

**Contextual Risks, Social Capital, and Internal Assets Among
Communities In Schools Participants:
Comparisons to the National School Success Profile**

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May 1997

Note: The School Success Profile was developed by Dr. Gary L. Bowen and Dr. Jack M. Richman, School of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 301 Pittsboro Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3550. Project efforts by Dr. Bowen and Dr. Richman have been sponsored by the Knight Foundation in Miami, Florida and the BellSouth Foundation in Atlanta, Georgia and developed in cooperation with Communities In Schools of North Carolina. Grateful appreciation is expressed to Linda Harrill, Director, Communities In Schools of North Carolina, for her consultation and encouragement in developing the SSP. Appreciation is also expressed to Ann Brewster and Kim Sprunck who provided consultation on an earlier draft of this report.

Executive Summary

Using data obtained with the School Success Profile from 665 middle and high school Communities In School participants and 2,099 middle and high school students from a national representative sample, this report introduces three measures for a comparative analysis of these two student groups: contextual risks, social capital, and internal assets. The development of these measures are informed by the ecological-interactional-developmental perspective and are anchored in the literature on adolescent adjustment and school performance.

CIS students are more likely than students in the national sample to be from racial/ethnic minority groups, to be in middle school, to live in single-parent households, to live with a parent who has not completed high school, and to participate in the free or reduced price lunch program. The school performance, attendance, and behavior of CIS students is lower than their counterparts in the national sample; however, the findings show that most CIS students are trying, in spite of the social environmental risks, to attend school, behave properly, and perform academically.

CIS students experience higher levels of contextual risks than students in the national sample. Neighborhood characteristics and TV exposure contribute to the differences. The levels of social capital available to students and perceptions of internal assets do not differ significantly for the CIS and national samples. Yet, for both groups, the percent of maximum possible average only 61% for social capital and less than 60% for internal assets.

For both samples, school performance declines as contextual risks increase. On the other hand, increases in social capital and internal assets are accompanied in both groups by better school performance and behavior. The data also indicate that as contextual risks increase, levels of social capital and internal assets decrease.

Overall, the analysis reveals that students who participate in CIS are distinguished primarily from their national counterparts by the risks that they face in their social environment. These contextual situations and conditions place them at greater risk of school failure. American youth in general need more safety and stability in their environments, greater interpersonal support from adults, and more guidance and support to develop healthy bodies, minds, and relationships. Addressing both contextual risks and social capital deficits is likely to be the most effective intervention strategy for promoting better academic performance, school behavior, and attendance among middle and high school youth, according to the data. For some students, however, risk factors related to safety and security may need to be given priority in defining intervention strategies.

Because of the restricted nature of the CIS sample and differences in the demographic profiles of the CIS and national samples, caution is recommended in drawing inferences from the comparative analysis. The pool of CIS participants will continue to increase and will become more representative as the use of the School Success Profile expands

throughout the CIS network of sites. The present analysis suggests the potential of the SSP to describe students selected for CIS program participation and to inform the process by which intervention priorities are defined for these participants.

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Contextual Risks, Social Capital, and Internal Assets Among Communities In Schools Participants: Comparisons to the National School Success Profile

"Getting started, keeping going, getting started again -- in art and in life, it seems to me this is the essential rhythm not only of achievement but of survival, the ground of convinced action, the basis of self-esteem and the guarantee of credibility in your lives, credibility to yourselves as well as to others."

Nobel Prize-Winning Poet Seamus Heaney
(May 12, 1996)

Introduction

This report examines the contextual risks, social capital, and internal assets of 665 middle and high school student in North Carolina and Florida who had been identified as "at risk" of school failure by school officials. These "at risk" students were all participants in the Communities In Schools Program (CIS), which is the largest U.S. public-private partnership in the nation for promoting school success, with programs in more than 261 communities across 28 states. Data collection involved the use of the School Success Profile (SSP), which was developed by Dr. Gary Bowen and Dr. Jack Richman.¹ The contextual risks, social capital, and internal assets of these students are compared to a nationally representative sample of 2099 students who completed The National School Success Profile (NSSP).²

Measures are proposed for assessing the concepts of contextual risks, social capital, and internal assets, which provide a framework for the comparative analysis. The development of these measures was informed by the ecological-interactional-developmental perspective that anchors the SSP. They are grounded in the empirical literature on school success and school failure.³

These summary measures were used in the analysis to examine a set of interrelated research questions. First, do students who have been identified by school officials as "at risk" of school failure differ in terms of contextual risks, social capital, and internal assets from a nationally representative sample of public school students? Second, to what extent do the levels of contextual risks, social capital, and internal assets vary by the demographic profile of students? Third, to what extent is the school performance of students related to the indexes of contextual risks, social capital and internal assets? An important question from the social science literature involves the degree to which social

¹Bowen, G. L., & Richman, J. M. (1995). School success profile. Chapel Hill, NC: Jordan Institute for Families, School of Social Work, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. (1997). School success profile. New York, New York.

³Richman, J. M., & Bowen, G. L. (1997). School failure: An ecological-interactional-developmental perspective. In M. W. Fraser (Ed.), Risk and resilience in childhood: An ecological perspective (pp. 95-116). Washington, DC: NASW Press.

capital and internal assets operate as protective factors in buffering the relationship between contextual risks and school performance outcomes. Therefore, the last question is explored using both descriptive and more advanced statistics.

This report has a number of potential implications for community practice with middle and high school students. First, it may inform the way in which students are currently identified to participate in special "at risk" programs. If few differences appear in the profiles of the two groups of students, the currently model of targeting specific students for intervention may be challenged. Whole school models that target every student as at potential risk of school failure may be more realistic. In addition, the results will provide valuable information about current status of adolescents across the United States. These results have important implications for monitoring and addressing adolescent well-being through policy and program planning.

Definitions and Measures

Contextual Risks

Contextual risks include situations and conditions in the social environment of children that decrease their chances for positive life experiences and increase their chances for adverse developmental outcomes. Informed by James Garbarino's concept of social toxicity and Richard Lerner's model of developmental contextualism, the contextual risks index comprises twenty indicators reflecting social factors that youth may face in their neighborhood, school, peer relationships, and family.^{4 5} These risks relate directly to the second and third levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs: (a) safety and security needs, and (b) social and affiliative needs.⁶

Each risk indicator has demonstrated good discriminate validity in prior analyses of either personal adjustment, school success, or both. A summary score was created by counting the number of reported risks. This index ranged from 0 to 20 with higher numbers representing more risk factors. For some analyses, the index was converted to a percentage score by dividing the number of reported risks by the total possible number of risks (20). For other analyses, index scores were converted into categories of risk based on the number of reported risks. Students who reported 0 to 2 risk factors were in the low risk category; students with 3 to 5 risk factors were in the moderate risk category; and students with 6 to 20 risk factors were in the high risk category.

Assets

Assets are "the positive counterparts of risk" (p. 6).⁷ While risk factors are predictive of negative outcomes, assets increase the likelihood of positive outcomes. According to

⁴Garbarino, J. (1995). Raising children in a socially toxic environment. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

⁵Lerner, R. M. (1995). America's youth in crisis: Challenges and options for programs and policies. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

⁶Maslow, A. (1954). Motivation and personality. New York: Harper & Row.

⁷Masten, A. S. (1994). Resilience in individual development: Successful adaptation despite risk and adversity. In M. C. Wang & E. W. Gordon (Eds.), Educational resilience in inner-city America: Challenges and prospects (pp. 3-23). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Jane Gilgun, assets that are actively used in the face of risk are protective factors.⁸ Assets may promote development and goal attainment directly, while protective factors buffer or compensate for the negative effects of environmental risks. Two sources of assets are discussed below: those that reside within the social relationships in which children are embedded and those that are internal to children.

Social Capital

Social capital, as defined by James Coleman, exists for children within and outside of the family.⁹ In the family, social capital refers to the quality of family relationships and the time and attention parents give to children. Social capital outside the family includes two aspects. First, it includes the opportunities and support that youth receive from institutions and adults in their community. Second, it consists of the relationships that parents have with adults and institutions in the community that have linkages to the developing child. These mesosystem linkages, as described by Urie Bronfenbrenner,¹⁰ provide the developing children with greater consistency of expectations and experiences across settings. Social capital may operate as assets or protective factors in helping youth manage life demands and achieve their goals and ambitions.

