: Bullying

### ■ Primary aim:

- *Describe prevalence of school bullying victimization (12 month) and cyber bullying behaviors (3 month)*
- *Investigate factors associated with school bullying victimization (12 month) and cyber-bullying behaviors (3 month)*

***Theoretical framework used to guide variable selection:  
Social Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1994)***

# Objectives: RI Youth ages 12-17 (Combined, MS, HS samples)

## Study 2: Suicidality

### ■ Primary aim:

- *Describe prevalence of suicidal ideation, suicide plan, suicide attempts, and serious suicide attempts (past year)*
- *Investigate factors associated with suicidal ideation*

***Theoretical framework used to guide variable selection:  
Social Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1994)***

# Objectives: RI Youth ages 12-17 (Combined, MS, HS samples)

## Study 3: Weapon carrying

- Primary aim:
  - *Describe prevalence and factors associated with carrying weapons to school in the past 30 days*

***Theoretical framework used to guide variable selection:  
Social Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1994)***

# Methods: Study 1 (Bullying)

## Measures

- **Individual (sociodemographic+):**
  - Age
  - Gender identity (reference = male)
  - Sexual orientation (ref = heterosexual)
  - School truancy (reference = none)
- **Relationship with parents (reference = Agree):**
  - Parental engagement (availability, encouragement, involvement)
- **Relationship with school (reference = Agree)**
  - School engagement (opportunities for school involvement, school safety, fair enforcement of rules, school equity)
- **Neighborhood safety (reference = Agree)**
  - Safety going to and from school

## Outcomes

- **DV1: Past year school bullying victimization (Y/N)**
- **DV2: Past 3-month cyber bullying behavior**
  - Victim
  - Perpetrator
  - Bully-victim
  - None of the above
- **Modeling framework:**
  - DV1: Logistic regression (reference = No)
  - DV2: Multinomial logistic regression (reference = none of above)

# Methods: Study 2 (Suicidality)

## Measures

- **Individual (sociodemographic+):**
  - Age
  - Gender identity (reference = male)
  - Sexual orientation (reference = heterosexual)
  - History of any substance use (reference = never)
  - School performance (grades) (ref = mostly D's and F's)
  - Number of depressive symptoms (past 30 days)
- **Relationship with peers:**
  - Past-year school bullying victimization (ref = none)
  - Past 3-month cyber bullying behavior (ref = none)
- **Relationship with parents (reference = Agree)**
  - Parental encouragement
- **Relationship with teachers (reference = Agree)**
  - Teacher encouragement
- **Neighborhood safety (reference = Agree)**
  - Safety going to and from school

## Outcomes

- **DV: Past year suicidal ideation (Y/N)**
- **Additionally, prevalence of endorsement of suicide plan, suicide attempts, and serious suicide attempts among MS, HS and combined sample**
- **Modeling framework:**
  - *Logistic regression (reference = No)*

# Methods: Study 3 (Weapons)

## Measures

- **Individual (sociodemographic+):**
  - Age
  - Gender identity (reference = male)
  - Sexual orientation (reference = heterosexual)
  - History of any substance use (reference = never)
  - School performance (grades) (ref = mostly D's and F's)
  - Number of depressive symptoms (past 30 days)
- **Relationship with peers:**
  - Past-year school bullying victimization (ref = none)
  - Past 3-month cyber bullying behavior (ref = none)
- **Relationship with school (reference = Agree)**
  - Perception of safety at school
- **Neighborhood safety (reference = Agree)**
  - Safety going to and from school

## Outcomes

- **DV1: Past 30-day weapon carrying (gun, knife or club) to school (Y/N)**
- **Modeling framework:**
  - **Logistic regression (reference = No)**



