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Research on Lowering Violence in Communities and Schools (ReSOLV)

The California School Safety Study: School and Community Contexts that Contribute to Root Causes and Prevention of Violence in California

Preliminary Final Research Report

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American Institutes for Research

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Dawn Chorus Group

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Contents

Project Summary.....	2
RESEARCH QUESTIONS (RQ)	2
RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODS, AND ANALYSIS	2
EXPECTED APPLICABILITY OF THE RESEARCH	9
Participants and Collaborating Organizations	9
STUDY SAMPLE.....	9
COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS	10
Changes in Approach from Original Design	10
Outcomes.....	11
ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS	11
PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND FINDINGS	13
LOS ANGELES STUDY SITE	21
MENDOTA STUDY SITE	34
References	46
End Notes.....	47

Project Summary

ReSOLV is a longitudinal research study funded by the National Institute of Justice under the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative. American Institutes for Research (AIR), in partnership with Arizona State University (ASU), Dawn Chorus and an interdisciplinary Council of Advisors (COA) is using a multi-site independent case study design over a nine-year period (2014-2022), to examine the association of school safety and student outcomes with school and community risk and protective factors, and readiness for violence prevention and safety promotion reform among students, parents, schools, and communities in three contextually distinct school districts and communities in California. This report presents preliminary final analyses and will be complemented at the end of the study by a large number of artifacts including a public-facing full technical report of final results and actionable steps to utilize research findings to inform policy and practice.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS (RQ)

ReSOLV is examining four primary research questions using cross-sectional and longitudinal data from three unique school and community violence contexts: urban, large county, and rural:

RQ1. How does the ecology of risk and protective factors within schools and communities influence the educational and safety outcomes of students?

RQ2. Is school, individual, or community readiness to mitigate risk factors for school violence associated with improved educational and safety outcomes?

RQ3. What are the core components of school, individual, and community readiness to mitigate risk factors for school violence?

RQ4. How do the associations between school, individual, and community readiness, along with school safety, and student outcomes vary over time?

The overarching framework that guides the four research questions posits that there is no bright line between school and community environments, and that recognizing this permeability and building the readiness to work across boundaries, will allow communities and schools to more effectively create safer environments *together* in and outside of school.

RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODS, AND ANALYSIS

ReSOLV is a mixed methods study that uses quantitative data to understand the relationships between root causes of violence and school and community safety outcomes, while using qualitative data to situate quantitative relationships in the unique rural, urban, and large county context of each site. Since COVID-19 interrupted the study period and disrupted student attendance practices for an entire school year, while also changing the way the term “safety” is understood by students, teachers, parents, and community members. ReSOLV’s research questions will be answered in three different analytical time periods.

1. Longitudinally, from Jan 1, 2014, through December 31, 2022
2. Pre-COVID, from August 1, 2014, through December 31, 2019
3. Post-COVID, from Jan 1, 2020, through June 30, 2022

The longitudinal time frame was determined by the annual (Jan-Dec) nature of the crime and census data that anchors the longitudinal analysis, whereas the pre-COVID and post-COVID time frames were determined based on the academic school year in the study sites. Pre- COVID refers to the time period before COVID-19 impacted our study sites. Exhibit 3 describes the different data types, data sources, and analysis levels in the study.

Exhibit 3: Data Types, Sources, and Levels of Analysis

Type	Source(s)	Analysis Level
Neighborhood mapping of risk, needs, and assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Primary data from fieldwork in Los Angeles, Mendota and Hanford in 2019 and 2022* ● Secondary data from Google Maps <p><i>*We assume the vast majority of places (e.g., buildings) and spaces (e.g., parks) existed at the start of the study period in 2014</i></p>	Within a one-mile radius of each school in our L.A. sample. City wide mapping in Mendota School attendance boundary mapping in Hanford.
Attendance boundary area for schools in study sample	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● California Department of Education (CDE) ● County Planning Departments 	Street
Public and school safety policies, programs, incidents, and communication materials	Secondary data from school, community., media sources, including social media	Organizational Community
Academic Achievement	Secondary data from CDE Study Districts	District School Student
School Discipline	Secondary data from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CDE ● Office of Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) ● Study Districts 	District School Student
Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Primary Fieldwork in Schools ● School Districts (L all years, H, some years) ● WestEd (M, some years) 	Student Parent Teacher Staff
Interviews	Primary Fieldwork in Schools and Communities	Student Parent Teacher Staff Community Members

Type	Source(s)	Analysis Level
Focus Groups	Primary Fieldwork in Schools and Communities	Student Parent
Concentrated Disadvantage	US Census	Census Tracts Census Blocks
Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FBI UCR ● CADOJ ● Police/Sheriff 	State/County/City County County/City/Street

Exhibit 4 shows the variables used to answer **RQ 1: How does the ecology of risk and protective factors within communities and schools influence the educational and safety outcomes of students?**

Exhibit 4. Variables Used in RQ1

Student Demographic Characteristics (X1)	Violent Crime Rates (X5)	School Climate (Parent Reported) (X9)	Chronic Absentee Rate (Y2)	Suspension Rate (Y6)
Parent Characteristics (X2)	Property Crime Rates (X6)	School Climate (Teacher Reported) (X10)	Standardized Test Results – ELA (Y3)	
Teacher Background Characteristics (X3)	Percent Students Meeting Literacy Benchmarks (X7)	School Climate (Staff Reported) (X11)	Standardized Test Results – Math (Y4)	
Concentrated Disadvantage (X4)	School Climate (Student Reported) (X8)	Graduation Rate (Y1)	Expulsion Rate (Y5)	

To address **RQ 1**, we will examine associations between school risk factors (e.g., X_8, X_9, X_{10}, X_{11}), school protective factors (e.g., X_7), community risk (e.g., X_5), community need (e.g., X_4), with school/community safety (e.g., incidents of violence), and student outcomes (e.g., $Y_1, Y_2, Y_3, Y_4, Y_5, Y_6$). Associations will be examined using the following analysis structure:

$$Y_i = f(X_i\beta) + e_i$$

where:

Y_i are the outcome measures that take the form described in Exhibit X for measures Y_1 to Y_6

X_i is a vector of predictor variables included in the regression models and are described in Exhibit X for measures X_1 to X_{11}

$f()$ is a functional form for the different regression models based on the distributional properties of the outcome variable (e.g., linear regression, logistic regression)

β is the vector of coefficients to be estimated

e_i is the error term

RQ 2: What are the core components of school and individual readiness to mitigate risk factors for school and community violence?

To address **RQ 2**, we will use the $R=MC^2$ model as a starting point to develop survey questions. $R=MC^2$ says readiness is not a singular construct but comprises three components that influence any implementation effort: *motivation*, *general capacity*, and *innovation-specific capacity*. The specific subcomponents and definitions can be found in Exhibit 5.

Exhibit 5: Organizational (School-level) Readiness

Subcomponent	Definition
Motivation	Degree to which we want the innovation to happen.
Relative Advantage	This innovation seems better than what we currently do.
Fit	This innovation fits with how we do things.
Simplicity	This innovation seems simple to use.
Ability to Pilot	The degree to which this innovation can be tested and experimented with.
Observability	Ability to see that this innovation is leading to outcomes.
Priority	Importance of this innovation compared to other things we do.
Urgency	The timing of the innovation’s implementation
Innovation-specific Capacity	What is needed to make this particular innovation happen.
Innovation-specific Knowledge & Skills	Sufficient abilities to do the innovation.
Champion	A well-connected person who supports and models this innovation.
Supportive Climate	Necessary supports, processes, and resources to enable this innovation.
Inter-organizational Relationships	Relationships between organizations that support this innovation.
Intra-organizational Relationships	Relationships within an organization that support this innovation.
General Capacity	Our overall functioning.
Culture	Norms and values of how we do things here.
Climate	The feeling of being part of this organization.
Innovativeness	Openness to change in general.
Resource Utilization	Ability to acquire and allocate resources, including time, money, effort, and technology.
Leadership	Effectiveness of our leaders.

Subcomponent	Definition
Internal Operations	Effectiveness of communication and teamwork.
Staff Capacities	Having enough of the right people to get things done.
Process Capacities	Ability to plan, implement, and evaluate.

Further, while readiness can be measured at a point in time, it is hypothesized to change dynamically due to internal or external factors. As $R=MC^2$ was initially conceived as an organizational-level construct, we conducted a literature review to identify how the overall model could be conceptually applied individually (Exhibit 6). A similar process was done for the community-level and is the subject of a forthcoming manuscript.

Exhibit 6. Individual Readiness

Subcomponent	Definition
Motivation	Degree to which we want the innovation to happen.
Subcomponents same as organizational level	
Innovation-specific Capacity	What is needed to make this particular innovation happen.
Perceived Capacity Continued access to information about innovation	Perceived ability to implement the innovation’s requirements
Continued access to information about innovation	Ability to obtain further information about the innovation.
General Capacity	Our overall functioning.
Staff Attributes	General professional abilities an individual brings to their work
Absorptive Capacity for new knowledge	Ability to learn and retain new information
Educational level	Highest level obtained
Intellectual ability	General statement about perceived intelligences (not drilling down into specific aspects of intelligent)
Compassion	Ability to empathetic and take viewpoints of others

Another key aspect of readiness is that it can differ based on the respondent. We hypothesized that, for instance, leadership would have a different perspective on the readiness around school safety compared to other respondents, such as teachers.

Each of the three sites had related but differing measurement strategies. We began by developing a core set of items adapted from the Readiness Measurement Tool (Scott et al., 2016; Walker et al 2020). However, different sites had different ongoing measurement strategies that looked at related constructs, such as school climate. When possible, we added readiness items to the ongoing surveys when these were non-redundant with other items. Additionally, items may have conceptually

changed (both in wording and purpose from year to year). A comprehensive harmonization was undertaken to identify when the items were similar enough to count as the “same” item from year to year.

In general, we attempted to gather data from four groups of respondents: *Administrators, parents, teachers, and students*. (In LA and Hanford, the teachers and administrators were collapsed under a category called “staff.”). However, we realized that the respondent may not be the object of the item. For example, several teacher items would ask about “students at this school” and vice versa. Therefore, we needed to go through and recode all items to include information about the object; that is, to whom is readiness ascribed. Under this code scheme, items were reassigned into the relevant components and subcomponents.

To compute readiness scores, we created an index for each subcomponent that consisted of the average of all items on that subcomponent. We scaled each item with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 to account for the differences in response categories. This allowed us to combine into these indices. We computed index scores for each respondent category for each school. We then ran a simple linear regression to see whether the response category predicted variations in perceived readiness. We ran this test for each subcomponent for each school. When no comparison could be made (such as when a readiness subcomponent appeared for only one group), we reported average scores only.

Finally, we examined the strength of associations between individual and organizational readiness by running within-time bivariate correlations between the constructs developed in the instrument development phase. We visualized that as a correlation matrix. Each cell in the matrix represents the correlation coefficient between two variables, and its color intensity and hue reflect the strength and direction of the correlation. Typically, colors on one end of the spectrum (e.g., green) indicate strong positive correlations, meaning as one variable increases, the other tends to as well.

Conversely, colors on the opposite end (e.g., dark brown) depict strong negative correlations, signifying that as one variable rises, the other tends to decrease. Cells colored in neutral tones, such as white, represent weak or no correlations. Additionally, the numeric values in each cell provide the exact correlation coefficient, with values ranging from -1 (perfect negative correlation) to 1 (perfect positive correlation). A value of 0 suggests no linear relationship. When analyzing the visualization, diagonal cells, typically from the top-left to bottom-right, often represent the correlation of a variable with itself, hence always showing a perfect correlation of 1.

RQ 3: Is school and individual readiness to mitigate risk factors for community and school violence associated with improved educational and safety outcomes?

To examine **RQ 3**, we build on the analyses addressing RQs 1 and 2. The RQ 2 analyses identified the readiness components (i.e., capacities and motivations) shown to have a statistically significant association to school and community risk factors. The RQ 1 analyses demonstrated which school and community risk factors were related to student outcomes. As a result, the analytical approach for RQ 3 (Exhibit 7), featured a similar analytic structure as we used in the RQ 1 analyses, adding in a stepwise component introducing the relevant variables that emerged in the RQ 2 analyses. We also used context from qualitative materials to support sensemaking and interpretation of findings.

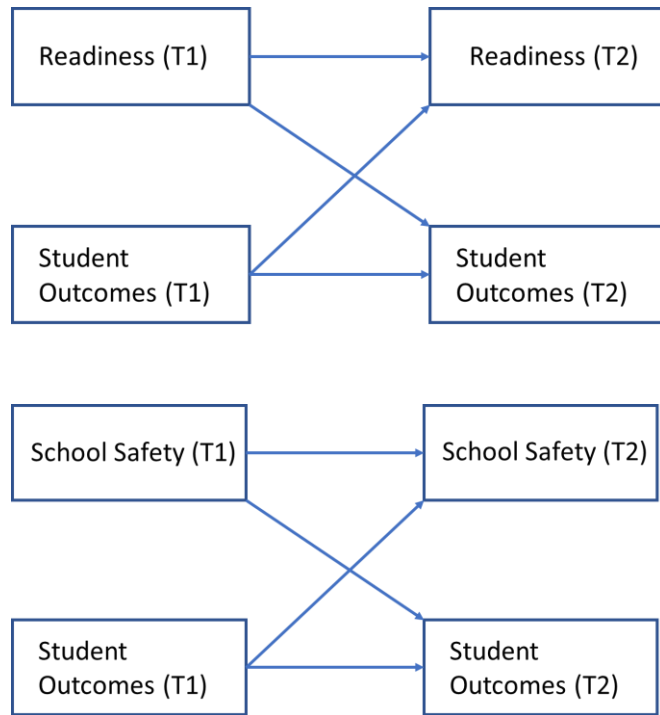
Exhibit 7. Analytical Approach for RQ 3

Model	Predictor Variables	Outcome Variables
1	Readiness components	Student Outcomes ($Y_1 - Y_6$)
2	Readiness components School and community risk factors ($X_4 - X_5; X_7 - X_{11}$)	Student Outcomes ($Y_1 - Y_6$)

RQ 4: How do the associations between school readiness, individual readiness, community safety, school safety, and student outcomes vary over time?