Fifteen indicators define the social capital index. These indicators capture eight sources of social capital within and outside the family: neighborhood, neighbor-parent connection, school, family, parent, parent-friend connection, parent-school connection, and help support. Because of the important role that parents play in the life and development of children, parents and their links to other sources of social capital were a central focus in the development of the social capital index. The nature and operation of these social relationships and ties are hypothesized to provide youth with opportunity and social support.

Each social capital indicator has demonstrated good discriminate validity in prior analyses of either personal adjustment, school success, or both. Scores for each social capital indicator were divided into low and high categories. A summary social capital score was created by counting the number of social capital assets with high codes. This index ranges from 0 to 15. As with the measure of contextual risks, the social capital index is converted to either a percentage or categorical variable for purposes of some analyses. The number of high social capital indicators present for a given youth or group is converted to a percentage by dividing the number of high indicators reported by the total number of indicators ($n = 15$). This results in a score that ranges from 0% to 100%. The measure of social capital is collapsed into three groups for analysis based on the number of indicators present. Students who reported 0-7 indicators were in the low social capital category; students with 8 to 11 indicators were in the moderate social capital category; and students with between 12 to 15 indicators were in the high social capital category.

⁸Gilgun, J. F. (1996). Human development and adversity in ecological perspective, Part 1: A conceptual framework. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, *77*, 395-402.

⁹Coleman, J. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, *94*, S94-S120.

¹⁰Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Internal Assets

Internal assets are those resources that reside within the individual. Resulting from the dual influences of nature and nurture, these assets reflect the value and belief systems of children about themselves and about the level of control they exert over events in their lives. Such value and belief systems inform the way in which children approach and react to events and situations in their environment.

Twenty indicators define the internal assets index. Each asset has demonstrated good discriminate validity in prior analyses of either personal adjustment, school success, or both. Scores for each asset were divided into low/high categories. A summary score was created by counting the number of internal assets with high codes. From some analyses, the index was converted to a percentage score by dividing the number of assets by the total possible number of assets ($n = 20$). This results in a score that ranges from 0% to 100%. In other analyses, index scores were converted into categories of assets based on the number of reported assets. Students who reported 0 to 9 assets were in the low asset category; students with 10 to 13 assets in the moderate asset category; and students with 14-20 assets were in the high asset category.

The School Success Profile

The School Success Profile is a paper-and-pencil survey instrument used to profile student participants in the Communities In Schools program. The SSP is designed to (a) describe students selected for program participation; (b) inform the process by which each student is provided with a comprehensive program of academic services, social services, and employment and life skills training; (c) monitor changes in program participants over time; (d) develop effective and responsive programs; and (e) increase accountability to major stakeholders, including student participants themselves. The purpose of the SSP is to increase the accountability of local CIS initiatives to their key stakeholders, including the school systems in which they operate, their advisory boards and sponsors, and to the student participants themselves.

Informed by an ecological perspective, the SSP assesses student participants in the contexts of their neighborhood, school, friends, and family. It is designed for use with middle school and high school age students (10-18 years of age). Each student who completes the SSP receives an individualized summary report that includes two profiles: (1) The Social Environment Profile, which includes 11 subdimensions and (2) The Individual Adaptation Profile, which includes 12 subdimensions.

Method

The CIS Sample

The data for "at risk" students were collected during the 1995-1996 academic year from 665 CIS students across 21 middle and high schools in North Carolina and Florida. These schools were participating in a larger evaluation of the SSP and its consequences as an assessment tool on the school performance outcomes of CIS students. Although student demographic profiles varied (see Table 1), a large proportion of students came from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and homes. In part, this profile reflects

the communities from which CIS identifies schools for program implementation. The student profile also reflects the demography of students most vulnerable to school failure.

Student respondents ranged in age from 10 to 20 years old. The majority (61%) were middle school students (6th-8th grade), and they were nearly evenly split by gender: females (49%) and males (51%). Most student respondents reported their racial/ethnic identity as either African-American/Black (53%) or white (38%). Nearly two-fifths (38%) of the respondents lived in a family with one parent. More than one-half of the students (59%) were receiving free or reduced price lunches at school, a proxy indicator of poverty status.

The National Sample

Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. conducted the national study of middle and high school students between October 31 and February 15, 1997. Yielding a nationally representative sample of 2099 public school students in grades 6 to 12, the Harris methodology involved a stratified two-stage sampling design. From the population of public middle and high schools in the United States, a sample of 102 schools was selected. From these schools, a representative sample of students were selected to complete the SSP.

Harris implemented special procedures that are part of its scholastic methodology to help ensure a representative student sample across the nation, including replacement procedures for schools and/or students who elected or who were unable to participate. The sample design was specified to ensure adequate representation of students by gender, race/ethnicity, size of place, and region. A two-stage weighting procedure was used to ensure a representative sample. Based on a sample of 2,000 students and a survey percentage result at 50% (maximum variability), the estimates for 95 out of 100 cases are +/- 2%. Table 1 provides a demographic profile comparison of students in the national sample with those in the CIS sample.

Sample Profiles

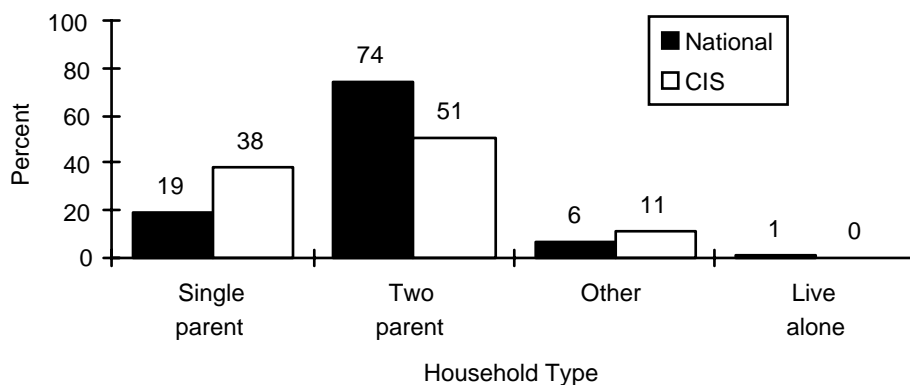
Key Findings:

- A higher proportion of CIS students than students in the national sample:
 - report a racial/ethnic minority group identification (62% versus 37%)
 - live in a single parent household (38% versus 19%) (see Figure 1)
 - live with a parent or stepparent who had not finished high school (mother/stepmother, 32% versus 19%; (father/stepfather, 30% versus 19%)
 - receive free or reduced price lunch at school (59% versus 28%)
 - attend middle school rather than high school (61% versus 45%)

Implications:

- CIS is successfully targeting students whose background characteristics place them at greater risk of school failure.
- Because of differences in their profiles, caution should be used in comparing CIS students to students in the national sample

Figure 1. Household Type



School Performance Outcomes

Key Findings:

- Most CIS students received mostly B's and C's or better on their last report card (61%); most had never repeated a grade (55%); most had not been expelled or suspended from school in the past 30 days (86%); and the parents of most had not received a warning about attendance, grades or behavior during the past 30 days (66%).
- A higher proportion of CIS students than student in the national sample reported lower grades; more D's and F's on their last reported card; more grades repeated in school; one or more warnings received by their parents/guardians because on their attendance, grades, or behavior at school; a suspension or expulsion during the past 30 days; and days missed from school because of sickness during the last 7 days (see Figures 2 and 3).

Implications:

- Most CIS students are trying, in spite of the risks they face, to attend school, behave properly, and perform academically.
- As evidenced by their self reports about school performance, these results suggest that CIS is reaching students who are at greater risk of school failure.