# Results: Study 1 (School bullying)

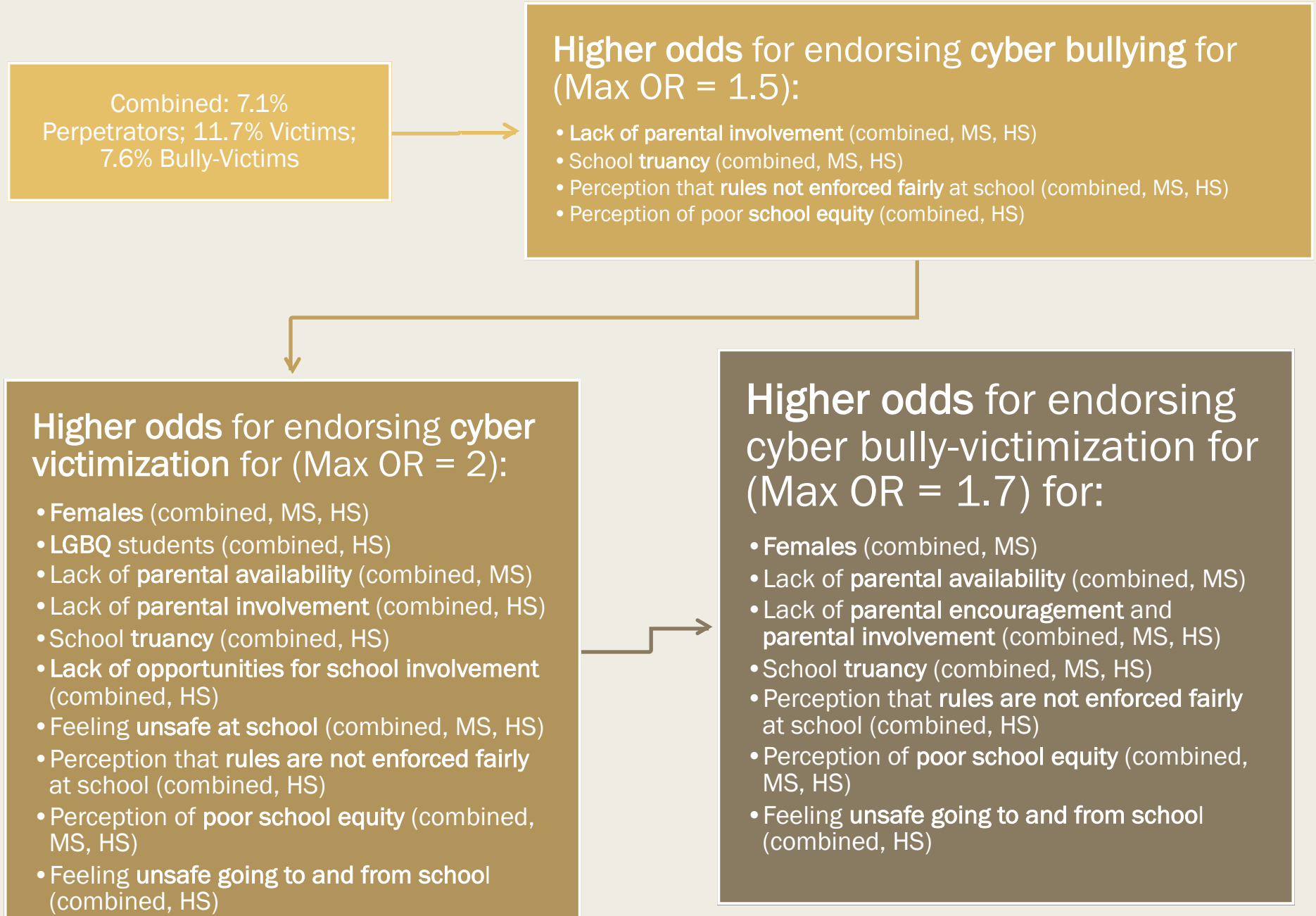
Combined: 29.1%; MS: 35.2%; HS: 25.6%

Higher odds of endorsing school bullying victimization for (Max OR = 1.8):