To address **RQ 4** we will attempt to use cross-lagged structural equation modeling to test the fit of models of the associations between readiness, school safety, and student outcomes, and how these associations vary by students and community risk and need. Findings from **RQs 1-3** will inform the development of the models. Autoregressive, cross-lagged panel models are a type of path modeling that account for the stability of each measure across time and allow for the simultaneous estimation of direct and indirect associations between factors. By comparing the fit of multiple competing models, we can test multiple theories about the progression over time of readiness, school safety, and student outcomes. In addition, we will compare model fit to examine whether the hypothesized paths differ by levels of community concentrated disadvantage and crime (Exhibit 8)

Exhibit 8. Analytical Approach to RQ 4



EXPECTED APPLICABILITY OF THE RESEARCH

The results from ReSOLV could have relevance for both community and school-based violence prevention efforts. We expect that results will help schools understand how risk and need factors in the community influence student engagement and outcomes in school, while helping community leaders understand how violence prevention efforts in the community may benefit educational outcomes for youth, which in turn can prevent future violence. Study results will also provide insights on building the readiness for individuals, organizations, and the broader community to work together to address violence and safety issues using inclusive, equitable, and comprehensive strategies that are rooted in evidence of effectiveness.

Participants and Collaborating Organizations

STUDY SAMPLE

Within each study site there are contextually driven research sub questions that ReSOLV is exploring, as well as questions that specifically relate to the role of rare and dramatic exogenous factors that

sites experienced during the study period. Study participants include students, parents, staff, teachers, school and community policymakers, police, mental and behavioral health providers, youth programs, community organizing agencies, and business owners.

SITE I: Urban: Hanford, CA, Hanford Joint Union High School District (HJUHS) (Grades 9-12): At ~60,000 people, Hanford is in the group of small cities that are most typical for an urban school district (52% of all urban districts) in the United States according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). Hanford is the county seat of Kings County, and is situated in the south-central San Joaquin Valley, about 80 miles due north of Bakersfield.

SITE II: Large County: Los Angeles, CA, South Local District Region of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) (Grades 6-12): This county includes urban, suburban, and rural fringe geographies. The southern region of LAUSD includes a range of city and county neighborhoods that span the continuum of risk and need, from low-risk low-need to high-risk high-need. Englewood anchors the northern edge of the region.

SITE III: Rural (Remote): Mendota, CA, Mendota Unified School District (MUSD) (Grades 6-12): Mendota is a small rural city of ~12,000 people occupying 3.4 square miles of space, about 35 miles west of Fresno, in the heart of California's agriculture-rich Central Valley. Rural remote is one of three types of rural communities, defined by the US Census Bureau as places that are more than 25 miles from an urban area.

COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

The AIR P.I. and the project's Data Collection Lead developed close relationships with key points of contact in each study site to execute data collection, communication, and reporting activities through a study collaboration and learning plan in each site. A representative from each site was asked to join the ReSOLV COA, a national advisory group with research, practice, and policy expertise in topics relevant to the research.

Changes in Approach from Original Design

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted all school and community-level data collection activities beginning in March 2020, disrupting Wave II data collection for each of the three districts over two school years (SY 2019-20, 2020-21). The study design began with an 18-month planning period (required by the RFP), followed by three annual primary data collection waves aligned with the school year, and a final six-month period devoted to reporting and dissemination. There are three California

school districts enrolled in the study, each beginning their Wave 1 data collection process at different times due to when they enrolled in the study. COVID-19 schedule disruptions are shown in Exhibit 9.

Exhibit 9. Primary Data Collection Waves – Planned and Actual

District	Wave 1 Planned (Actual)	Wave 2 Planned (Actual)	Wave 3 Planned (Actual)
Hanford	Oct. 2019 (Oct. 2019)	Oct. 2020 (Apr. 2021)	Oct. 2021 (Oct. 2022)
Los Angeles	Nov. 2019 (Dec. 2019)	Nov. 2020 (Feb. 2021)	Nov. 2021 (Dec. 2022)
Mendota	Mar. 2019 (Mar. 2019)	Mar. 2020 (May 2021)	Mar. 2021 (Mar. 2022)

Also, in early 2020, the California Department of Justice (CADOJ) notified AIR that the state had adopted the most restrictive level of access, as set forth by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and that AIR would not be able to receive any crime data from the state unless AIR invested in new security infrastructure that met the new requirements. AIR made the required changes (at no expense to the project or NIJ), but this process took almost a year to complete, delaying receipt of CADOJ data for use in the study. Due to the pandemic and enhanced CADOJ requirements, AIR requested and received a two-year no-cost extension from NIJ.

Outcomes

ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Survey data were collected across a nine-year time-period from each of the three study sites as shown in Exhibit 10. Surveys were a mix of preexisting instruments and those developed by the researchers.

Exhibit 10. Survey Data Collected for ReSOLV in Hanford (H), Los Angeles (L) and Mendota (M)

Year	Parent Sample			Student Sample			Staff and Teachers		
	H	LA	M	H	LA	M	H	LA	M
2014-15	0	10,044	0	0	27,039	521	0	1,897	0

Year	Parent Sample			Student Sample			Staff and Teachers		
Study Sites	H	LA	M	H	LA	M	H	LA	M
2015-16	138	14,192	0	0	24,535	351	0	2,346	26
2016-17	123	15,051	0	0	28,041	512	0	2,638	41
2017-18	449	11,570	0	1624	26,627	582	67	2,681	65
2018-19	526	11,150	0	2474	25,378	562	0	2,841	92
2019-20	275	11,927	2	2177	26,684	0	154	2,709	36
2020-21	113	10,515	11	1754	19,986	53	64	3,074	69
2021-22	249	8,165	31	1796	23,037	385	190	2,899	44

Five community convenings were held in 2019 to share data from the first wave of survey data collection, and feedback from the sessions were used to improve survey questions for subsequent survey waves. The Covid-19 pandemic interfered with the ability to hold additional community convenings that had been planned for the study. Focus groups and interviews were conducted in each of the study sites, and included parents, staff, students, and community members. The research team conducted physical observation within the districts and community and performed geographic mapping at the street address level of analysis in each study site using livestream video recording devices mounted on research vehicles. Mapping information was supplemented and confirmed by secondary data sources to identify locations of interest (e.g., liquor license, nonprofit registrations). Multiple site visits were made to sites to engage study partners and forge strong, trusted relationships, and when the pandemic interrupted in-person meetings, the team met by Zoom or phone to maintain contact. The investment in these relationships was especially valuable when trying to retain sites in the study during and after the pandemic when schools and communities were in crisis, and at reduced capacity to partner on a research study. The project also developed English and Spanish video, print, and social media materials to communicate with stakeholders throughout the state of California about the study. As part of these communication activities, we also participated in several published interviews with the California Association of School Boards. Lastly, the research team Co-PIs collaborated with other scholars to co-edit a special issue of the Journal of School Violence on the topic of Racial/Ethnic Equity and School Safety. In this issue, to be published in 2023, ReSOLV presents a proposed model for creating a process for equitable action to prevent school and community violence, based on study results.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND FINDINGS

HANFORD STUDY SITE

School District Context

Given that our survey data and analytical models span multiple years for this site, from the 2015-16 to 2021-22 school years, we elect to show demographic data as an average across years for which demographic data were available for each respondent group. On average, just over 1,900 students, 260 parents, and 95 staff and teachers responded to annual surveys over the study period. Many staff and teachers (31%) reported having 20+ years' experience working in schools, while only 17% said their experience level was no more than 3 years. Most staff and teachers (51%) have lived in Hanford for six or more years, while a good number (40%) live outside of Hanford.

When surveys were made available in English and Spanish, about 25% of parents elected to respond in Spanish; otherwise, 100% of students, staff, and teachers responded to English surveys. Students were fairly evenly represented across grade levels, with the majority of respondents coming from 11th and 12th graders (60%). Females were more represented than males across all survey respondents, with 81% of parents reporting as females, 67% of staff and teachers, and 56% of students, respectively. Just less than half of students (48%) reported at least one parent was born outside the United States, while only 14% of parents reported being born outside the United States. And while 14% of students reported their parent(s) did not graduate high school and 28% of students said their parent(s) was a college graduate, most parents said they had a college degree (63%). As can be seen in Exhibit 11, students, parents, teachers, and staff also report largely dissimilar racial ethnic characteristics in reference to each other.

Exhibit 11: Average Race and Ethnicity Characteristics of Survey Respondents in Hanford

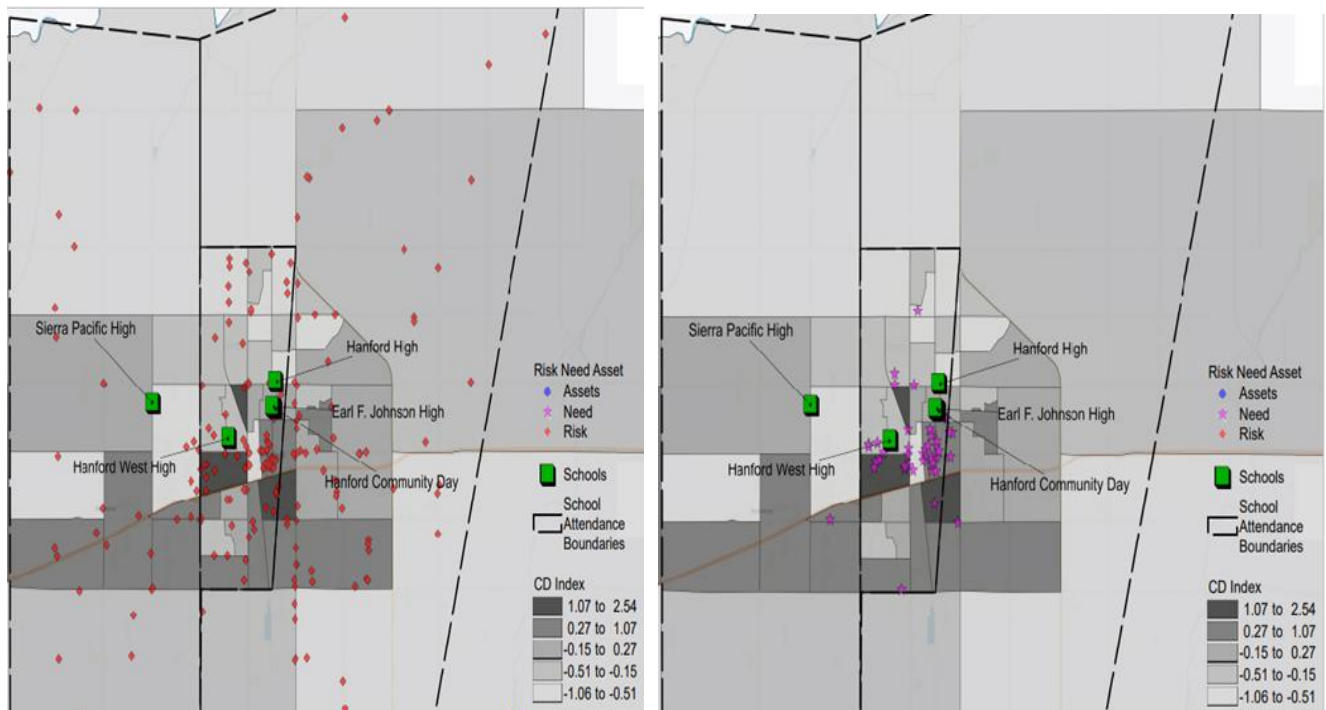
	Latinx	African American	Asian American	American Indian	White	Multi-Racial
Student	56%	5%	4%	2%	23%	10%
Parent	44%	7%	1%	1%	76%	15%
Staff and Teachers	20%	3%	-	-	82%	15%

Community Context

There are six high schools in the city of Hanford, all contained within HJUHS, our study site partner. Three are comprehensive high schools with defined attendance boundaries: Hanford High, Hanford West, and Sierra Pacific; Hanford Online is virtual, and there are two continuation schools: Community Day School and Earl F. Johnson, which are, respectively, available for youth transitioning from the

justice system and making up educational credits after their education was interrupted by parenthood, health issues, or family matters. We used a variety of data to examine the continuum of risk, need, and assets surrounding these schools and within the attendance areas where students and families live. Risk factors were operationalized according to census-derived concentrated disadvantage (% below poverty level, % households on public assistance, % female-headed households, unemployment %, % individuals < 18, residential instability) as well as places and spaces identified in the research to be associated with greater risk of violence (e.g., places where alcohol is sold or consumed, social gathering places). Need factors were operationalized according to places that serve vulnerable individuals or families (e.g., food pantries, shelters) or spaces that are structurally vulnerable (e.g., abandoned buildings, homeless encampments). When examining areas of risk and need within the attendance boundaries of the three comprehensive high schools, we find concentrations of both high risk and high need within the attendance boundary for Hanford West High School, whereas risk is widely dispersed and need is minimal within the attendance areas for Hanford High and Sierra Pacific High (Exhibit 12). Assets are evenly distributed across the three attendance areas, so are not shown in the interest of brevity.

Exhibit 12. Spatial Risk (left) and Need (right) in HJUHS Attendance Areas



School and Community Perspectives on Safety and Violence

Qualitative data collected through HJUHS interviews prompted commentary from across stakeholders on their perceptions of each high school that coincide with the risk and need profiles of

each school. There was a common topic across interviews that perceptions of a school from within the school community (i.e., insiders) did not completely align with perceptions of the school from those outside of the school community (i.e., outsiders). For example, Hanford West was cited by insiders and outsiders as the “ghetto school” because of fights in the school, gang affiliation/activity and the overall visual of the school being rundown in comparison to the new Sierra Pacific High School. One administrator commented, “So Hanford West has always been seen as the ghetto school...that's the public perception in the city...that we have all these fights all the time.” However, Hanford West insiders also conveyed seeing their school as tolerant of all genders, races, and ethnicities and students are cared for. There is a cohesion among staff that wraps around and supports student needs and school events and clubs are largely developed from the bottom-up where student need is observed (e.g., “Lunch on the Lawn” to celebrate different groups, mental health awareness).