Figure 2. Number of D's or F's on the Most Recent Report Card

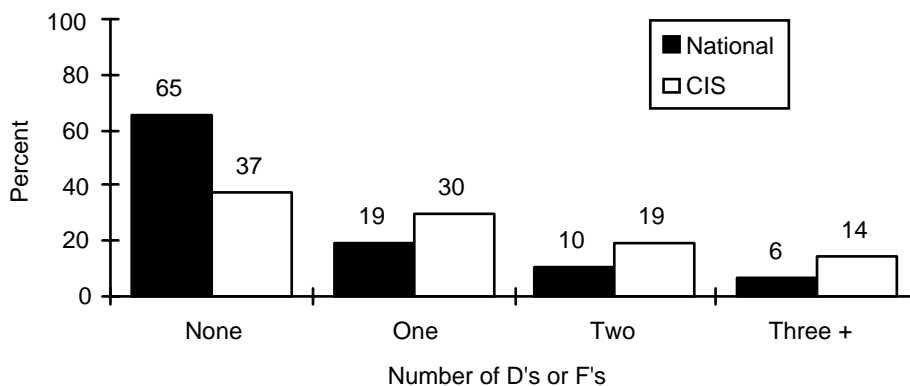
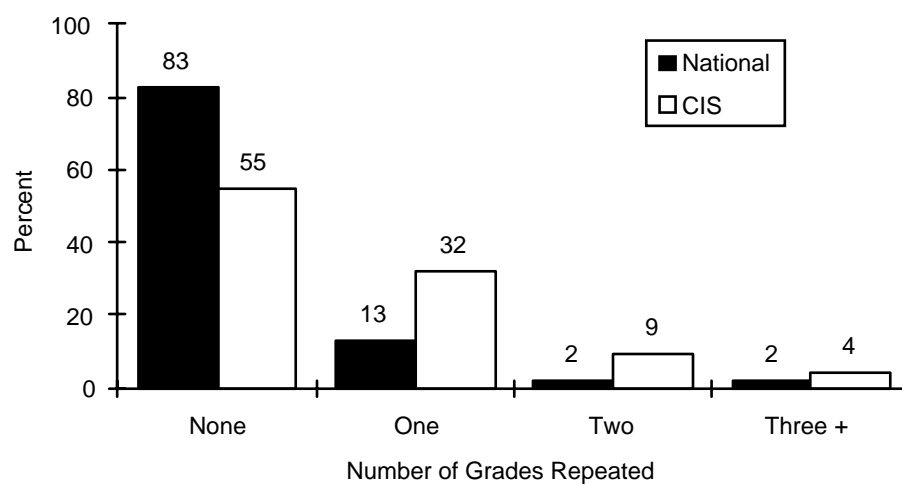


Figure 3. Number of Grades Repeated in School



Contextual Risks Index

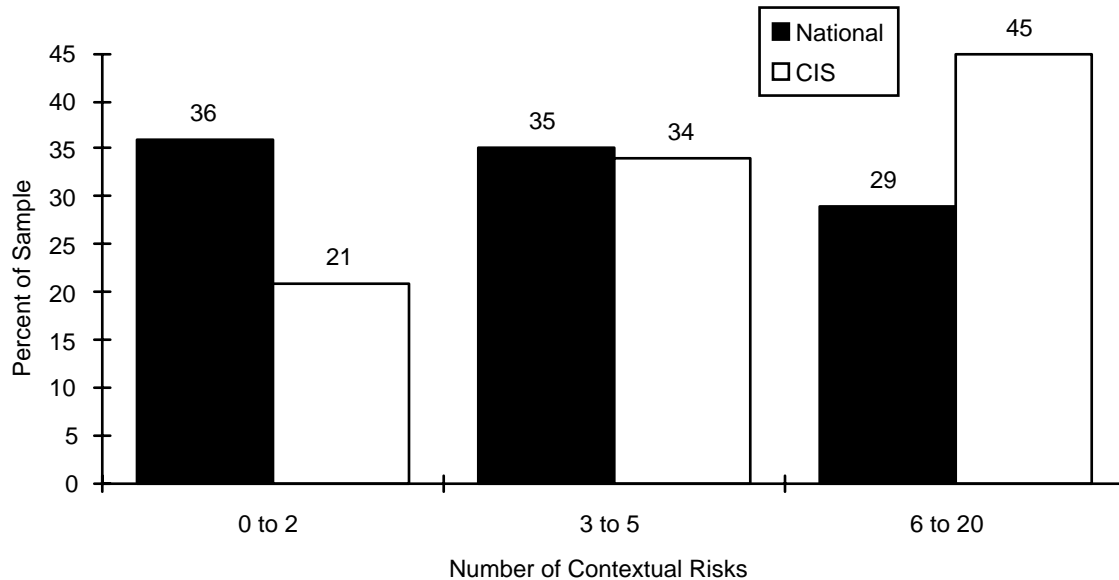
Key Findings:

- A higher proportion of CIS participants than students in the national sample reported experiencing 19 of the 20 contextual risks (see Appendix A).
- CIS students were significantly more likely (a 10 percentage point difference or more) than the national sample to report risks related to neighborhood safety (feeling unsafe, high incidence of crime and violence) and transience.
- CIS students were also significantly more likely to watch more than 4 hours of TV on school nights (43% versus 30%).
- On average, CIS students reported more risk factors than students in the national sample (5.5 versus 4.2).
- As seen in Figure 4, CIS students were much more likely than the national comparison group to be in the high risk group with 6 or more risk factors (45% versus 29%). CIS students were much less likely to be in the low risk group with 2 or fewer risks (21% versus 36%).

Implications:

- Compared to the national sample, CIS students faced more conditions and situations in their social environment that place them at risk of low adjustment and school failure.
- While reducing the number of risk factors encountered by students by targeting any risk factor with the potential for change, specific targets that may be appropriate for many CIS students are neighborhood-level characteristics and students' time use.

Figure 4. Percent of Students in Contextual Risks Groups



Contextual Risks and Demographic Profile

Key Findings:

- While the percentage of contextual risks (out of the maximum possible) was consistently higher for CIS students than students in the national sample, non-whites, students in households with nine or more residents, students who lived alone, and students who received free or reduced price lunches tended to face a higher percentage of risks in both samples (see Table 3).
- The highest percentage of risks was faced by students who lived alone (72%).
- Students living with both parents had a lower percentage of risks than others in each of the samples.
- Both CIS students and students in the national sample who received free or reduced priced lunches reported more contextual risks.

Implications:

- Students with certain profile characteristics are more likely than students without those profile characteristics to face situations and conditions in their social environment that place them at risk of low adjustment and school failure.

Contextual Risks and School Performance

Key Findings:

- For both CIS students and students in the national Sample, the findings are unequivocal: lower school performance and increases in problem behavior at school parallel increases in contextual risks (see Table 4).

Implications:

- Improvements in school performance and behavior are likely to parallel interventions that work to decrease the level of contextual risks that students experience in their social environment.

Figure 5. Percent of Contextual Risks by Number of D's and F's on Most Recent Report Card