- **Females** (combined, MS, HS)
- **Transgender** students (combined, HS)
- **LGBQ** students (combined, MS, HS)
- **Lack of parental availability and encouragement** (combined, MS, HS)
- **Lack of parental involvement** (combined, HS)
- **School truancy** (combined, MS, HS)
- **Feeling unsafe at school** (combined, MS, HS)
- **Perception that rules not enforced fairly** at school (combined, MS, HS)
- **Perception of poor school equity** (combined, MS, HS)
- **Feeling unsafe going to and from school** (combined, MS, HS)

Lower odds of endorsing school bullying victimization for every unit increase in age (combined, HS)

# Results: Study 1 (Cyber bullying behaviors)



# Results: Study 2 (Prevalence SI, Plan, Attempts, Serious Attempts)

## Combined:

- 13.7% SI
  - 53.8% plan
  - 39.1% 1 or more attempts
    - 26.4% serious attempt

## MS:

- 13% SI
  - 54.7% plan
  - 45.2% 1 or more attempts
    - 20.4% serious attempt

## HS:

- 13.8% SI
  - 53.1% plan
  - 35.1% 1 or more attempts
    - 29.4% serious attempt

### Lower odds of endorsing SI for:

- **Age** (marginally lower for every unit increase in age in combined sample)
- **School performance** (mostly A's and B's vs. C's, D's and F's) (combined, HS)

### Higher odds of endorsing SI for (Max OR = 2.7):

- **Females** (MS)
- **LGBQ** students (combined, MS, HS)
- Identification as **transgender** (combined, MS, HS)
- **Any lifetime substance use** (combined, MS, HS)
- Endorsement of greater number of **depressive symptoms** (combined, MS, HS)
- **School bullying victimization** (combined, MS, HS)
- **Cyber bullying victimization and bully-victimization** (combined, MS, HS)
- Lack of **parental encouragement** (combined, MS, HS)
- Feeling **unsafe going to and from school** (combined, MS, HS)

## Results: Study 2 (Factors associated with SI)

# Results: Study 3 (Weapons at school)

Combined: 2.3%; MS: 1.6%; HS: 2.5%

Higher odds of endorsing carrying a weapon to school for  
(Max OR = 22):

- Individuals who identify as **transgender** (combined, HS)
- Individuals who endorsed **any lifetime substance use** (combined, MS, HS)
- Feeling **unsafe at school** (combined, HS)
- Feeling **unsafe going to and from school** (combined, MS, HS)
- Being a **victim of school bullying** (combined, MS), **victim of school bullying and cyber bullying** (combined, HS), **victim of school bullying and perpetrator of cyber bullying** (combined, HS), **victim of school bullying and cyber bully/victim** (combined, MS, HS), **perpetrator of cyber bullying** (combined, HS), and **cyber bully/victim** (combined, MS, HS)
- **NOTE: Highest odds ratio after controlling for effect of all other variables selected in model for individuals who were victimized at school in past 12 months AND endorsed being a cyber bully/victim in past three months.**

Lower odds of endorsing carrying a weapon to school for  
females (combined, MS, HS) and for students who received  
B's and A's (combined, MS, HS)

# Conclusions

- RISS is a valuable data source for substance use and behavioral health outcomes at the individual level
- Bullying:
  - *Consistent with literature, many individual and relational factors associated with experience of school bullying victimization and cyber bullying victimization*
- Suicide:
  - *Rhode Island youth demonstrate similar factors associated with suicidal ideation as those expressed in literature*
- Weapon carrying:
  - *Individuals who endorsed past 12-month school bullying victimization and past 3-month cyber bully-victimization demonstrated highest odds of carrying a weapon to school*
- Cannot establish causality due to cross-sectional nature of data
- Further investigation is necessary to develop more nuanced understanding of these and other behaviors

# Questions, Comments, Inquiries

- Thank you for your time!