Similar to Hanford West, commentary provided by students and administrators from Earl F. Johnson, the continuation high school, conveyed a collective agreement that the outside community sees their school as violent and where all the ‘problem kids’ go. In reality, most students are there because they are behind in credits due to their circumstances (e.g., foster care, homelessness). There was evident consensus in the interviews that the school is seen by insiders as a safe space for students with no fighting even though it gets a bad rap from outsiders. An administrator commented on combating this bad reputation, “We work really hard and the kids understand like, hey, we don't, we don't do that [fighting] here and unfortunately my numbers got all messed up and I had to tell this kid, God dang it, you're messing up my rates 'cause We hadn't had a fight in four years.”

Another related common topic across interviews was visual signs of socioeconomic standing (i.e., assets and resources) for each high school and the stark contrast between the schools. Schools are not only known for their reputations but also their physical presence, with both aspects seemingly working together to further solidify community perceptions. Sierra Pacific is the beautiful new school (established 2009), a state-of-the-art facility that continues to garner new resources (e.g., recent addition of pickle ball courts). A Sierra Pacific administrator commented on this phenomenon, “...I don't wanna say the elite school. But that's kind of in people's eyes what they think. ‘Oh, little Sierra Pacific over there. They've got all the new facilities’ ... we just had a \$10 million pool built in the back. It's this huge Olympic size pool... you hear that and you're like, wow. So...the community's like, ‘well, how come they get it?’ You know? Everything is looked at as being different as well as that clientele that we serve.” In the middle of this spectrum is Hanford High – the original school (established 1980) that is older but well maintained and carries tradition and strong faculty tenure that speaks to its stability as a school. On the low end of the spectrum is Hanford West (established 1998), which is seen as rundown and lacking resources for its students. A Hanford West administrator stated, “I think it [negative Hanford West perceptions] comes from the way it looked. I think you see Sierra Pacific getting a brand-new pool. You see Hanford High getting this, and then there wasn't really anything coming in [for Hanford West]. And the parking lot was a mess. And so, they were redoing the parking

lot. So, I think a lot of things have started to happen that have made it look a lot nicer, [the] physical look, a little less ghetto, as the kids call it. But I also think the kids feel like they have to live up to this reputation.” The ‘disconnect’ we found between internal and external perceptions of schools and school safety is a prime example of why it is so important for schools and community to be ready to work together on issues of safety, rather than operate from siloed perspectives. We will examine these relationships more thoroughly from a quantitative perspective, in our final analyses.

We also examined social media activity through Facebook, between HJUHSD leadership and the community once the pandemic forced schools to close down. The interaction between school leaders and the public in this open forum provides an interesting window into the often hidden and dynamic ways that school and community readiness can interact when working to solve a shared problem impacting student safety. In our final analyses we will present findings from review of this social media activity in Hanford.

Quantitative Preliminary Results

RQ1. How does the ecology of risk and protective factors within communities and schools influence the educational and safety outcomes of students?

Concentrated disadvantage was found to be associated with several outcomes in the direction predicted. Prior to the Covid period, we found that higher levels of concentrated disadvantage were associated with higher chronic absentee rates ($r = 0.32$), lower graduation rates ($r = -0.89$), and lower percentages of students scoring at or above the median on standardized test results for English Language Arts ($r = -0.27$) and Math ($r = -0.23$). In the post-Covid period, we found similar results. Higher levels of concentrated disadvantage were associated with higher chronic absentee rates ($r = 0.23$), higher rates of suspension ($r = 0.28$) and expulsion ($r = 0.449$), lower graduation rates ($r = -0.76$), and lower percentages of students scoring at or above the median on standardized test results for English Language Arts ($r = -0.86$).

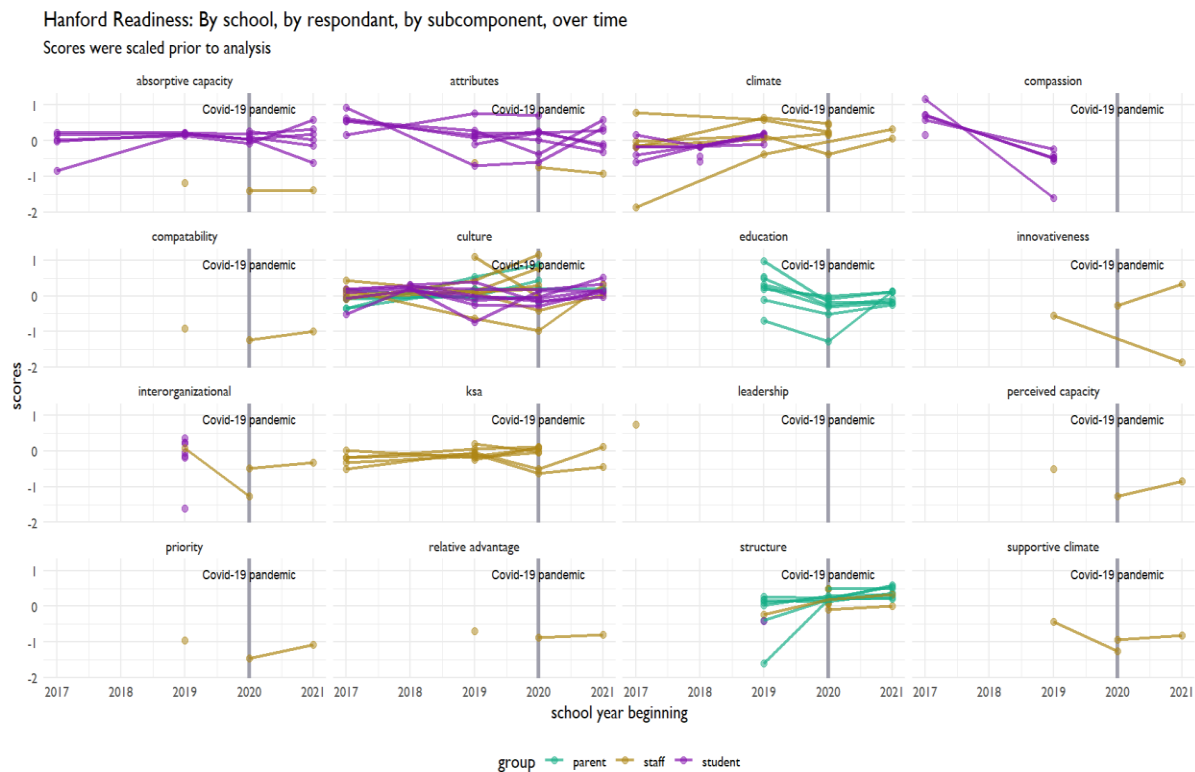
We have survey data addressing school climate from four high schools in Hanford. In the years prior to the pandemic, if we compare the high school with the most positive elements of school climate as reported by parents to the high school with the least positive elements of school climate, we find the rate of suspensions is significantly lower ($p = .001$) and the rate of chronic absenteeism is also lower ($p = .063$) for the high school with better school climate.

Our final analyses will further explore these relationships and embed the results at the school level within the maps shown in Exhibit 12, so there is a visual means to understand root causes in relation to school and community spaces.

RQ2. What are the core components of school and individual readiness to mitigate risk factors for school and community violence?

Individual and school readiness data was collected via survey for students, parents, staff, and teachers across multiple years in the study period, as shown in Exhibit 7. To assess readiness for RQ2, we relied on survey questions that were either developed by our team, as documented in Scott et al., 2015 and Walker et al., 2020, or conceptually coded, where preexisting surveys were available. We used constructs indicated of readiness (Scaccia et al., 2015). There are many ways to visualize this data: by school, by respondent, by subcomponent, and so on. Exhibit 13 shows subcomponent scores over time, grouped by school. In this figure, we can see that many of the subcomponents remained generally constant over time.

Exhibit 13. Readiness Subcomponents in Hanford Study Site



Graph produced on September 26, 2023

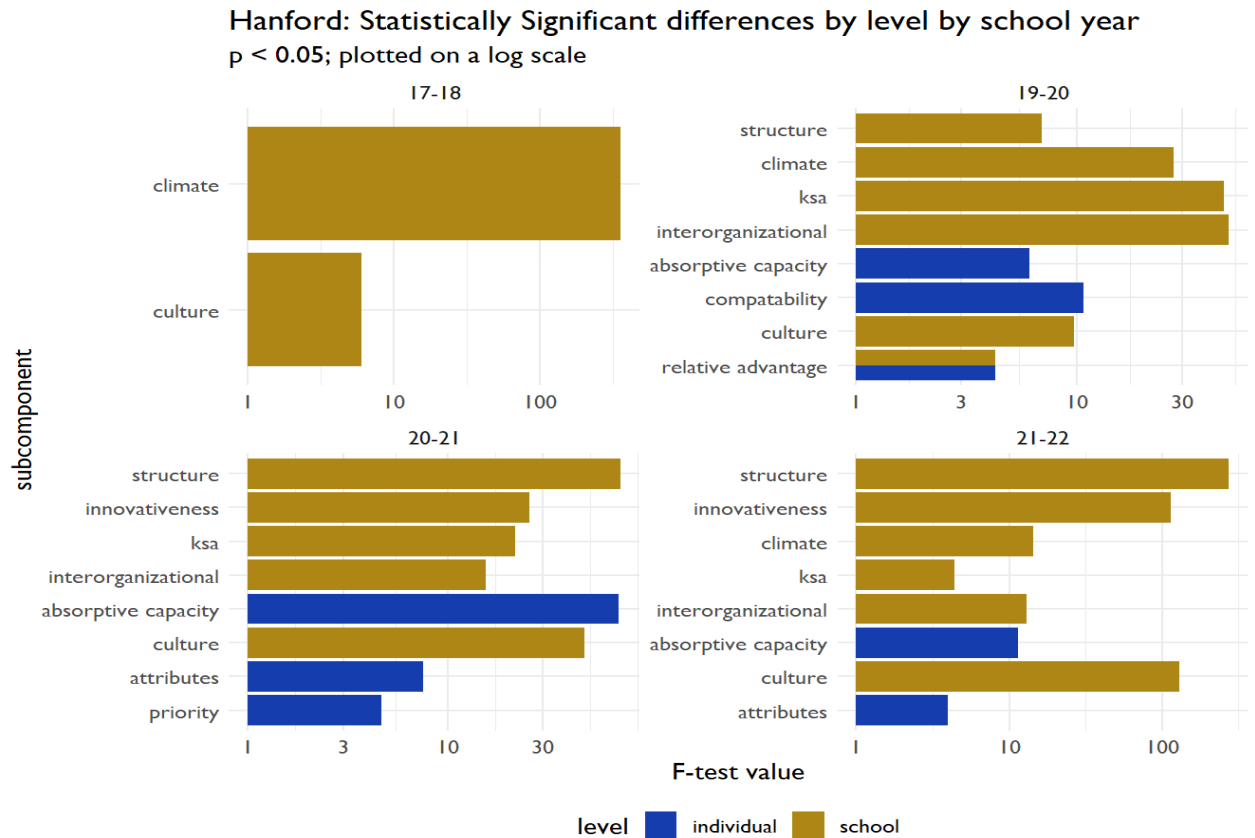
To test this assumption, we ran a linear model by which school and group (parent, staff, and student) characterized an interaction since they were responding about the same setting. The multiple R-squared (0.3152) and adjusted R-squared (0.2599) values indicate the goodness of fit of the model. These values suggest that the independent variables explain about 31.52% of the variance in the dependent variable. For space limitations, we only present statistically significant results in Exhibit 14.

Exhibit 14. Analysis of Variance for Readiness Subcomponents in Hanford Study Site

Term	B-weight	Std. error	T-statistic	p. value
school	-0.00434	0.001658	-2.62002	0.00931
compatibility	-0.82832	0.275383	-3.00789	0.002889
culture	0.212851	0.106117	2.005825	0.045911
leadership	1.156723	0.460967	2.509339	0.012704
perceived capacity	-0.64662	0.275383	-2.34807	0.019621
priority	-0.94134	0.275383	-3.41831	0.000731
relative advantage	-0.56643	0.275383	-2.05689	0.040695
structure	0.298173	0.140137	2.127726	0.034301
supportive climate	-0.58708	0.24589	-2.38758	0.017674

We also looked at where there were significant differences over the study period for each year. Exhibit 15 shows where there were significant differences between subcomponents over time. We can see there were the most persistent misalignments around school culture and school climate.

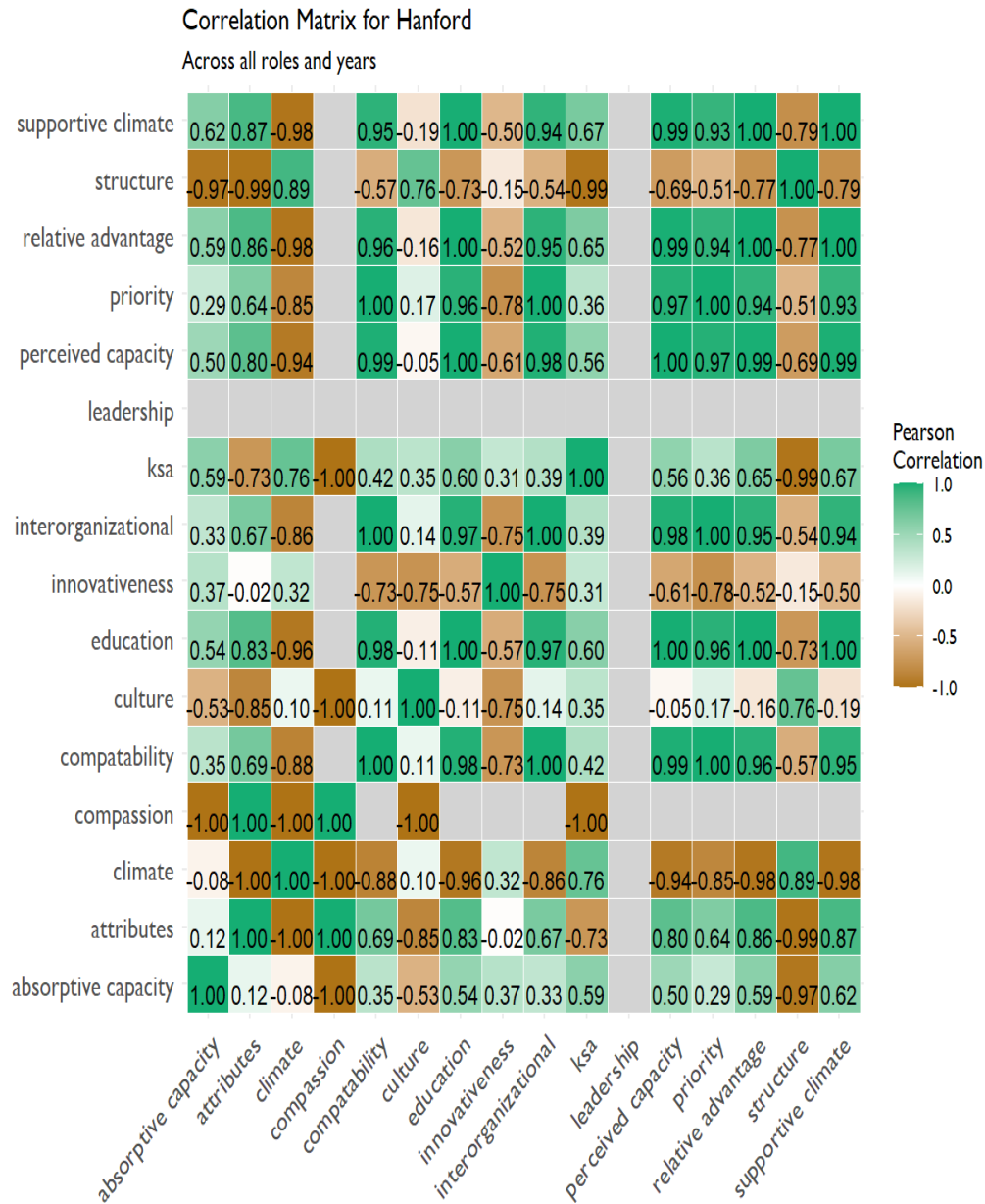
Exhibit 15. Analysis of Readiness Subcomponents Over Time in Hanford Study Site



Graph produced on September 26, 2023

Exhibit 16 shows the correlation matrix for Hanford. There are many very strong correlations between subcomponents, which suggests that there is likely some redundancy in the readiness model for this setting. We will further examine the readiness model in Hanford as analyses are finalized.