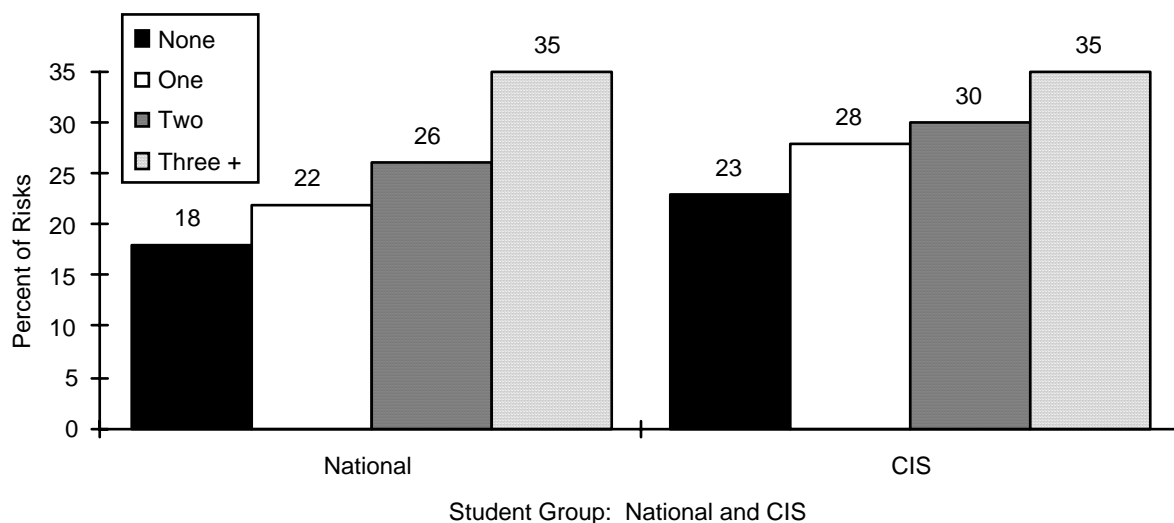
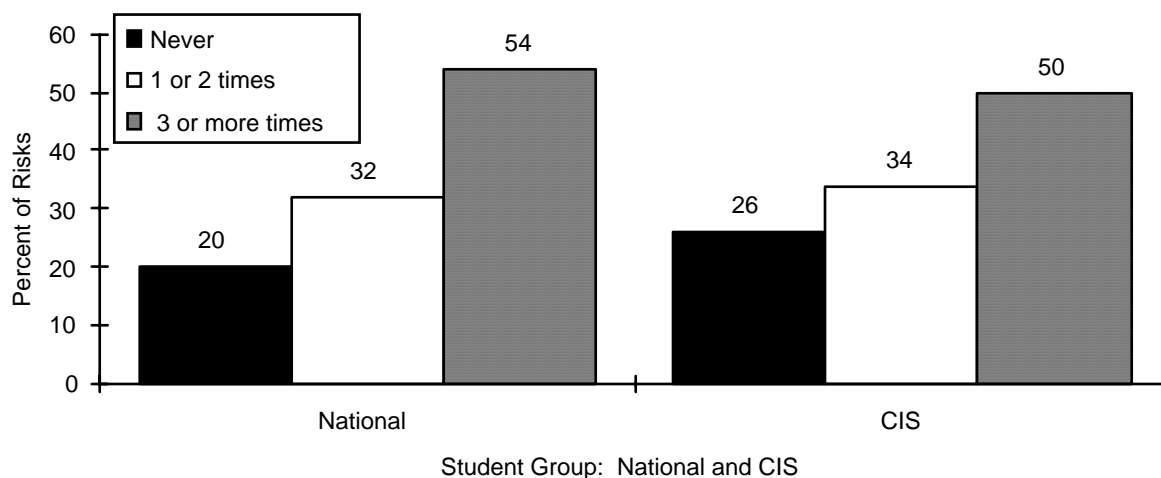


Figure 6. Percent of Contextual Risks by Number of Times Suspended or Expelled from School During Past 30 Days



Social Capital Index

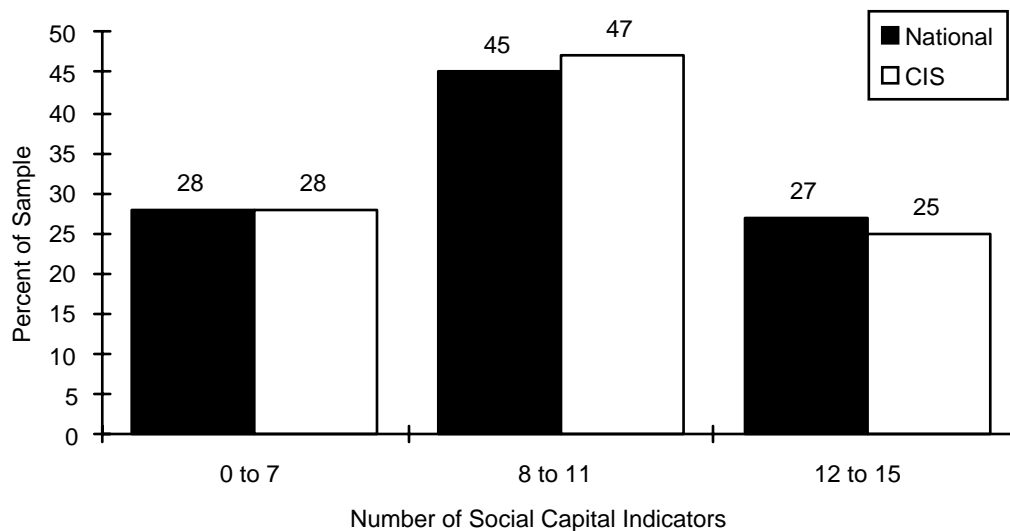
Key Findings

- Few remarkable differences (10% difference or greater) were found in the proportion of CIS students and students in the national sample who reported having each of the 15 indicators of social capital (see Appendix B).
- Similar percentages of CIS and national students had low levels of social capital (0 to 7 indicators), moderate levels of social capital (8 to 11 indicators), and high levels of social capital (12 to 15 indicators) (see Figure 7).
- On average, both CIS students and students in the national sample reported having 61% of the total number of social capital indicators.

Implications:

- The present results challenge the assumption that students at risk of school failure have fewer social connections than other students and are less likely to have people who encourage them to do well at school.
- It is also possible to conclude from these data that all children need more and stronger social connections. In other words, it is not that CIS students are doing well; it is that the national sample is also suffering from depleted social relationships.

Figure 7. Proportion of CIS and National Sample by Number of Social Capital Indicators



Contextual Risks by the Number of Social Capital Indicators

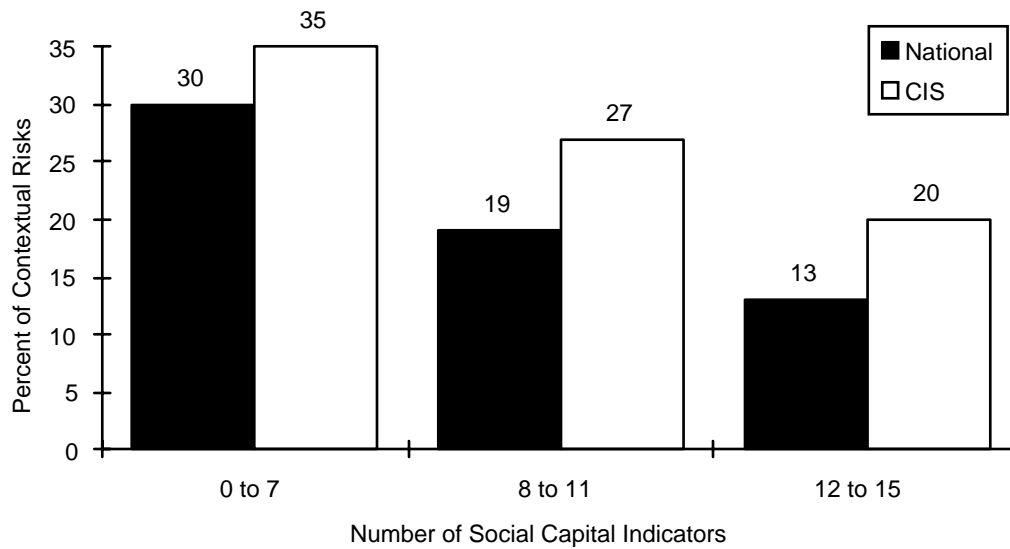
Key Findings

- For both groups of students, as the number of high social capital indicators increases, the percent of contextual risks decreases (see Figure 8).

Implications:

- Students who face high contextual risk in the context of low social capital may be particularly vulnerable to negative outcomes.
- Because a dearth of social capital tends to be accompanied by higher levels of contextual risks, interventions must address social environment risks in addition to students' social relationships. Risks related to safety and security may need to take priority in interventions.

Figure 8. Percent of Contextual Risks by Number of Social Capital Indicators



Social Capital and Demographic Profile

Key Findings

- In general, few patterns emerged in the data when the number of social capital indicators were examined by the demographic profile of CIS students and students in the national sample.
- Students in large households (9 or more) reported the least social capital, while students in two parent families reported the most (see Table 5).

Implications:

- Students with background markers that place them at risk of school failure may not experience any fewer social capital indicators than students with background markers that are associated with more socioeconomic advantage.

Social Capital and School Performance

Key Findings:

- For both CIS students and students in the national Sample, the findings are unequivocal: increases in school performance and behavior parallel increases in the percent of social capital indicators (see Table 6).

Implications:

- Interventions that focus on increasing the social capital of students are likely to pay dividends in better school performance and behavior.
- Yet, strategies that focus simultaneously on increasing social capital and decreasing contextual risks are likely have the most positive effect.

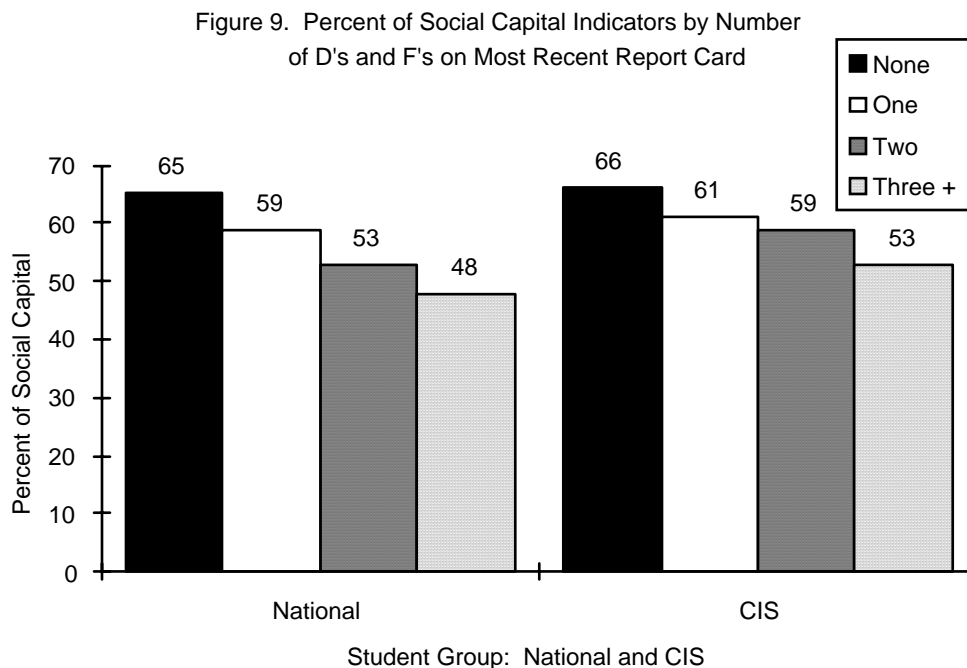
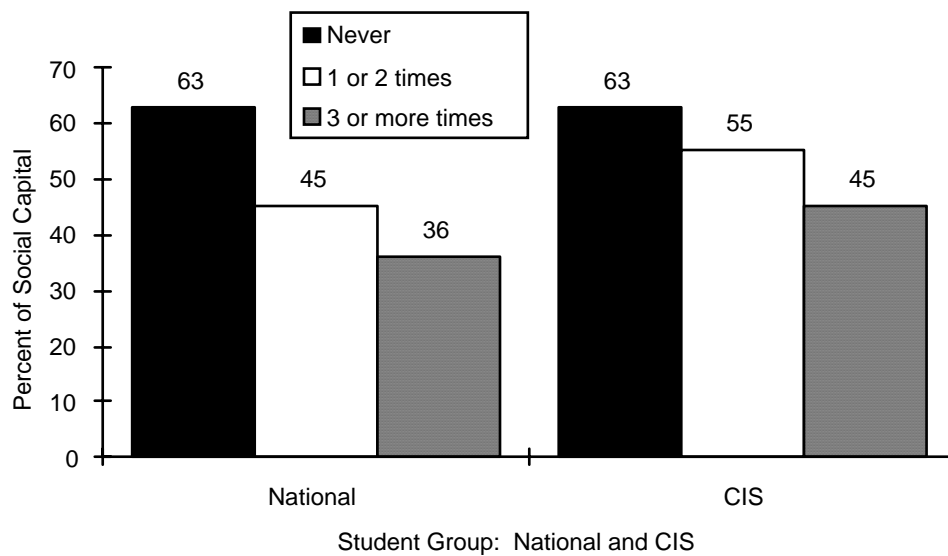


Figure 10. Percent of Social Capital Indicators by Number of Times Suspended or Expelled during the Past 30 Days



Internal Assets

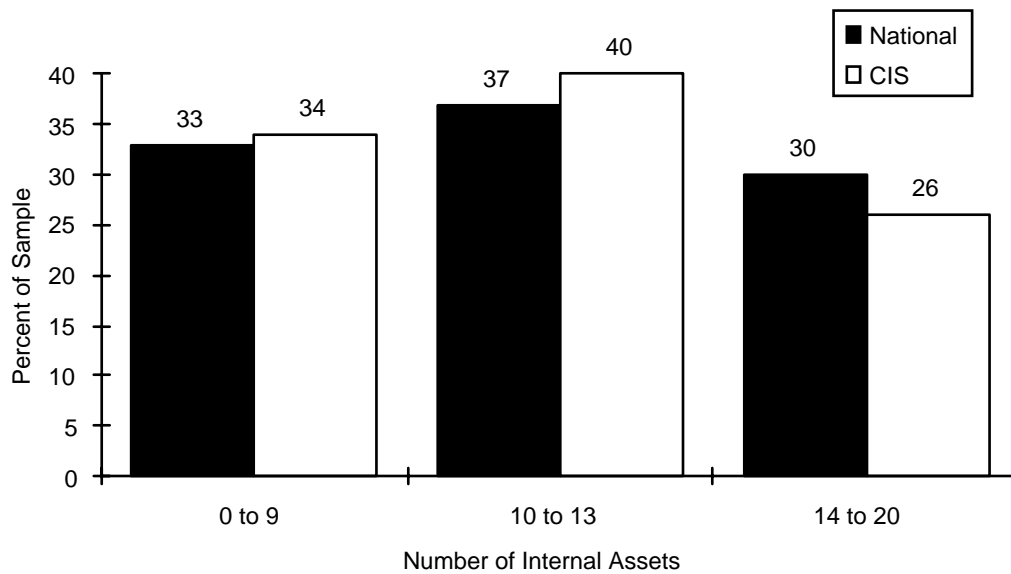
Key Findings:

- Students in the national sample were more likely than those in the national sample to:
 - take part in school activities outside of classwork (60% versus 49%)
 - spend one or more hours studying on school nights (44% versus 32%)
 - feel accepted by friends and able to resist negative peer pressure (51% versus 40%)
- CIS students were more likely than those in the national sample to:
 - find education an exciting and meaningful experience (57% versus 41%)
 - report being happy with the way they look (66% versus 51%)
- The CIS and national samples reported similar perceptions (less than 10% difference) of assets related to physical well-being, mental health, and self-esteem and control in the school environment.
- Fewer than half of the students in each group felt school was very helpful in preparing them for life after high school, said they were likely to turn to another when faced with major problems, and felt able to overcome difficulties at school.
- Similar percentages of CIS students and national students were in the low, moderate, and high categories for the number of internal assets possessed (see Figure 11).
- On average, students in the national sample reported 57% of the total number of internal assets; CIS students reported 55% of total internal assets.

Implications:

- While students in the CIS and national samples had similar overall levels of internal assets, the findings indicate that after-school activities and studying could be promoted among CIS students. The quality of friendships and ability to resist negative peer pressure were also revealed as important targets.
- The findings indicate that middle and high school students in general may lack understanding of the importance of schooling for future success, a sense of control in school situations, and an appreciation for the role of social support in problem-solving.
- Overall, the values and beliefs that CIS students have about themselves and their social environment do not differ from other students and are strengths that can be used in interventions.

Figure 11. Proportion of CIS and National Sample by Number of Internal Assets



Internal Assets by the Number of Contextual Risks

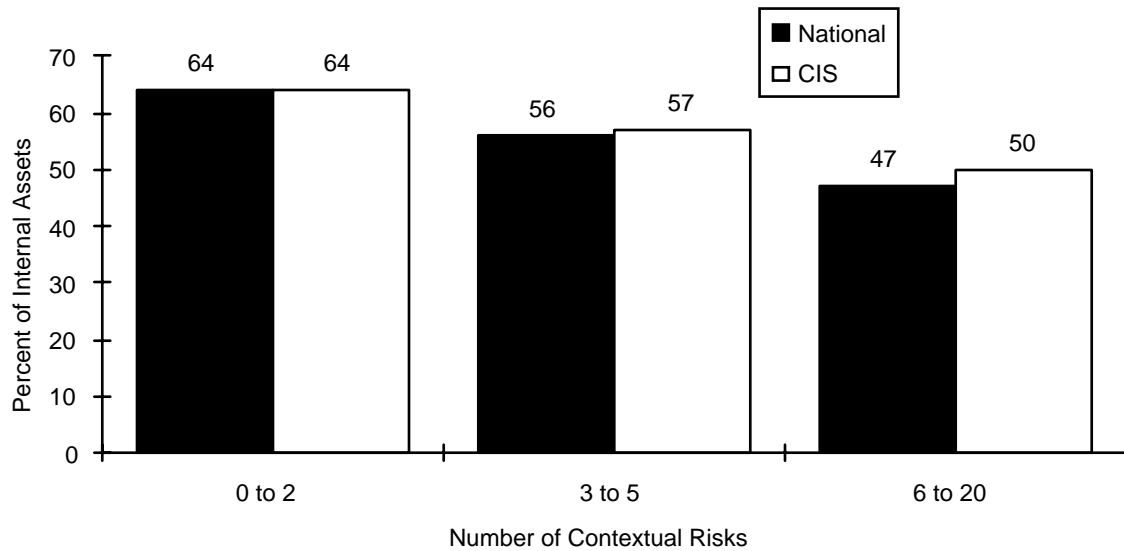
Key Findings:

- As the number of contextual risks increases, the proportion of internal assets reported by CIS students and students in the national sample decreases (see Figure 12).