Exhibit 16. Correlation Matrix of Readiness Subcomponents in Hanford Study Site



Graph produced on September 26, 2023

RQ 3: Is school and individual readiness to mitigate risk factors for community and school violence associated with improved educational and safety outcomes?

To address RQ 3, we have the advantage in Hanford that all the schools are high schools. For the other two districts, preliminary analyses found that there were differences in readiness across the different types of schools—middle schools, small high schools, and large high schools—and this was a confounding influence in our analyses, given that youth outcomes often differed in systematic ways for the different types of schools. While there are several smaller high schools in Hanford, the survey data used to measure readiness are most complete for the larger high schools. As we finalize our analyses, we will unpack the readiness factors as they vary across schools and populations to understand the extent to which these variations are associated with improved educational and safety outcomes. We will also embed the results at the school level within the maps shown in Exhibit 12, so there is a visual means to understand readiness in relation to school and community spaces.

RQ 4: How do the associations between school readiness, individual readiness, community safety, school safety, and student outcomes vary over time?

From preliminary analyses, we note that we did not find statistically significant differences over time on any of the measures of community safety, school safety, or student outcomes in our analyses. We will confirm this result as final analyses conclude and provide visualizations for any time-dependent relationships of importance.

LOS ANGELES STUDY SITE

School District Context

Given that our survey data and analytical models span multiple years for this site, from the 2014-15 to 2021-22 school years, we elect to show demographic data as an average across years for which demographic data were available for each respondent group. On average, just over 25,000 students, 11,500 parents, and 2,600 staff and teachers responded to annual surveys over the study period. Most staff and teachers (51%) reported having 10+ years' experience working in schools, while only 15% said their experience level was a year or less.

When surveys were made available in English and Spanish, about 42% of parents elected to respond in Spanish; otherwise, students, staff, and teachers primarily responded to English surveys. Almost half of students (46%) were classified as non-native English speakers who receive instruction in English as a second language. Students were evenly represented across grade levels, with 14% of the sample, on average, coming from each grade from six to twelve respectively. Females were more represented

than males across all survey respondents, with 81% of parents reporting as females and 51 % of students, respectively. Almost all students (85%) were eligible for services reserved for families living below the poverty level, 1% of students were identified as living in foster care, 11% designated with special education status and 22% were categorized as gifted. As can be seen in Exhibit 17, students and parents report largely similar racial ethnic characteristics in reference to each other.

Exhibit 17: Average Race and Ethnicity Characteristics of Survey Respondents in Hanford

	Latinx	African American	Asian American	American Indian	White	Multi-Racial
Student	73%	13%	7%	<1%	4%	2%
Parent	63%	13%	12%	<1%	-	4%

Community Context

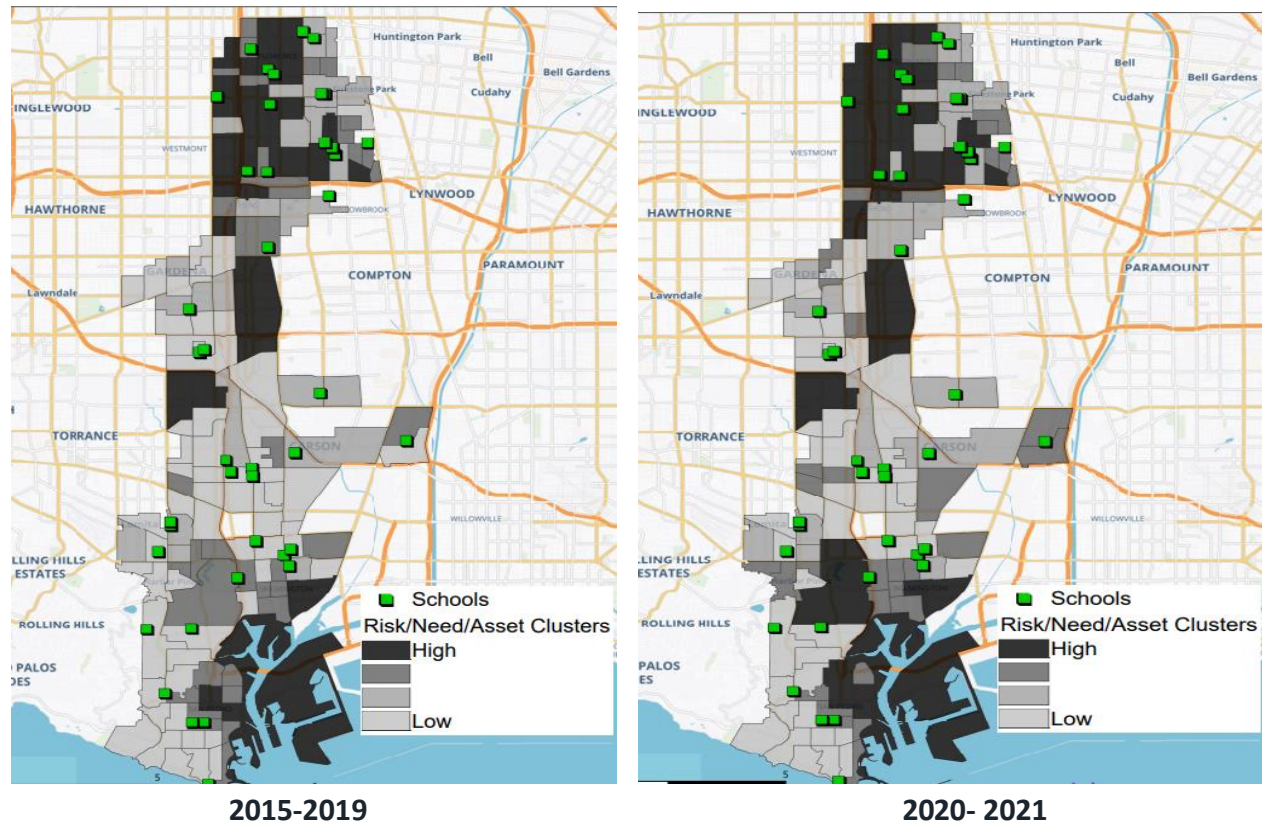
There are forty-one schools in our sample serving students in grades 6-12 in the southern region local district of LAUSD.¹ There are no specific attendance boundaries for these schools, as LAUSD has an open enrollment attendance policy that allows families to attend different schools within a large geographic area near the family’s home address. We used a variety of data to examine the continuum of risk, need, and assets within a 1-mile radius surrounding these schools, which would contain areas students, parents, staff, and teachers utilize on their way to and from the school campus. Risk factors were operationalized according to rates of violent crime per 1,000 persons, census-derived concentrated disadvantage (% below poverty level, % households on public assistance, % female-headed households, unemployment %, % individuals < 18, residential instability) as well as places and spaces identified in the research to be associated with greater risk of violence (e.g., places where alcohol is sold or consumed, social gathering places). Need factors were operationalized according to places that serve vulnerable individuals or families (e.g., food pantries, shelters) or spaces that are structurally vulnerable (e.g., abandoned buildings, homeless encampments). Assets were operationalized as features of the environment that improve health and wellness according to social determinants of health research (e.g., healthcare facilities, grocery stores, financial institutions). We used a clustering technique to examine the combination of risk, needs, and assets in areas surrounding each school (Gershoff, Pedersen, & Aber, 2009).

We found that schools and neighborhoods in the southern region local district exist within highly variable clusters of risk, need, and assets that can transition from low risk to high risk, low need to high need, or low asset to high asset in very close proximity to each other (Exhibit 18). Students, teachers, staff, parents, and community members live, work, and move through and around these

¹ The Southern Region Local District was eliminated as a separate district in SY 2023-24 per changes mandated by the Los Angeles City Council, but schools within the district remain within LAUSD and the Southern region more broadly.

risk, need, and asset clusters dynamically and as a result may experience very different school and community safety realities even though they may live in the same neighborhood or attend the same school. Further, when examining these clusters pre- and post-pandemic, we find that some schools and surrounding areas went from moderate need and risk to high need and risk, echoing findings from other studies examining impacts from the Covid-19 crisis on community well-being (Valinejad, Guo, Cho, & Chen, 2022).

Exhibit 18. Risk, Need, and Assets Around LAUSD Southern Region Local District 6-12 Schools



School and Community Perspectives on Safety and Violence

There are several items from the qualitative data collection that reflect the scope and context of the highly variable clusters of risk, need, and assets within varying combinations of high to low severity in the southern region local district in Los Angeles. These qualitative pieces also show how the city and communities have responded to the complex nature and impact of violence in these neighborhoods and schools.

The Los Angeles County Office of Violence Prevention, established in 2019, developed a strategic plan, [A Blueprint for Peace and Healing](#), to respond to violence “...to serve as a blueprint to guide the programmatic and policy efforts of the Office and creates a framework that builds on the

extraordinary work already taking place at count and community levels to advance a trauma informed, racially just care first approach” (Los Angeles County Office of Violence Prevention, 2020). The guiding principles are organized by the topics of: safe and healthy children, youth and families; safe and thriving neighborhoods; a culture of peace; healing informed and equitable systems and policies; and culturally relevant shared data and evaluation support. The Office and strategic plan are rooted in a public health approach suggesting that, “violence can be understood much as we understand a preventable disease” and also implies that there are multiple factors that feed into community and school violence.

The Office also developed seven regional violence prevention coalitions in 2021. A staff member of the Office explained during an interview that the coalitions were created so that, “we can apply context and community-specific solutions to context and community-specific problems and leverage local leaders to build community buy-in and implement initiatives.” The interviewee emphasized how unique each area is in terms of problems and assets and provided the example of an LA neighborhood that is run by the Mexican Mafia. On the outside it looks like a very well-maintained neighborhood with a thriving business corridor and no evidence of police. In reality, the Mexican Mafia run their drug money through all of their car repair businesses. There is also an edict to the local gangs (e.g., Bloods and Crips) to “be cool” to not draw any attention to the area meaning that violence is not public. This is a stark contrast to other neighborhoods where students are getting jumped on the way to and from school, which is one of the many issues that United Parents and Students (UPAS) contends with.

United Parents and Students (UPAS), a ReSOLV partner, is a non-profit organization that seeks to “empower low-income communities to become powerful self-advocates for sustainable neighborhood revitalization” (United Parents and Students, 2023). The organization’s aims and achievements reflect the ever-changing and complex nature of neighborhood violence and how structural violence plays into these issues. By leveraging and empowering community members through civic engagement, solutions to these problems come from the ground up which serves to create a solution that actually works and further empowers the community by adding to their strength as an organized group to continue improving neighborhoods and changing public policy. A UPAS leader interviewed for this study relayed the following achievements, “Our work this year alone resulted in the allocation of \$20 million of direct COVID relief (i.e., grocery vouchers) by LA County, expansion of local violence prevention efforts, policies to combat food deserts, a county ban on flavored tobacco products, and numerous pedestrian safety measures implemented at more than a half dozen local public schools.”

Lastly, the Black Student Achievement Plan focuses on making school instruction and materials culturally responsive to Black students, closing gaps in literacy and math skills, and reducing racial disparities in school discipline across 900 schools. This was funded in June 2020 through the Los Angeles Unified School District board voting to cut \$25 million from the \$70 million school police

budget. This was spurred on by the recent George Floyd protests and historical trauma of school and police violence in South LA schools. A part of the plan includes a ban on officers using pepper spray on students (Walker, 2021).

We learned through our work in Los Angeles of the highly neighborhood-dependent nature of the risk and protective context impacting schools and community. One street may be ruled by a particular gang or the Mexican Mafia, where specific rules apply for staying safe, while a few streets over a different group may be in power, and these different groups are often at odds with each other as students and community members move through these overlapping boundaries in the innocent commerce of their lives. We also found that some areas in our sample contain assets on the outside (e.g., parks, thriving business), but are really assets controlled by organized crime or local gangs, so the community is not benefiting from these assets and could be in harm's way when using these assets. Still other neighborhoods are virtual asset deserts, where there are no resources within walking distance or a short ride, to find banking services, grocery stores, green space, churches, youth organizations or health-related services such as pharmacies or medical clinics.

In our final technical report, we will present several case studies from Los Angeles that demonstrate the unique nature of these neighborhood-dependent root causes of violence and protective readiness factors that can moderate risk for violence.