Implications:

- Without changes in the social environment of students to reduce the level of contextual risks, students may face difficulties in developing a value and belief system that is associated with good personal adjustment and school success.

Figure 12. Percent of Internal Assets by the Number of Contextual Risks



Internal Assets by the Number of Social Capital Assets

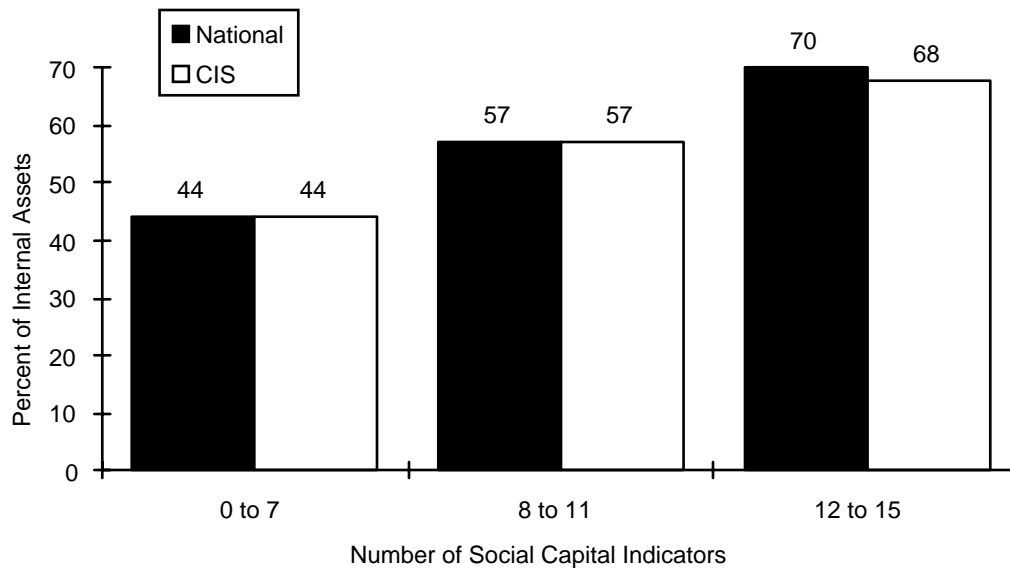
Key Findings:

- The proportion of internal assets that CIS students and students in the national sample report increases significantly as the number of social capital indicators increases (see Figure 13).

Implications:

- Interventions that focus on increasing the level of support and encouragement that students receive from significant adults in their environment are likely to support the development of a value and belief structure that is conducive to personal adjustment and school success.

Figure 13. Percent of Internal Assets by Number of Social Capital Indicators



Internal Assets and Demographic Profile

Key Points:

- Overall, the proportion of internal assets varied little across the various demographic profile characteristics of students (see Table 7).
- The proportion of internal assets for different demographic groups varied little between the CIS and national samples.

Implications:

- Demographic profile characteristics may not be good markers for identifying students who may evidence values and beliefs that are associated with poor adjustment and low school performance.

Internal Assets and School Performance

Key Points:

- The findings for CIS students and students in the national sample show a similar pattern: students who perform better in school and behave more appropriately report a higher proportion of internal assets (see Table 8).

Implications:

- Unlike contextual risks and social capital that are external to the student and thus are more likely to influence school performance than be influenced, it is likely that internal assets and school performance work in a reciprocal manner, each benefiting the other.
- Targeting the many internal assets that are manipulable (e.g., physical and psychological health, school meaningfulness, responses to peer pressure) should promote improved school performance and behavior.

Figure 15. Percent of Internal Assets by Number of D's and F's on Most Recent Report Card

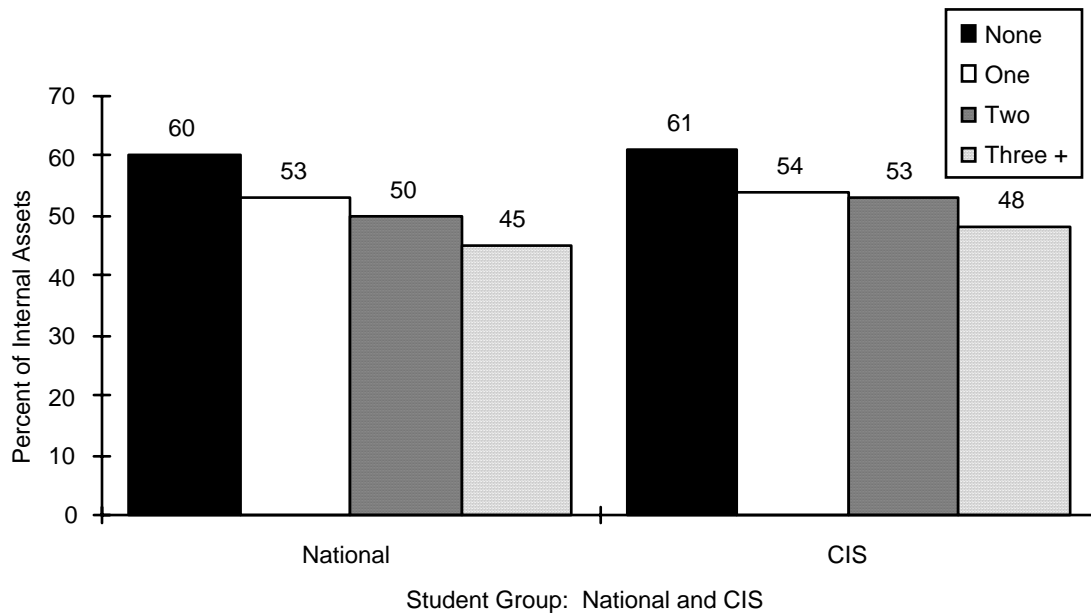
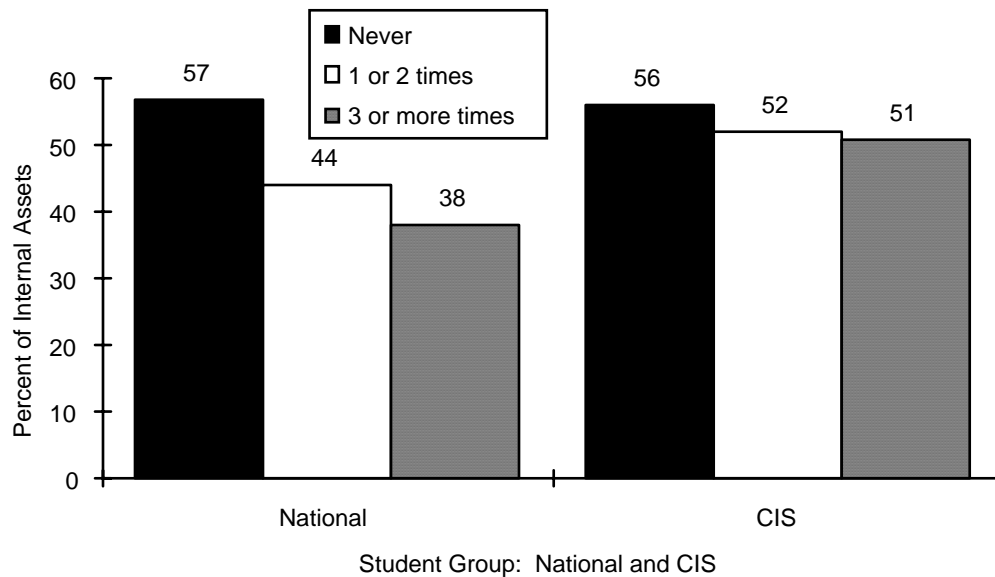


Figure 15. Percent of Internal Assets by Number of Times Suspended or Expelled during the Past 30 Days



School Performance by Contextual Risks, Social Capital Assets, and Internal Assets

Two models have informed the study of the role that risk and protective factors play in influencing dependent outcomes, such as school performance: the compensatory model and the immunity model. The compensatory model assumes that both risk and protective factors will have a direct but opposite effect on dependent outcomes. Risk factors will detract from positive outcomes; protective factors (assets) will promote positive outcomes. Like the compensatory model, the immunity model assumes that risk factors will detract from positive outcomes. Yet, it assumes that protective factors only play a role in influencing outcomes in the face of risk. Protective factors buffer the consequences of risk factors on dependent outcomes. In situations of high protection, it is assumed that risk factors will have little effect on dependent outcomes. In situations of low protection, it is assumed that risk factors will have a strong negative effect on dependent outcomes.

Five indicators of academic performance from the national data were used to test the operation of a compensatory versus an immunity model: grades on the most recent report card; number of D's and F's on the most recent report card; number of grades repeated in school; the degree to which students have avoided problem behavior at school during the last 30 days, and attendance over the last 7 days. When the indicators of academic performance were examined in the context of categories of contextual risks (0-2, 3-5, 6-20), social capital assets (0-7, 8-11, 12-15), and internal assets (0-9, 10-13, 14-20) the results supported the operation of a compensatory model. Of the six analyses, only one provided support for the immunity model. At high levels of contextual risks (6-20), increases in the level of social capital buffered the negative effect of contextual risks on

attendance. As a consequence, the models were re-examined by using multiple regression procedures, which allow specification of the full range of the independent variables. Models were examined both for students in the national sample and for CIS students.

The results were generally consistent across the two respondent groups. Overall, the number of contextual risks was the best predictor of school performance outcomes for both groups. This was particularly the case for the two behavior variables, avoidance of problem behavior and attendance, variables which are strongly related to school performance outcomes in the literature. As expected, the greater the number of contextual risks, the less the avoidance of problem behavior and the poorer the attendance at school. In all cases where significant effects were found, the greater the number of contextual risks, the poorer the school performance indicator; the greater the number of social capital and internal assets, the more positive the school performance indicator.

In summary, these findings suggest that interventions that focus on reducing the level of contextual risks in the lives of students may have the greatest effect in promoting their outcomes at school. This is not to say that a focus on building the level of social capital and internal assets in the lives of students is not important. Yet, like Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, higher level needs such as needs for belonging, connection, and social support may not become motivating until lower order needs such as the needs for safety and security have been satisfied. Students who face danger and peril in their social environment may be mesmerized into inaction. A strategy that focusing on reducing contextual risks and building assets simultaneously is likely to have the most benefit for student performance in the long run.

Tables

Table 1. Sample Profiles from National and CIS Surveys

Characteristic	National (n = 2099) %	CIS (n = 665) %
Gender		
Female	51	49
Male	49	51
Race/Ethnicity		
Native American or Alaskan Native	03	01
Asian or Pacific Islander	04	01
Black/African-American	14	53
Hispanic/Latino	09	02
White	63	38
Multiracial	04	03
Other	03	02
Grade		
Middle School (6th - 8th grade)	45	61
High School (9th - 12th grade)	55	39
Household Type		
Live in a family with one parent	19	38
Live in a family with two parents	74	51
Live in another type of family situation	06	11
Live alone	01	00
Number People Living in Home		
1-2 people	05	11
3-4 people	50	50
5-6 people	35	30
7-8 people	08	07
9 or more people	02	02
High School Graduate: Mother		
Does not live with me	05	09
Lives with me but did not graduate from high school	19	32
Lives with me and did graduate from high school	76	59
High School Graduate: Father		
Does not live with me	13	25
Lives with me but did not graduate from high school	19	30
Lives with me and did graduate from high school	68	45
Receives Free or Reduced Price Lunches at School		
No	72	41
Yes	28	59

Table 2. School Performance Outcomes for the National and CIS Samples

School Performance Outcome	National %	CIS %
Grades on Most Recent Report Card		
Mostly A's and B's	54	28
Mostly B's and C's	25	33
Mostly C's	07	11
Mostly C's and D's	10	19
Mostly D's and F's	04	09
Number D's or F's on Most Recent Report Card		
None	65	37
One	19	30
Two	10	19
Three or More	06	14
Number Grades Repeated in School		
No Grades	83	55
One Grade	13	32
Two Grades	02	09
Three or More Grades	02	04
Cut school for the entire day at least once over the last seven days.		
No	94	94
Yes	06	06
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Received a Warning about Student's Attendance, Grades, or Behavior during the Past 30 days		
Never	77	66
Once or Twice	19	26
More than Twice	04	08
Suspended or Expelled from School during the Past 30 days.		
Never	95	86
Once or Twice	03	11
More than Twice	02	03
Number of Days Missed From School Because to Sick to Attend Over the Last 7 Days		
None	79	71
1 - 2 Days	17	22
3 or More Days	04	07

Table 3. Percent of Contextual Risks by Demographic Indicators

Characteristic	National %	CIS %
<hr/>		
Gender		
Female	20	29
Male	22	27
Race/Ethnicity		
Black/African-American	27	30
White	18	24
Other	24	29
Grade		
Middle School	20	27
High School	22	28
Total Number of People Living in Household		
1-2	25	27
3-4	20	29
5-6	20	26
7-8	24	25
9 or more People	32	30
Household Type		
Live in a family with one parent	25	30
Live in a family with two parents	19	25
Live in another type of family situation	25	32
Live alone	72	*
Receives Free or Reduced Price Lunches at School		
No	19	25
Yes	25	29

Table 4. Percent of Contextual Risks by School Outcomes

School Performance Outcome	National %	CIS %
Grades on Most Recent Report Card		
Mostly A's and B's	17	24
Most B's and C's	23	26
Mostly C's	24	30
Mostly C's and D's	27	32
Mostly D's and F's	38	34
Number D's or F's on Most Recent Report Card		
None	18	23
One	22	28
Two	26	30
Three or More	35	35
Number Grades Repeated in School		
No Grades	19	25
One Grade	26	29
Two Grades	30	33
Three or More Grades	36	37
Cut the entire school day over the last 7 days.		
No	20	27
Yes	38	40
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Received a Warning about Student's Attendance, Grades, or Behavior during the Past 30 days		
Never	18	25
Once or Twice	27	31
More than Twice	38	40
Suspended or Expelled from School during the Past 30 days.		
Never	20	26
Once or Twice	32	34
More than Twice	54	50
Number of Days Missed From School Because to Sick to Attend Over the Last 7 Days		
None	19	26
1 - 2 Days	24	28
3 or More Days	34	38

Table 5. Percent of Social Capital by Demographic Indicators

Characteristic	National %	CIS %
Gender		
Female	64	62
Male	59	61
Race/Ethnicity		
Black/African-American	61	61
White	63	63
Other	57	59
Grade		
Middle School	63	64
High School	60	58
Total Number of People Living in Household		
1-2	58	59
3-4	62	61
5-6	62	63
7-8	59	66
9 or more People	46	53
Household Type		
Live in a family with one parent	57	60
Live in a family with two parents	64	63
Live in another type of family situation	55	57
Live alone	10	*
Receives Free or Reduced Price Lunches at School		
No	63	60
Yes	59	62