Quantitative Preliminary Results

RQ1. How does the ecology of risk and protective factors within communities and schools influence the educational and safety outcomes of students?

In Exhibit 19, preliminary analyses examined the relationship between community risk factors and youth outcomes. In the years before the pandemic, we find that in the schools where the concentrated disadvantage in the community is higher, we find lower levels of achievement in Math ($r = -0.15$) and higher rates of suspension ($r = 0.22$). As the violent crime rates increased for the community where the school is located, we observed higher rates of chronic absenteeism ($r = 0.29$) and suspension ($r = 0.33$), and lower graduation rates ($r = -0.23$) and achievement in language arts ($r = -0.25$) and math ($r = -0.25$). We found similar patterns among the results for the period since Covid, as shown in the bottom section in Exhibit 19.

Exhibit 19. Correlations between Community Risk and Youth Outcomes

Period	Variables	Graduation Rate	Chronic Absentee Rate	Standardized Test Results – English Language Arts	Standardized Test Results – Math	Expulsion Rate	Suspension Rate
Pre-Covid	Concentrated Disadvantage	.229*	0.019	-0.052	-.149*	-0.07	.217**
	Violent Crime Rates	-.225*	.285**	-.251**	-.248**	-0.075	.329**
Post-Covid	Concentrated Disadvantage	0.269	0.142	-0.033	-0.020	-0.125	0.147
	Violent Crime Rates	-0.074	.358**	-.237*	-0.181	-0.076	.244*

Within the group of schools in our sample, we have middle schools and also high schools of various student body sizes. One of the patterns that we observed was that across the three groups of respondents (i.e., students, parents, staff) who reported on school climate, the lowest ratings on school climate were found among middle schools, and the highest ratings on school climate were reported for the high schools with smaller numbers of students. To unpack the relationship between school climate and student outcomes, we compared middle schools with other middle schools, large high schools with other large high schools, and small high schools with small high schools. Preliminary results are presented in Exhibit 20.

For this analysis, we identified two larger high schools (i.e., more than 300 students in graduating class) that were different from one another across the various dimensions of school climate. To demonstrate the differences on school climate, we show the mean reported values on each of the three aspects of school climate for each of the three respondent types. The two schools we are comparing are referred to by a code number (i.e., NCESS code), and for each comparison we indicate the result of the test of difference between the two means (i.e., p-value). In the bottom section of the table, we then examine how different the two schools are on each of the youth outcomes. In the comparison between the two larger high schools, we find that the school with the lower ratings on school climate has significantly lower graduation rates, significantly higher suspension rates, and a significantly lower percentage of students who meet or exceed the median scores on English Language Arts. We also conduct comparisons between two small (i.e., graduating class of fewer than 50 students) high schools that are significantly different on ratings of school climate. Here we find that the two schools only differ on outcomes in the case of chronic absenteeism, where the school with lower ratings on school climate has significantly worse rates of chronic absenteeism. Finally, we compare two middle schools that differ significantly on the ratings of school climate. Here we find that for the middle school with the lower ratings on school climate, there are also significantly higher

rates of chronic absenteeism, significantly higher rates of suspension, and significantly lower percentage of students who meet or exceed the median scores on Math.

Exhibit 20. Comparisons Between Similar Schools on School Climate and Youth Outcomes

	Large High School			Small High School			Middle School		
	NCESS Code	Mean	p-value	NCESS Code	Mean	p-value	NCESS Code	Mean	p-value
School Climate - Safety (Student Reported)	3209	-1.718	<.001	11307	-0.418	<.001	3168	-3.093	<.001
	9150	2.046		3397	10.082		2975	1.445	
School Climate - Relate (Student Reported)	3209	-1.518	<.001	11307	-2.095	<.001	3168	-1.206	<.001
	9150	0.054		3397	9.643		2975	0.911	
School Climate - Learn (Student Reported)	3209	-1.322	0.002	11307	-2.956	<.001	3168	-0.016	0.045
	9150	0.378		3397	8.105		2975	0.923	
School Climate - Safety (Parent Reported)	3209	-1.043	<.001	11307	2.858	0.082	3168	-0.697	0.002
	9150	0.491		3397	4.134		2975	0.366	
School Climate - Relate (Parent Reported)	3209	-2.195	0.011	11307	4.905	0.147	3168	-0.129	0.045
	9150	-0.004		3397	8.330		2975	1.203	
School Climate - Learn (Parent Reported)	3209	-0.697	<.001	11307	1.213	0.009	3168	-0.420	0.052
	9150	1.280		3397	4.754		2975	0.261	
School Climate - Safety (Staff Reported)	3209	-5.938	<.001	11307	2.390	0.006	3168	-7.305	0.002
	9150	5.630		3397	11.733		2975	3.116	
School Climate - Relate (Staff Reported)	3209	-6.860	<.001	11307	4.634	0.054	3168	-5.346	0.007
	9150	2.785		3397	13.586		2975	2.184	
School Climate - Learn (Staff Reported)	3209	-5.035	<.001	11307	3.491	0.096	3168	-4.394	0.014
	9150	3.050		3397	8.176		2975	1.708	
Concentrated Disadvantage	3209	-0.248	<.001	11307	-0.664	<.001	3168	1.229	0.116
	9150	1.327		3397	1.453		2975	1.028	
Violent Crime Rates	3209	19.500	<.001	11307	15.670	<.001	3168	114.83	<.001
	9150	47.830		3397	60.500		2975	40.000	
Chronic Absentee Rate	3209	0.161	0.109	11307	0.699	0.042	3168	0.284	0.002
	9150	0.098		3397	0.561		2975	0.143	

	Large High School			Small High School			Middle School		
	NCESS Code	Mean	p-value	NCESS Code	Mean	p-value	NCESS Code	Mean	p-value
Graduation Rate	3209	0.888	<.001	11307	0.410	0.355	3168		
	9150	0.972		3397	0.439		2975		
Expulsion Rate	3209	0.000	0.104	11307			3168	0.000	0.095
	9150	0.000		3397			2975	0.001	
Suspension Rate	3209	0.001	0.047	11307	0.012	0.120	3168	0.046	0.064
	9150	0.000		3397	0.000		2975	0.004	
Standardized Test Results – English Language Arts	3209	0.355	0.051	11307	0.053	0.372	3168	0.134	0.155
	9150	0.618		3397	0.041		2975	0.190	
Standardized Test Results – Math	3209	0.216	0.117	11307	0.009	0.443	3168	0.087	0.035
	9150	0.320		3397	0.007		2975	0.171	

Our final analyses will embed these results at the school level within the maps shown in Exhibit 18, so there is a visual means to understand root causes in relation to school and community spaces.

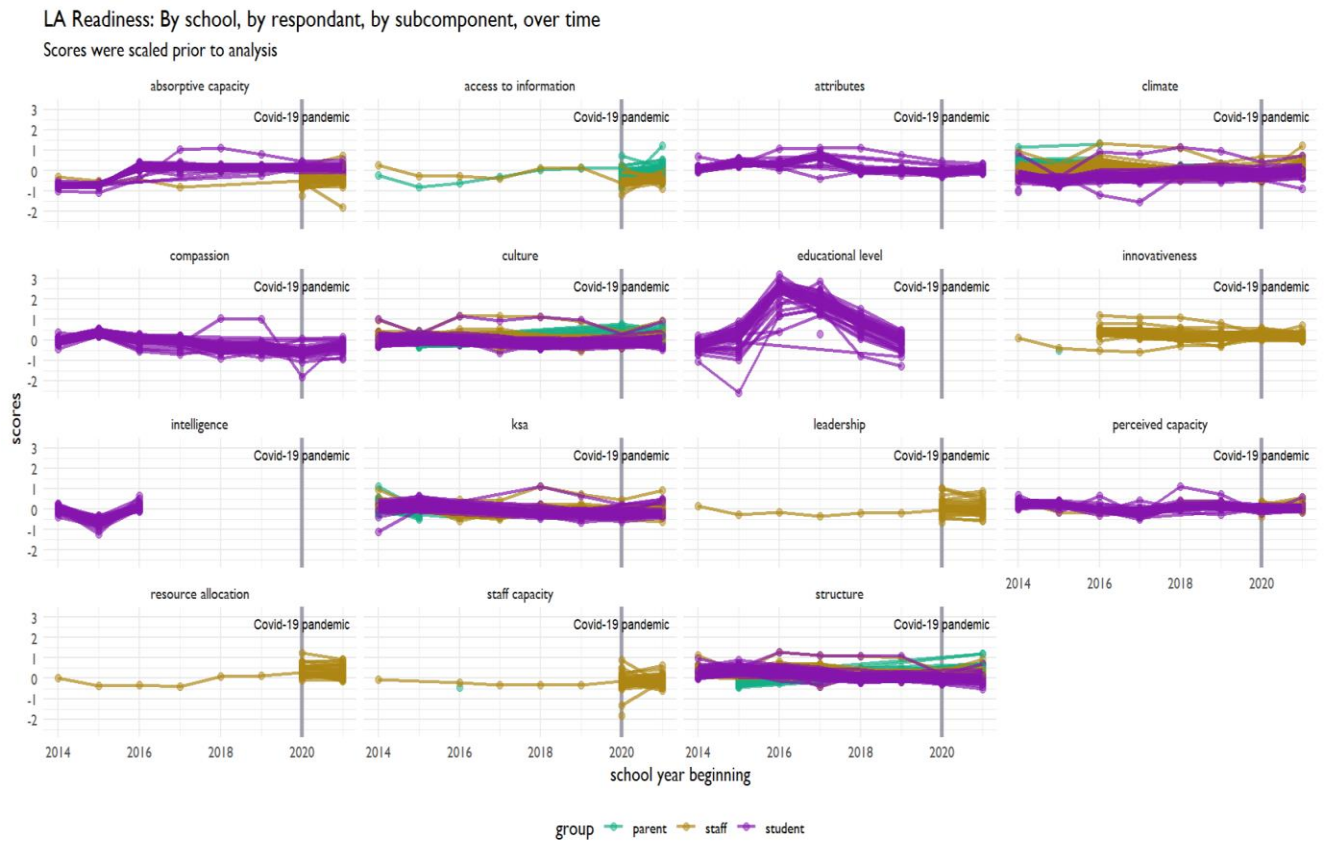
RQ2. What are the core components of school and individual readiness to mitigate risk factors for school and community violence?

Individual and school readiness data was collected via survey for students, parents, staff, and teachers across multiple years in the study period, as shown in Exhibit 7. To assess readiness for RQ2, we relied on survey questions that were either developed by our team, as documented in Scott et al., 2015 and Walker et al., 2020, or conceptually coded, where preexisting surveys were available. We used constructs indicating readiness (Scaccia et al., 2015). LA was substantially different from our other sites for several reasons. First, we did not directly collect readiness data from LA but rather used items in existing school district surveys. Second, the number of respondents and schools in LA far exceeded the other districts. Finally, there was no way to distinguish between teachers and non-instructional staff, so we used the combined category of “staff”

Preliminary results in Exhibit 21 shows the variation in readiness subcomponent by role, by school, by subcomponent over time. Several schools, including "Avalon," "Bridges School," "Carson Acad Ed & Emp," "Eagle Tree HS," "Riley HS," and "STEAM," have significant positive effects on the readiness scores. Staff has a negative effect on the score ($p < 0.05$), indicating that when the group is staff, the score tends to be lower. Conversely, the student group also has a negative effect ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that when the group is students, the score tends to be lower. Year had a significant

negative impact ($p < 0.001$), indicating that as the year increases, the score tends to decrease. Many subcomponents have significant effects on the score, including "attributes," "climate," "culture," "educational level," "innovativeness," "leadership," "perceived capacity," "resource allocation," and "structure." These subcomponents have positive effects, suggesting that when they are present, they tend to increase the score. Some interactions between specific schools and groups have significant effects on the score. These will be further investigated when we complete final analyses.

Exhibit 21. Readiness Subcomponents in Los Angeles Study Site



Graph produced on September 26, 2023

Overall, this linear regression model (Exhibit 22) explains about 33.91% of the variance in the "score" variable, as indicated by the multiple R-squared value. The model is statistically significant, as indicated by the F-statistic ($p < 0.001$), so we will continue to use this model as we finalize analyses.