Table 6. Percent of Social Capital by School Performance Outcomes

School Performance Outcome	National %	CIS %
Grades on Most Recent Report Card		
Mostly A's and B's	67	67
Most B's and C's	58	63
Mostly C's	55	61
Mostly C's and D's	51	54
Mostly D's and F's	43	55
Number D's or F's on Most Recent Report Card		
None	65	66
One	59	61
Two	53	59
Three or More	48	53
Number Grades Repeated in School		
No Grades	63	64
One Grade	57	59
Two Grades	58	53
Three or More Grades	47	60
Cut school for the entire day at least once over the last seven days.		
No	63	62
Yes	39	46
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Received a Warning about Student's Attendance, Grades, or Behavior during the Past 30 days		
Never	64	64
Once or Twice	56	57
More than Twice	43	51
Suspended or Expelled from School during the Past 30 days.		
Never	63	63
Once or Twice	45	55
More than Twice	36	45
Number of Days Missed From School Because to Sick to Attend Over the Last 7 Days		
None	63	62
1 - 2 Days	59	62
3 or More Days	50	52

Table 7. Percent of Internal Assets by Demographic Indicators

Characteristic	National %	CIS %
Gender		
Female	56	55
Male	57	56
Race/Ethnicity		
Black/African-American	60	57
White	56	54
Other	55	53
Grade		
Middle School	57	57
High School	56	54
Total Number of People Living in Household		
1-2	57	54
3-4	56	55
5-6	58	57
7-8	55	59
9 or more People	48	55
Household Type		
Live in a family with one parent	55	56
Live in a family with two parents	57	56
Live in another type of family situation	54	51
Live alone	24	*
Receives Free or Reduced Price Lunches at School		
No	57	54
Yes	55	56

Table 8. Percent of Internal Assets by School Performance Outcomes

School Performance Outcome	National %	CIS %
Grades on Most Recent Report Card		
Mostly A's and B's	62	62
Most B's and C's	52	56
Mostly C's	51	54
Mostly C's and D's	48	50
Mostly D's and F's	40	46
Number D's or F's on Most Recent Report Card		
None	60	61
One	53	54
Two	50	53
Three or More	45	48
Number Grades Repeated in School		
No Grades	58	59
One Grade	52	52
Two Grades	49	50
Three or More Grades	43	47
Cut school for the entire day at least once over the last seven days.		
No	57	56
Yes	44	47
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Received a Warning about Student's Attendance, Grades, or Behavior during the Past 30 days		
Never	58	58
Once or Twice	51	51
More than Twice	43	47
Suspended or Expelled from School during the Past 30 days.		
Never	57	56
Once or Twice	44	52
More than Twice	38	51
Number of Days Missed From School Because to Sick to Attend Over the Last 7 Days		
None	58	58
1 - 2 Days	51	52
3 or More Days	46	43

Table 9. School Performance Outcomes Regressed on Contextual Risks, Social Capital, and Internal Assets

School Performance Outcome	Beta			R ²
	Risks	Social Capital	Internal Assets	
Grades on Most Recent Report Card (A's - F's)				
National	.18	-.13	-.17	.15
CIS	.12	.NS	-.21	.10
Number D's or F's on Most Recent Report Card (None to 3 or More)				
National	.19	-.11	.10	.10
CIS	.18	-.18	.NS	.10
Number Grades Repeated in School (0 to 3+)				
National	.19	.NS	-.09	.05
CIS	.12	.NS	-.16	.06
Avoidance of Problem Behavior During Last 30 Days (No to Yes)				
National	-.37	.09	.NS	.19
CIS	-.35	.NS	.NS	.16
Attendance--Last Seven Days (Poor to Good)				
National	-.31	.09	.09	.16
CIS	-.21	.13	.13	.14

Note: NS = Not Significant

Appendices

Appendix A. Contextual Risks

	National %	CIS %
Safety and Security		
1. Youth feel unsafe in their neighborhood.	13	24
2. Youth live in a neighborhood with a high incidence of crime and violence.	31	45
3. Youth are often or sometimes afraid that someone will hurt or bother them on the way to or from school.	27	34
4. Youth are often or sometimes afraid that someone will hurt or bother them at school.	30	34
5. During the past 30 days, youth knew someone who carried a weapon to school, such as a gun, knife, or club.	21	23
6. Youth attend a school with high disruption, crime, and violence	22	26
7. During the past 30 days, someone attacked or threatened the youth with a weapon, such as a gun, knife, or club.	07	10
8. Youth report that people move in and out of their neighborhood a lot.	15	32
9. Youth have moved two or more times in the last year.	08	17
10. Youth do not always have a way to get home if they stay for after-school activities.	32	38
Social and Affiliative		
11. Youth are unhappy with the neighborhood in which they live.	20	28
12. Youth live in a neighborhood where young people about their age are likely to break the law and get into trouble with the police.	41	44
13. Youth view young people in the neighborhood as unlikely to graduate from high school.	14	26
14. Youth feel that every student is <u>not considered</u> important at the school they attend.	33	24
15. Youth report that they have friends who often get into trouble.	17	23
16. Youth are a member of a school or neighborhood gang.	07	09
17. Youth report the death of a close friend in the last year.	23	30
18. Youth report that they often have disagreements with the adults in their home about the adults' behavior.	13	19
19. Youth have a brother or sister who dropped out of school before graduating.	12	20
20. During the past 30 days, youth watched television more than 4 hours on average each school night (Sunday-Thursday).	30	43
(Mean number of contextual risks)	(4.2)	(5.5)

(Percent of Maximum)

(21) (28)

Appendix B: Social Capital Index

	National %	CIS %
Neighborhood		
1. Youth perceive their neighbors as interested in their welfare and willing to help them if they have a problem.	60	59
Neighbor-Parent Connection		
2. Youth believe that if they did something wrong, adults in the neighborhood who knew about it would probably tell the adults that they live with.	70	73
School		
3. Youth report that they are getting a good education at the school they are attending.	84	85
4. Youth perceive teachers at their school as supportive and caring about them.	59	60
Family		
5. Youth describe the relationship between the adults in their home as good.	70	66
6. Youth report that members of their family feel a sense of emotional connection and bonding with one another.	48	50
Parent		
7. Youth report that the adults in their home provide them with loving support and encouragement.	53	57
Parent-Friend Connection		
8. Youth report that the adults in their home know most of their friends.	76	70
9. Youth report that the adults in their home know most of the parents of their friends.	52	47
Parent-School Connection		
10. Youth report that if they needed one or more adults with whom they live to come to school, they would come.	79	73
11. Youth report that an adult is available for them to contact when they return home from school.	67	63
12. Youth perceive that it is important to the adults in their home that they do well in school.	85	83
13. Youth are encouraged by the adults in their home to do well in school.	84	87
14. Youth report that the adults in their home show an interest in their courses, experiences and activities at school and ask them about their plans for the future.	51	58
Help Network		
15. Youth report that people are available when they need help and support.	55	55

(Mean Number of Social Capital Factors)	(9.2)	(9.2)
(Percent of Maximum)	(61)	(61)

Appendix C: Internal Assets

	National %	CIS %
<u>Educational Investment</u>		
1. Youth take part in school activities that are not part of classwork.	60	49
2. Youth spend one or more hours on average studying or doing homework each school night.	44	32
3. Youth find education an exciting and meaningful experience.	41	57
4. Youth feel that school is very helpful in preparing them for what they want to do after high school.	39	48
5. Youth want to go to college in the year after they graduate from high school.	75	67
<u>Physical Well-Being</u>		
6. Youth describe their health as either very good or excellent.	55	54
7. Youth have no medical condition or disability that keeps them from attending school regularly.	92	87
8. Youth report good physical health over the last seven days.	55	60
9. Youth exercised or played sports at least 3 of the last seven days.	63	58
10. Youth generally feel well-rested.	58	61
<u>Mental health</u>		
11. Youth report high psychological well-being.	48	50
12. Youth are very likely to turn to another when they face major personal or family problems.	32	34
13. Youth are helpful to others at school.	71	71
<u>Confidence and Self-Esteem</u>		
14. Youth are happy with the way they look.	51	66
15. Youth report positive feelings about self.	52	48
16. Youth feel that they are able to overcome difficulties at school.	49	41
17. Youth feel a sense of influence and control over events in the school environment.	52	55
<u>Peer Relationships</u>		
18. Youth report no difficulty in making new friends.	63	65
19. Youth report that they are part of a group of friends at school who hang out together.	80	72
20. Youth feel accepted by their friends and able to resist negative peer pressure	51	40

(Mean Number of Internal Assets)
(Percent of Maximum)

(11.3) (11.1)
(57) (55)