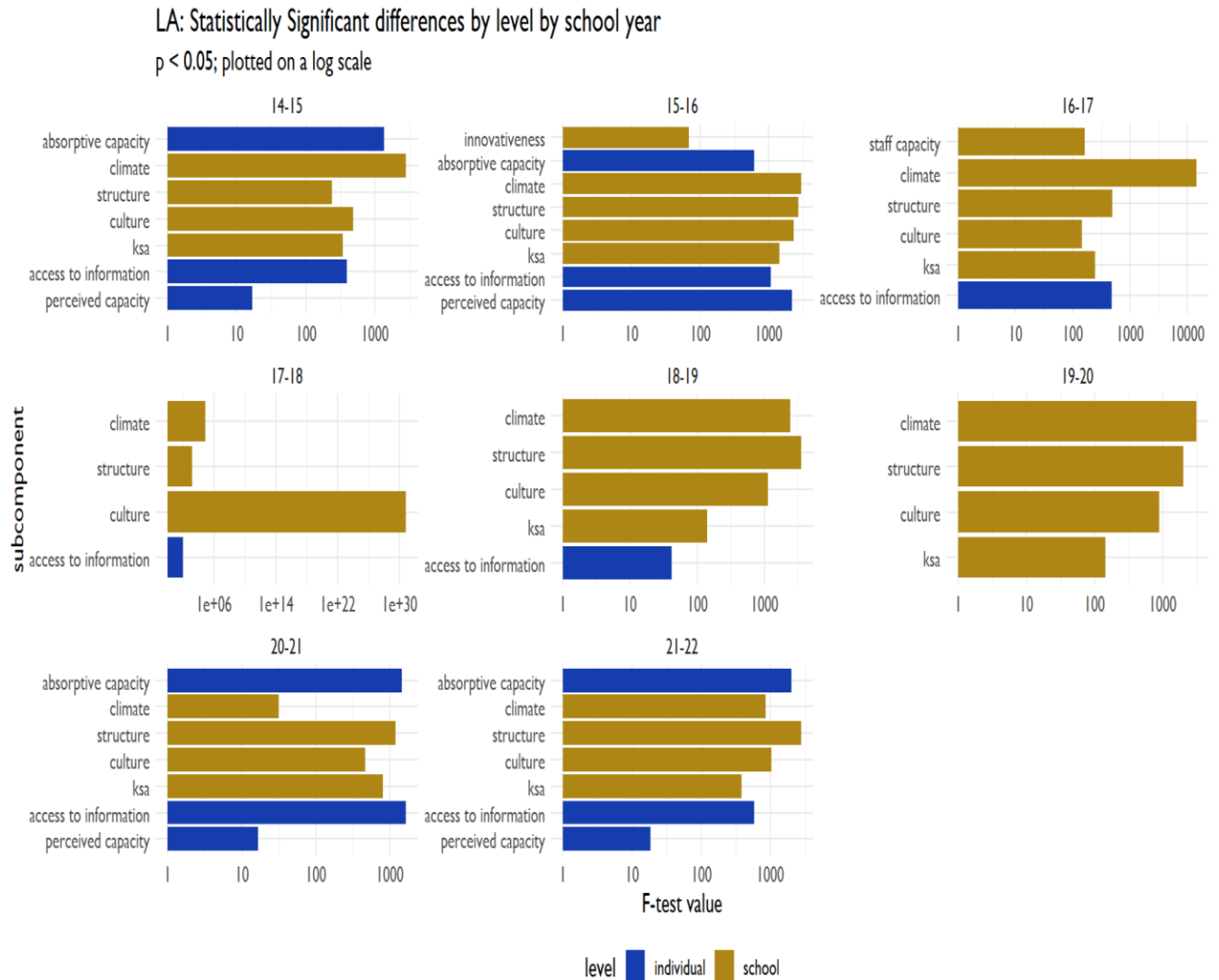
Exhibit 22. Analysis of Variance Among Readiness Subcomponents in Los Angeles Study Site

Term	B-weight	Std. error	T-statistic	p. value
Avalon	0.391846	0.129582	3.023914	0.00251
Bridges School	0.35079	0.129579	2.707159	0.006812
Eagle Tree HS	0.255807	0.125022	2.046092	0.040807
Jordan SH	0.310172	0.136396	2.274047	0.023011
Riley HS	0.646602	0.129579	4.990031	6.27E-07
student	-0.18956	0.0819	-2.31452	0.020685
year_begin	-0.01138	0.00242	-4.70232	2.65E-06
access to information	-0.19966	0.037585	-5.31233	1.14E-07
attributes	0.341416	0.029211	11.68781	4.23E-31
climate	0.063808	0.024967	2.555635	0.010633
culture	0.104898	0.024361	4.305961	1.70E-05
educational level	0.900481	0.031919	28.21122	4.69E-161
innovativeness	0.334431	0.033192	10.07564	1.28E-23
leadership	0.165509	0.047162	3.509361	0.000454
perceived capacity	0.220706	0.027205	8.112589	6.37E-16
resource allocation	0.434484	0.047162	9.212581	4.82E-20
structure	0.31303	0.024497	12.77815	9.74E-37
Diego Rivera Learning Comm & Tech:student	-0.6695	0.336717	-1.98833	0.046837
Johnston CDS:student	-0.3654	0.150329	-2.43068	0.01511

We also looked at where there were significant differences over the study period for each year. Exhibit 23 shows where there were significant differences between subcomponents over time. We see that there were a number of substantial differences between how different roles interpreted readiness, which suggests that there may be a lack of common understanding of the implementation setting for

school safety initiatives. We specifically call out how climate and culture were frequently misaligned (as indicated by the F test) between roles, suggesting there is disagreement around the milieu and attitudes about the schools as a whole. Final analyses will attempt to unpack this potential finding.

Exhibit 23. Analysis of Readiness Subcomponents Over Time in Los Angeles Study Site

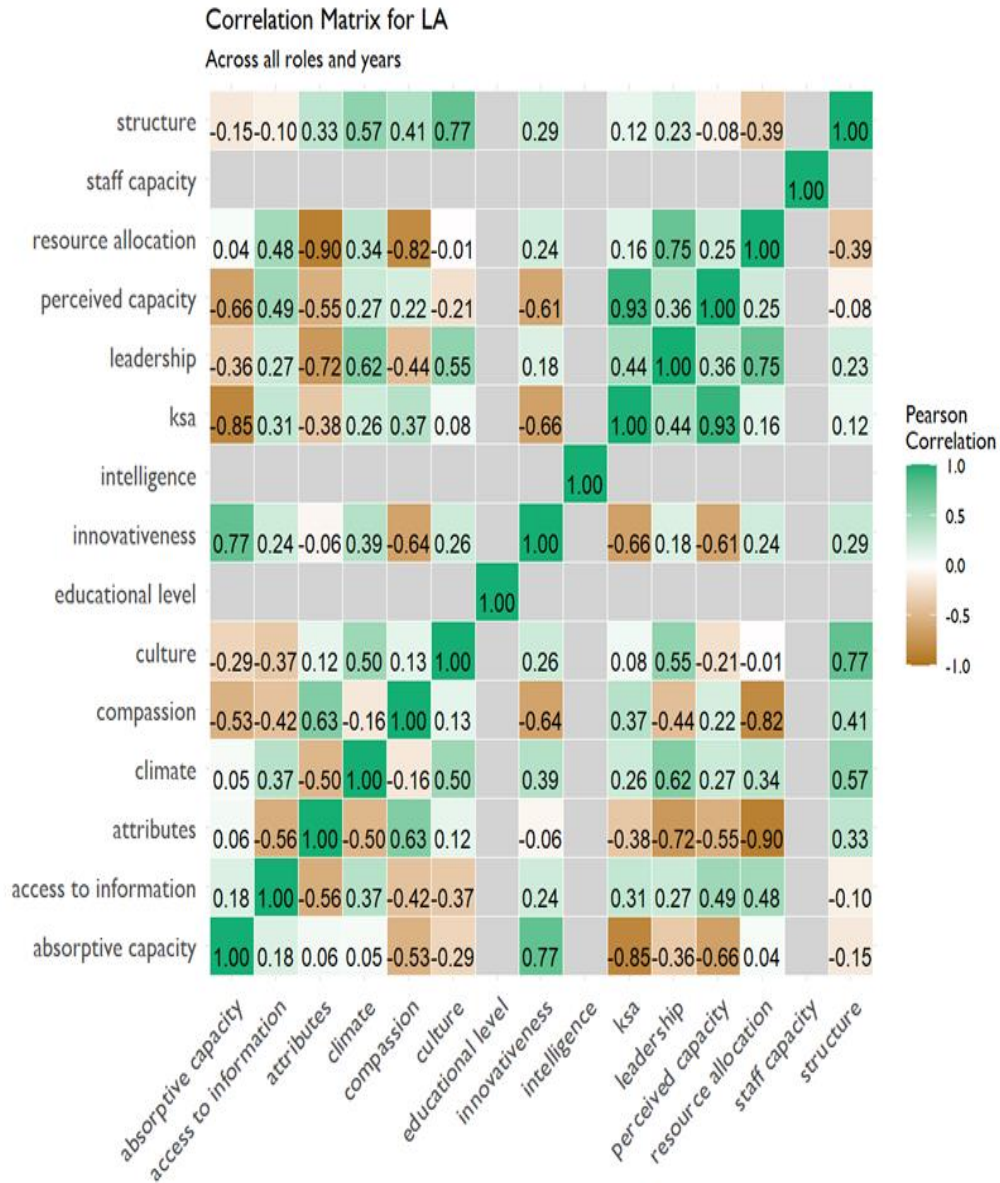


Graph produced on September 26, 2023

Exhibit 24 shows the preliminary correlation matrix for readiness components in the Los Angeles sample. The variabilities correlation values suggests that there were indeed different constructs being measured. The cluster of correlations around resources, perceived capacity, leadership, and KSAs suggests that may be a higher order construct around innovation leadership that in manifest in how

resources are shared, and skills are acquired. We will investigate this further to understand what it means in the context of the study as final analyses conclude.

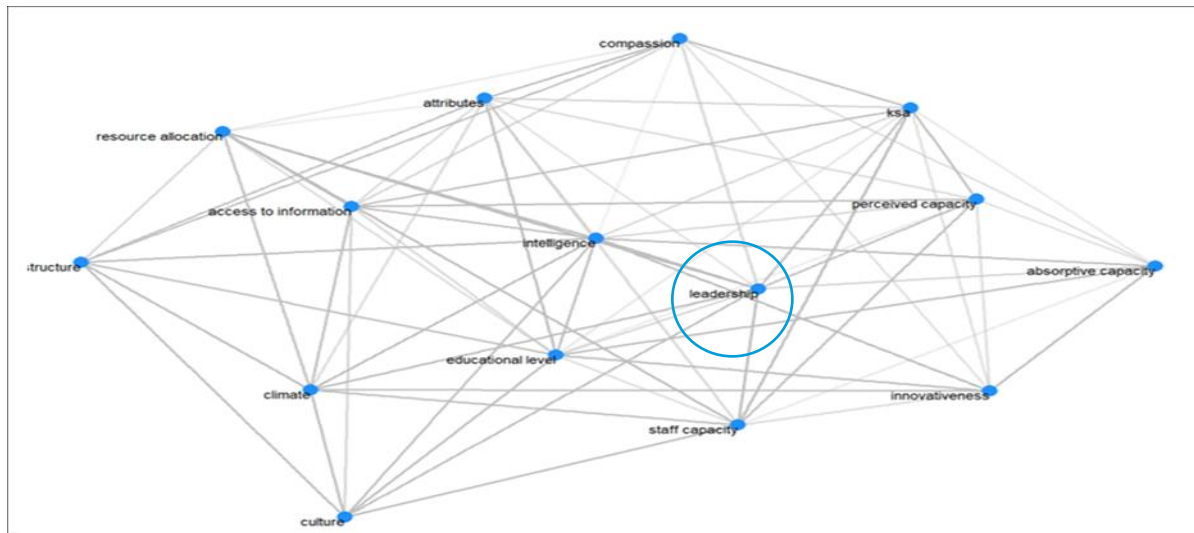
Exhibit 24. Correlation Matrix of Readiness Subcomponents in Los Angeles Study Site



The readiness data can also be visualized as a network (Exhibit 25). We present an example of this for the LA study site, only in instances where the strength of the correlation was above 0.3. This network show where specific readiness subcomponents have the highest relationships with others. For example, leadership plays a central role in the network, suggesting that changes positively or

negatively in leadership would have a ripple effect to many other subcomponents of readiness. We will explore the relationships in this network more fully in our final analyses.

Exhibit 25. Network Analysis of Readiness Subcomponents in Los Angeles Study Site



RQ 3: Is school and individual readiness to mitigate risk factors for community and school violence associated with improved educational and safety outcomes?

In preliminary analyses, we found that there were differences in readiness across the different types of schools—middle schools, small high schools, and large high schools—and this was a confounding influence in our analyses, given that youth outcomes often differed in systematic ways for the different types of schools. As a result, and because LAUSD is comprised of 41 different schools in our data set, we will conduct analyses separately for the three types of schools. Final analyses will analyze outcomes at the school level, and we will also embed these results into the maps shown in Exhibit 18.

RQ 4: How do the associations between school readiness, individual readiness, community safety, school safety, and student outcomes vary over time?

From preliminary analyses, we note that on three of the student outcomes in our analyses, we observed significant changes over time in the years prior to the pandemic. Over that period, we observed a significant decrease in the rate of suspensions in the schools within the district. We also found significant declines in standardized test scores in both Math and English Language Arts over that same period. We did not find statistically significant changes in the expulsion rates over time, although we noted the rates were trending down. We also did not find significant changes over time in the chronic absentee rates and the graduation rates but did see that both rates were trending up.

We will further explore the relationships between readiness, safety, and outcomes over time as final analyses conclude and create visualizations of important time-dependent findings we discover.

MENDOTA STUDY SITE

School District Context

Given that our survey data and analytical models span multiple years for this site, from the 2014-15 to 2021-22 school years, we elect to show demographic data as an average across years for which demographic data were available for each respondent group. On average, just over 370 students, 14 parents, and 45 staff and teachers responded to annual surveys over the study period. Less than a quarter of staff and teachers (17%) reported having 20+ years' experience working in schools, whereas 20% said their experience level was three years or less. When surveys were made available in English and Spanish, about 86% of parents elected to respond in Spanish; otherwise, all students, staff, and teachers responded to English surveys. Eighty-three percent of students said that Spanish is the primary language spoken in their homes. The majority of students (65%) represented grades 11 and 12, but during the study period MUSD shifted students into two new school buildings and combined grades from the elementary school into the new middle school, which disrupted the first wave of data collection with students in grades 6-8. Females were more represented than males across all survey respondents, with 82% of parents reporting as females, 55% of staff and teachers, and 60% of students, respectively. A small percentage of students reported as binary or transgender (2% respectively).

Only 39% of students had lived in Mendota all of their lives and nearly 1/5 lived in Mendota for no more than six years. A large majority of students (87%) and parents (73%) reported at least one parent born outside the US, while 10% of students and 18% of parents said they lived in a home belonging to someone else. Almost half (43%) of students said their parents did not complete high school, and only 8% of parents were said to hold a college degree, but parents reported only 8% had not completed high school and 9% completed college. As can be seen in Exhibit 26, students and parents report largely similar racial ethnic characteristics in reference to each other, whereas staff and teachers report dissimilar backgrounds to parents and students. It should also be noted that 78% of parents preferred to skip the race question altogether.

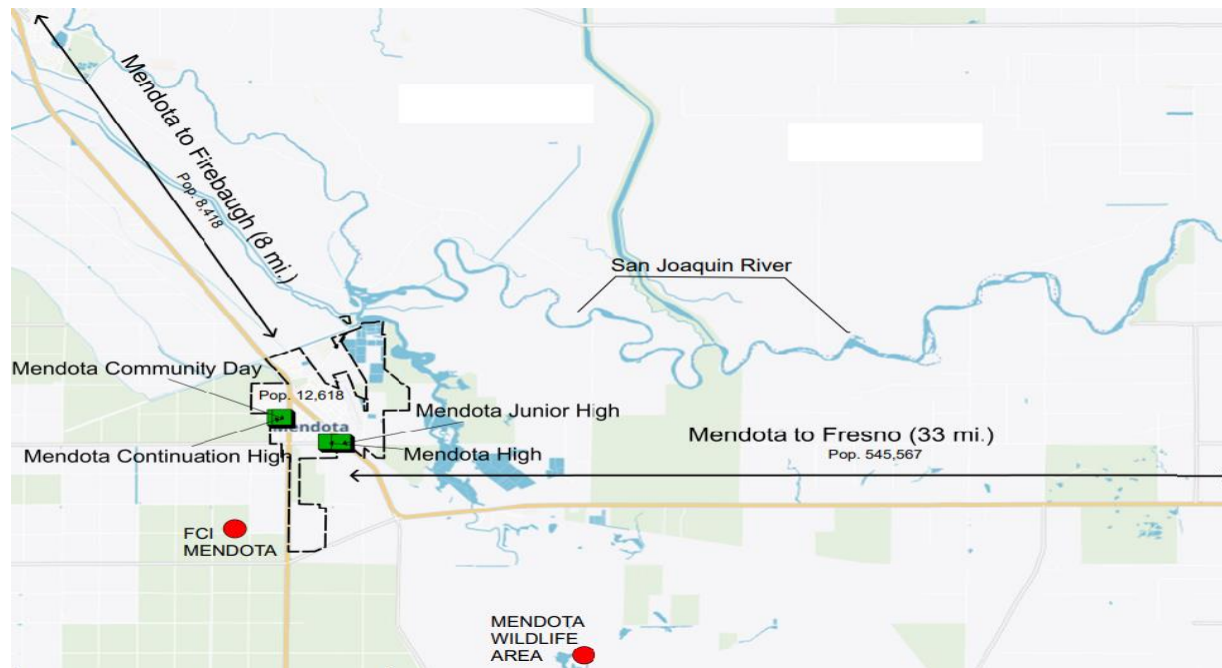
Exhibit 26: Average Race and Ethnicity Characteristics of Survey Respondents in Mendota

	Latinx	African American	Asian American	American Indian	White	Multi-Racial
Student	100%	2%	-	7%	11%	80%
Parent	91%	-	11%	11%	-	-
Staff and Teachers	67%	-	-	-	67%	33%

Community Context

There are three high schools and one middle school in the city of Mendota, all contained within the MUSD, our study site partner. Mendota High School is the city’s only comprehensive high school and there are two continuation schools: Community Day School and Mendota Continuation High, which are, respectively, available for youth transitioning from the justice system and making up educational credits after their education was interrupted by parenthood, health issues, or family matters. We attempted to use a variety of data to examine the continuum of risk, need, and assets surrounding these schools and within the attendance areas where students and families live, but there was not enough data variation at the census tract level to construct meaningful indices. Instead, we constructed a physical map of the area (Exhibit 27).

Exhibit 27. Risk, Need, and Asset Context of Mendota’s Geography



The map shows how the city is situated within a context where it has been vulnerable to risk from crime-related violence stemming from gang-involved residents within nearby FCI Mendota directing

violence in nearby Fresno and further south into Los Angeles. Retaliation repercussions have followed these actions back to Mendota where friends and family have moved to support incarcerated intimates and to raise their families in Mendota, including sending the children of incarcerated parents to MUSD schools. And while the prison complex was advertised to city leaders as an economic opportunity for city residents, very few residents meet the minimum educational and citizenship requirements to work in this federal facility. Economic frailties that heighten student and family needs are also evident when examining the geography of Mendota, lying on the western slope of the San Joaquin River, where unhealthy levels of naturally occurring heavy metal salts, including Selenium, washes down through irrigation from the east side of the mountains. As a result, much of the nearby agricultural area is barren or grows crops that do not require manual labor, forcing parents who need to work in agricultural to take farm-owned buses to work more than 30 miles away from Mendota each day, sunrise to sunset, and making it difficult to provide youth with parental support before or after school. Similarly, there are few teachers and staff in Mendota before or after school, as the large majority of them do not live in the city and drive to and from Mendota from Fresno, some 35 miles away, which is where the nearest hospital and other key assets are located. Asset scarcity, and a dynamic flow of risk and need into and out of Mendota typify this small rural city and create a unique context that affects the city's school and community safety prospects.

School and Community Perspectives on Safety and Violence

Crime

Law enforcement interview participants discussed how gang issues were relevant among the adult population, whereas the biggest issues with youth were drugs and violence spurred by social media conflicts. An interview with Mendota administrators touched on the gang issues that “came out of nowhere” in recent years, which escalated when a federal task force determined a series of killings across the state were tied to MS-13 leadership in Mendota. The federal task force did a sweep and arrested ten people in 2018. One administrator mentioned that MS-13 “...was also in waves in terms of people coming in.” Law enforcement participants discussed how Mendota connects to other cities and prisons along the I5 corridor as an agricultural transportation route, so that creates an opportunity for smuggling all kinds of illegal contraband, including people. From 2015-2017 there were 15 murders in Mendota, “...which is extremely high for a community of this size.” Across most interviews and focus groups, participants remarked on how they generally felt safe in Mendota. However, the MS-13 murders did have an impact on the community with some feeling that city leaders failed to “sound the alarm” due to the fear of the gang’s penchant for murder, extortion, kidnappings, and drug trafficking (*Amaro, 2019*).

Human Services

Documents collected from web searches highlight the sparse resources available locally, and the resources and services available only in the city of Fresno. These documents were mainly flyers, one-pagers, and non-profit/community action websites advertising services available in Fresno. Community members must travel to Fresno for significant medical/health services, as well as accessing social services such as child welfare, nutrition assistance, legal services, and housing assistance. It is important to note that in very recent years AMOR Wellness, which is a neighborhood health center that works in areas of concentrated poverty, opened in Mendota and provides an array of services including behavioral health, primary and medical specialty care, education, family counseling, mental and emotional health, dentistry (coming soon), emergency pantry assistance program, social services, youth activities, domestic violence services, and home energy assistance. AMOR leadership discussed the difficulty conducting effective outreach in the community to take advantage of this unique resource, comparing AMOR's work in Afghanistan during wartime to the situation in Mendota where children may also "sleep on dirt floors." Between the skepticism of outsiders, fear of deportation, and work schedules that keep parents in the field from sun up to sun down, AMOR leadership said it was challenging to connect with parents so they utilize services.

Documents found in the community during multiple site visits mainly consisted of flyers and one-pagers that give key information on resources and/or services that are mostly available outside of Mendota in Fresno County. This included services for domestic violence, nutrition assistance, youth/mental health services, environmental justice legal services for agricultural workers (e.g., exposure to chemicals), readiness materials related to natural gas safety (i.e., cleaners, plumbers, tree workers), and vocational training.

While the school and community host events to give information on important topics such as immigration rights, any significant action or follow-up requires substantial travel time to Fresno with a 45-minute car drive or a 45 to 75-minute bus ride one way that runs once a day. One administrative staff member commented that residents do not need to take the bus to Fresno for services because everyone has a car. However, this is not an easily substantiated assertion, and it is unclear if this applies to youth and their ability to access services outside of Mendota. Police commented in an interview that many people in the community do not have reliable transportation.

Flow of People

Several interviews brought a common theme of community members with one-foot-in and one-foot-out of the community. For instance, at the time of the law enforcement interview no officers on the force lived in Mendota. Of the eight interviews with teachers, behavioral specialists/psychologists, and administrative staff only one lived in Mendota while at least two participants who grew up in Mendota no longer lived there. Administrative staff have also discussed informally with the study team how many staff do not live in Mendota. Police and administrative staff discussed during

interviews how many youth want to leave Mendota and other administrative staff discussed how people in Mendota are leaving to go work in other places that have new types of crops. Law enforcement interview participants commented that people who live in Mendota generally do not work at FCI Mendota, the federal prison in town. This is because the federal facility's education and citizenship requirements for employees are too stringent for most of Mendota's residents.

Quantitative Preliminary Results

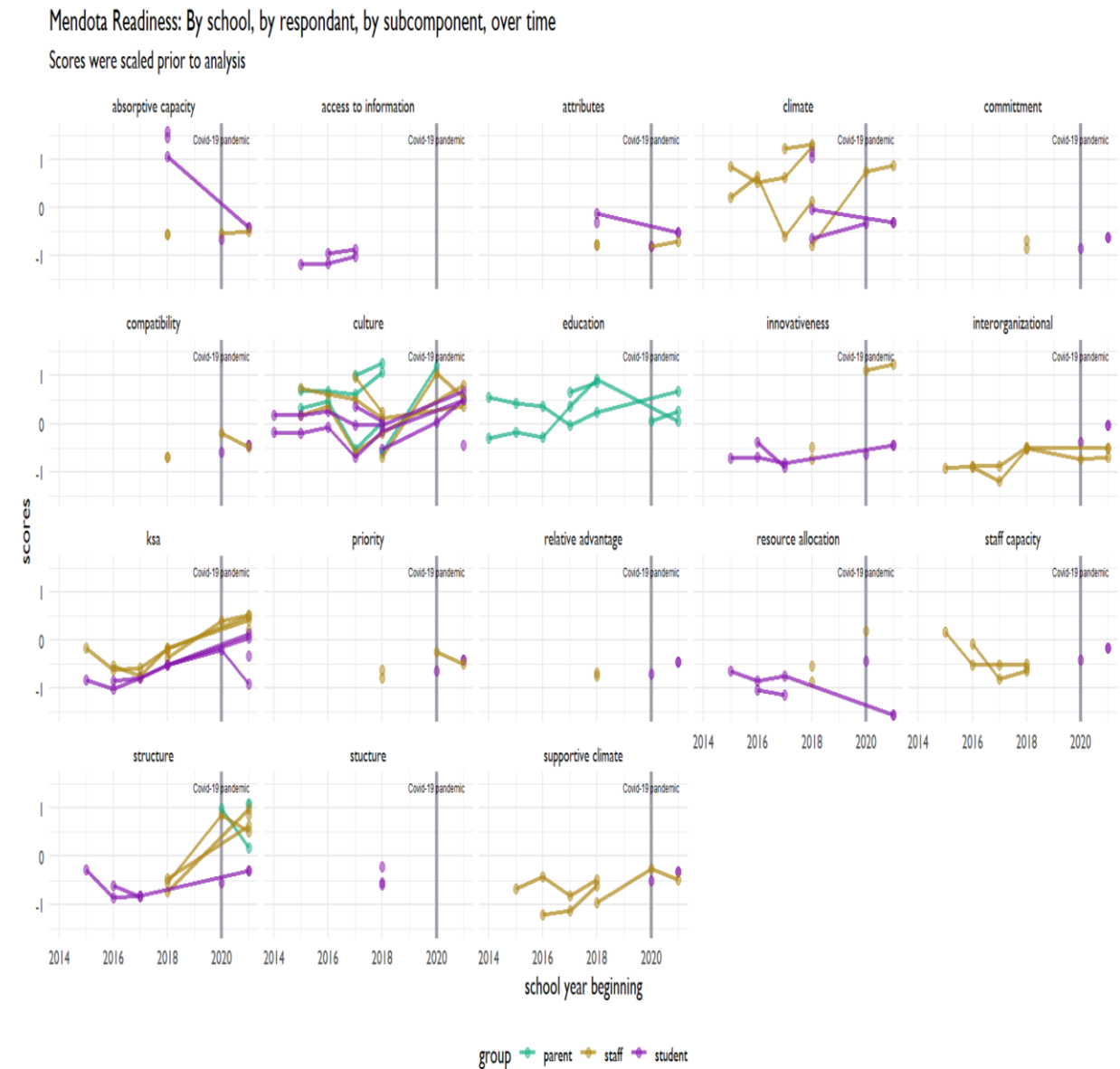
RQ1. How does the ecology of risk and protective factors within communities and schools influence the educational and safety outcomes of students?

For Mendota, we have data from one high school and one middle school that are located close enough to one another that they do not differ from one another on the measures of community risk factors that we examined. As we found to be true for the LAUSD schools, ratings of school climate are significantly lower for the middle school than the high school. We do not find, though, that the two schools differ from one another on the various youth outcomes with one exception. The percentage of students with scores at or above the median on English Language Arts is significantly higher for the high school than the middle school. We will further examine this finding and other ecological factors impacting outcomes in the final analyses.

RQ2. What are the core components of school and individual readiness to mitigate risk factors for school and community violence?

Individual and school readiness data was collected via survey for students, parents, staff, and teachers across multiple years in the study period, as shown in Exhibit 7. To assess readiness for RQ2, we relied on survey questions that were either developed by our team, as documented in Scott et al., 2015 and Walker et al., 2020, or conceptually coded, where preexisting surveys were available. We used constructs indicating readiness (Scaccia et al., 2015). We ran a similar model for Mendota. According to preliminary analyses, we found staff and students have negative coefficients of -0.4950 and -0.6812, respectively, indicating that being in these categories was associated with lower overall readiness, as these groups were associated with lower scores. Readiness scores tend to increase over the course of the study period and several subcomponents demonstrated statistically significant relationships (Exhibit 28). In final analyses, we will discern the nature of these relationships as they relate to the context of the study, so we can apply the appropriate interpretation for practical action.

Exhibit 28. Readiness Subcomponents in Mendota Study Site



Graph produced on September 26, 2023

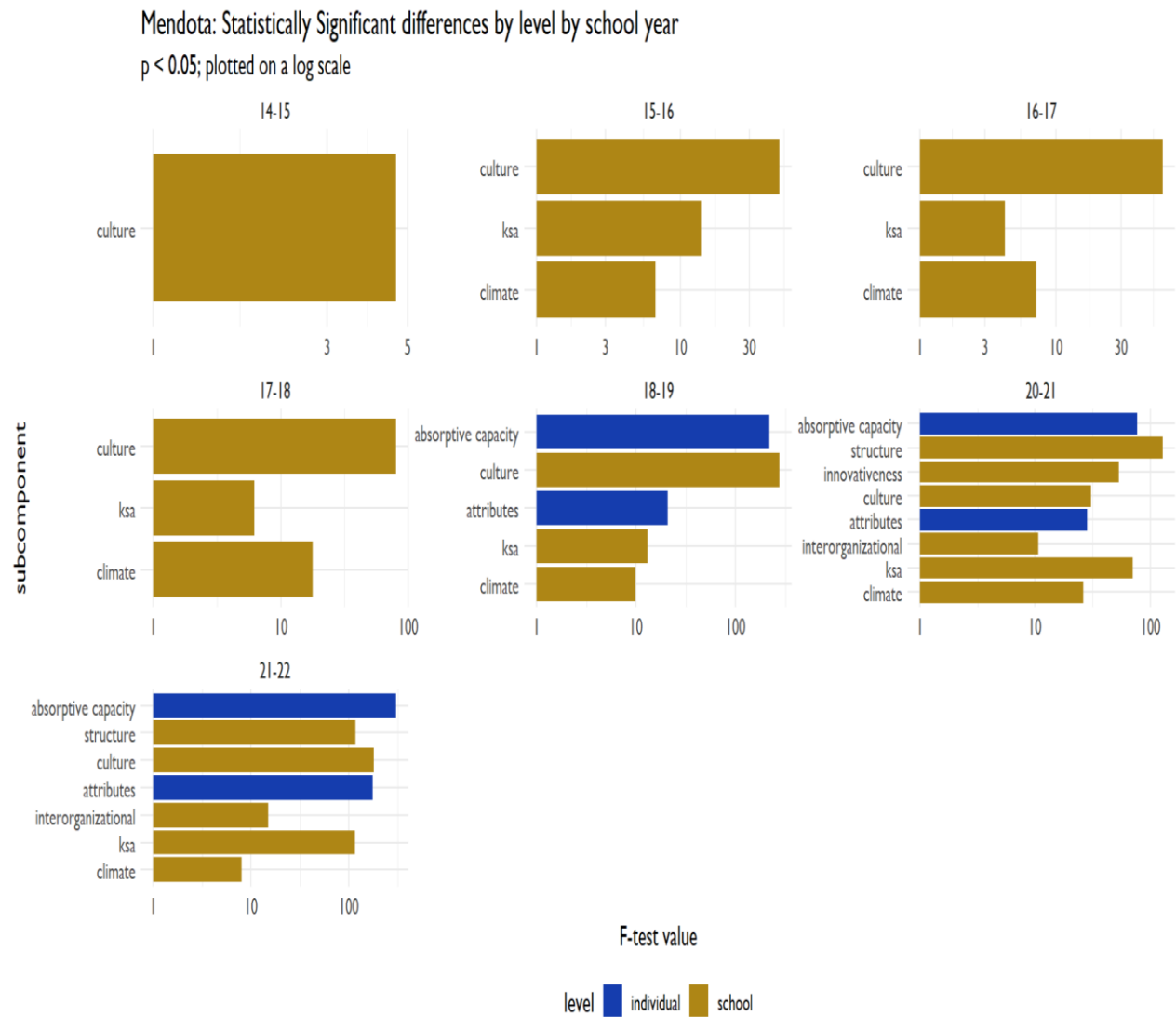
We also analyzed linear relationships between subcomponents and the readiness ‘score’, with preliminary results indicating that the multiple R-squared (0.5129) and adjusted R-squared (0.4612) explain about 51.29% of the variance in the scores, which is relatively high (Exhibit 29). This suggests we have specified the model properly, but we will confirm this result as we finalize analyses and make interpretive judgements based on the data.

Exhibit 29. Analysis of Variance Among Readiness Subcomponents in Mendota Study Site

Term	B-weight	Std. error	T-statistic	p. value
Staff	-0.49498	0.157605	-3.14061	0.001921
Student	-0.68119	0.156036	-4.36558	1.96E-05
year_begin	0.084479	0.017944	4.708026	4.46E-06
access to information	-0.77091	0.268812	-2.86782	0.004541
attributes	-0.65217	0.218908	-2.9792	0.003219
climate	0.398755	0.186667	2.136181	0.033785
commitment	-0.78016	0.262244	-2.97493	0.003262
compatibility	-0.61961	0.235439	-2.63175	0.009105
interorganizational	-0.69062	0.197036	-3.50505	0.000554
priority	-0.63073	0.235439	-2.67896	0.007951
relative advantage	-0.66224	0.262244	-2.52528	0.012275
resource allocation	-0.75749	0.209413	-3.61718	0.00037
supportive climate	-0.66723	0.202686	-3.29192	0.001161

Preliminary examination of subcomponent relationships over time found significant between-group differences, with culture and climate again playing a significant role (Exhibit 30). While this result is preliminary, it does align with prior research on both readiness and school climate more broadly, finding climate and culture as influencers over individual and group behavior. Since readiness has not been measured previously with younger populations, and our previously validated readiness questions were designed with adults in mind, we will also need to assess variations that arise due to age-related effects.

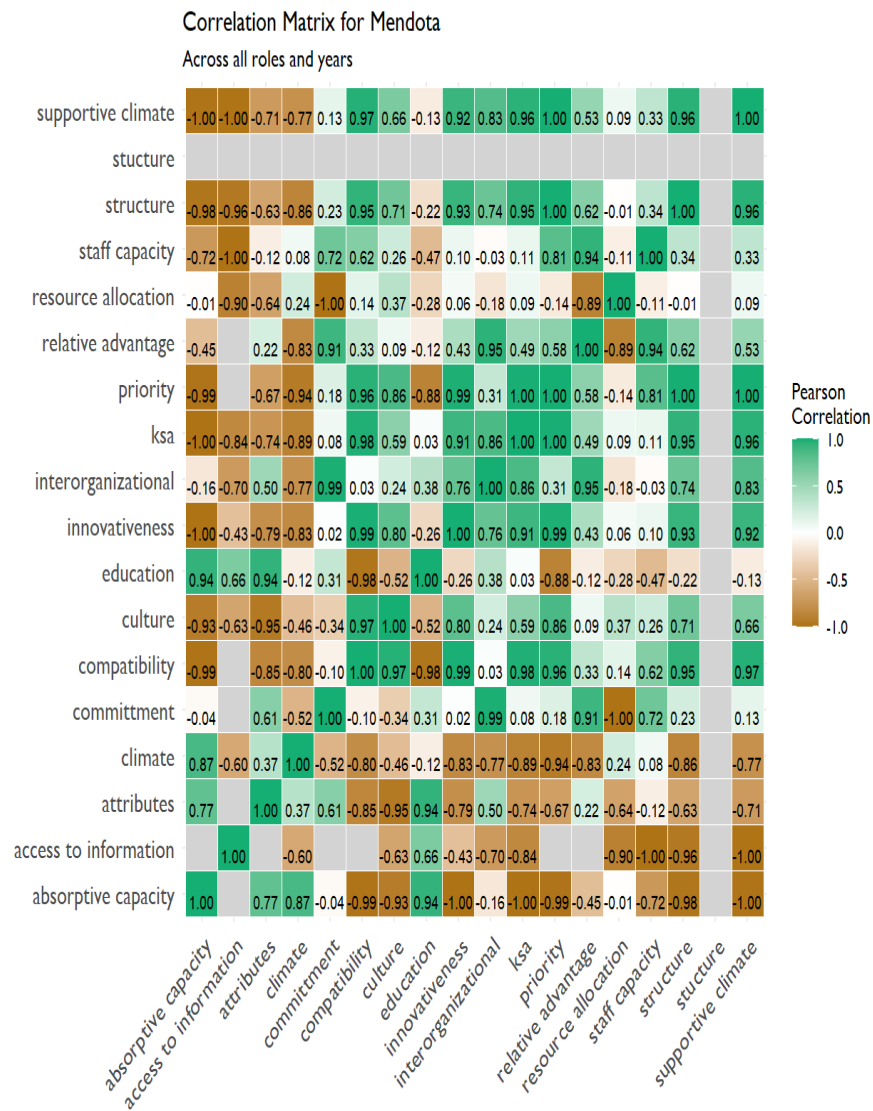
Exhibit 30. Readiness Subcomponents Over Time in Mendota Study Site



Graph produced on September 26, 2023

Correlational analysis of readiness subcomponents (Exhibit 31) indicate very strong negative relationships between climate, in particular, with a variety of subcomponents. This suggests that when climate is good, innovation-specific elements of school safety are not as important, and vice versa. This conceptually makes sense and helps to build some conceptual validity for this model. We will explore this finding more carefully as we move to final analyses and extract practical meaning from the study.

Exhibit 31. Correlations of Readiness Subcomponents in Mendota Study Site



RQ 3: Is school and individual readiness to mitigate risk factors for community and school violence associated with improved educational and safety outcomes?

Preliminary analyses showed that ratings by respondents (i.e., parents, staff, students, and teachers) were more positive for the middle school than the high school. Yet, the youth outcomes were found to be more positive (i.e., better) for the high school than the middle school. Even though we had complete data primarily for these two schools only, these patterns were found to be statistically significant. Given that the measures were aggregated to the school level, our initial analyses were

confounded by the circumstances whereby the middle school for which the ratings on readiness were more positive was also the school where the youth outcomes were less positive. We will be exploring alternative analytic approaches to examine the relationship between readiness and youth outcomes in this small rural context, to ensure findings are credible and useful.

RQ 4: How do the associations between school readiness, individual readiness, community safety, school safety, and student outcomes vary over time?

From preliminary analyses, we note that we did not find statistically significant differences over time on any of the measures of community safety, school safety, or student outcomes in our analyses. We will further explore the relationships between readiness, safety, and outcomes over time as final analyses conclude and create visualizations of important time-dependent findings we discover.

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

These preliminary results paint a complex picture for how unique rural, urban and large county contexts can influence the root causes that either protect youth and communities from violence or place them at risk. Rather than schools and neighborhoods existing in a static world of low need and risk or high need and risk, we can see from these data that the risk – need reality is more fluid within the shared spaces and places where youth live and learn. We also see that the readiness to protect against violence and promote safety in schools and communities depends on dynamic factors within individuals, within schools, and within the community overall. As a result, school and community safety solutions must be sensitive to context and dynamic in nature, rather than linear one size fits all approaches that do not meet students and communities where they are at to target the specific, context-driven readiness to reduce risk, and meet needs, while leveraging assets and building resiliency that prevents future harm.

While these preliminary results are promising in terms of confirming the contextual nature of root causes of violence, and additional analyses will be completed and reported at the end of the project, there are limitations to this research that must be noted. First, each of the study sites is a standalone case where we endeavored to understand context-driven root causes of school and community violence. While we hope the case is illustrative to other cases sharing similar features with each study site, we cannot generalize our findings from this multiple case study design. Second, we could not fulfill the longitudinal nature of the study as envisioned, due to the pandemic essentially shutting down schools and suspending key student achievement requirements for which we had no reliable outcome data while schools were virtual.

The very nature of what it means to “be safe” shifted in an existential manner in schools and communities during this time, to the extent that safety measured in the pre-pandemic period could not be measured the same way, reliably, in the post-pandemic period. And while the findings revealed valuable markers of student safety, education, and well-being, it is important to remember that these student climate surveys were conducted pre-, during, and post COVID-19 pandemic and the George Floyd protests. This mattered in two important ways. First, the social and cultural understanding of the school context fundamentally changed and varied across schools. Considering the transition of online learning and hybrid teaching inherently disrupted the historical and contextual definitions of relationships, safety, education, and the physical parameters of schools. Second, the social and cultural understanding and definition of safety, violence, and educational equity were transformed during social justice protests during this project, especially in schools with historically high levels of minoritized students.

Additionally, because of the interdisciplinary nature of this study, there were some conceptual limitations associated with utilizing theoretical tenets of school climate and theoretical tenets of readiness. Some of these concepts did overlap. In other words, we made some discretionary decisions to include some constructs or variables that were considered school climate or readiness. There is no consensus about how to define school climate, a positive and sustained school climate, or the school climate process and the dimensions that need to be regularly measured in school climate research and improvement efforts across distinct contexts. Relatedly, the measurement of crime was also impacted by pandemic-related changes in criminal and juvenile justice practices as well as gaps in police data reporting, and crime data was only available at the street level in Los Angeles. All other crime was measured at the city level.

Lastly, there were key limitations with the qualitative data collection. In Mendota we had the unique challenge of engaging with immigrant parents who were skeptical of outsiders, especially given the 2016-2020 Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids directed in that area at the same time the study was underway. Due to the nature of the region’s agricultural work and high demands on parent time, it was also difficult to arrange for interviews. To overcome this, we often met with parents when they came to school for cultural fairs or other events, but this obviously creates sample bias issues. Mendota had the least amount of publicly available documents online. This was the main challenge in identifying documents, particularly for collecting annual documents – several years are missing across schools and document type for this site and district staff often did not have the capacity to locate missing materials. In contrast, Los Angeles faced an ongoing issue with ransomware attacks on the school district’s website, which impacted the team when collecting web-based documents and there was an overwhelming amount of qualitative information available online in Los Angeles, so it is possible that documents were missed despite our search being exhaustive. Overall, our plan for community convenings and in-person interviews and focus groups was stymied due to the pandemic,

when we essentially had to suspend study activities because the study team prioritized maintaining strong relationships with the sites over demands for data collection when each community and district was dealing pandemic related crises.

Artifacts

ReSOLV will produce a large number of study artifacts before the conclusion of the project on December 31, 2023. These will include the following:

- Three videos where the study principals will discuss results from each study site;
- One national webinar where study principals will present results and answer questions;
- Ten one page “what you can do” primers for ten unique audiences, from students to business leaders, on how they can take action to protect schools and communities based on study results;
- One public convening in Los Angeles at ASU’s campus downtown to discuss study results;
- One article detailing study results in the California Association of School Boards magazine;
- Three thematic panels at the 2023 American Society of Criminology conference to share study results;
- One scholarly article within one co-edited special issue we put together for the Journal of School Violence; and,
- One full technical research report of final results suitable for posting on NCJRS.

All artifacts will be shared on air.org where there will be a dedicated webpage for the study, and also shared through ASU, Dawn Chorus, and California study partners.

At the conclusion of the project, we will also deposit relevant and appropriate datasets to the data archive at ICPSR.

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End Notes

¹ Interestingly, rural fringe areas are often described as being more like inner city areas than rural areas in terms of population characteristics (e.g., poverty, education, employment, access to services). *Sharp, J. S., & Clark, J. K. (2008). Between the country and the concrete: Rediscovering the rural–urban fringe. City & Community, 7(1), 61-79.*

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