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Jacqueline M. McCarty  
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THE EFFECTS OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR  
AND PERCEPTIONS IN AN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of  
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirement for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

URBAN SERVICES

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August 1999

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## ABSTRACT

### THE EFFECTS OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND PERCEPTIONS IN AN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL.

Jacqueline M. McCarty  
Old Dominion University, 1999  
Director: Dr. Maurice R. Berube

Public opinion polls have consistently highlighted the prevalence of violence in America's schools. Specifically, school personnel have witnessed increased assault and theft related to the wearing of expensive clothing. Concomitantly, administrators have noted decreased attendance rates triggered by clothing issues. Given the gravity of these problems, school officials nationwide have enacted uniform policies in hopes of improving school safety and student behavior. However, current research establishing the effectiveness of these policies is largely anecdotal. The few studies utilizing empirical measures mainly highlight short-term outcomes and often fail to address student perceptions regarding clothing-related problems.

By contrast, this study investigated the effects of a mandatory uniform policy on student behavior and perceptions three years after its implementation. Participants included students from two large urban middle schools, one with a mandatory uniform policy and the other without. Counts of violations provided by the school district were used to assess differences in student behavior between the two schools. Additionally, the *Student Perception Survey* (McCarty, 1999) was used to assess attitudes toward fear of crime/harm, sense of belonging to the school community, and satisfaction with clothing policy.

Analyses indicated that students who experienced a uniform policy had less fear of crime/harm. These students also felt a greater sense of belonging. On the other hand, students in the school without a uniform policy, free to choose their own attire, reported more satisfaction with the school clothing policy than those in the school with a uniform policy.

While there were some effects based on demographics, none of these effects interacted with the dress policy variable. Analysis of the behavioral data revealed no trends over time in terms of student violations.

Overall, results indicate that uniforms may have both positive and negative effects on student perceptions. Such findings could profit school administrators considering the implementation or modification of a mandatory uniform policy. Suggestions are made for administrators considering a change in uniform policy.

To my daughter Sam  
Always follow your dreams.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A monumental task such as this requires the relentless efforts of numerous people. It is to these family members, mentors, and friends that I offer my sincere thanks and gratitude.

My husband Christopher McCarty deserves to share this degree. Throughout my years at Old Dominion, he acted as a capable research assistant, copy editor, and main source of emotional support and encouragement. He willingly spent numerous weekends at the University's library and late evenings offering his assistance.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

According to the 1996 Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, school districts must strive "to make schools places where students learn without the threat of being victimized or actually becoming a victim of crime" (Modzeleski, 1996). Public opinion polls, however, consistently report that many schools fail to fulfill this challenge. For the past five years, the Phi Delta Kappa Gallup Poll has identified school safety, defined as fighting/violence/gangs, as a top challenge facing public schools (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1994, 1996; Elam & Rose, 1995; Rose, Gallup, & Elam, 1997; Rose & Gallup, 1998).

National studies and media reports support public perceptions regarding school safety, indicating an increase in the intensity and frequency of assault and theft in schools (Burke, 1991). Students resorting to violence and theft to obtain designer clothes and expensive athletic footwear is not uncommon (Furlong & Morrison, 1994). Violent assaults incited by student attire bearing gang insignia are also common. The gravity of this problem has prompted many school administrators to adopt uniform policies in an attempt to improve school safety and student behavior.

These policies have been implemented nationwide within urban, suburban, and rural schools (Landen, 1992). Research relating the effectiveness of such policies is largely anecdotal, relying heavily on the perceptions of school administrators, teachers, and staff members. Additionally, this research usually occurs just one year after the institution of uniforms. Moreover, the empirical research evaluating uniform policies

mainly highlights behavior, often failing to address student perceptions regarding clothing-related problems. By contrast, this study will empirically investigate the effects of a school uniform policy on student behavior and perceptions three years after implementation.

### Background to the Problem

School districts initially adopted uniform policies in response to the proliferation of violence in the schools (Landen, 1992). This violence is often inflicted by jealous students unable to afford expensive clothing (Anderson, 1991). Specifically, school systems have witnessed an increase in assaults and theft. Bomber jackets, professional sports team jackets, leather coats, and gold jewelry are among the items most coveted by juvenile perpetrators (Holloman, 1995). Chicago police, besieged by the occurrence of fatalities involving sports team jackets, created Starter Jacket Murders, a separate homicide category, to track this crime (Gerstein, 1995). Various newspaper and popular magazine articles have highlighted the pervasiveness of this clothing-induced violence in poor, urban schools.

School districts have also reported increased violence resulting from gang activity. This gang activity usually consists of assaults, fights, and disruptive behavior (Trump, 1993). Gang regalia, such as sports team jackets, expensive athletic footwear, earrings, bandannas, and signature color combinations, can create an atmosphere of intimidation, often resulting in distractions and poor concentration for students in the classroom (Gerstein, 1995; Telander, 1990). Clothing worn by non-gang members that reflects certain color combinations also causes gang violence in many schools. Students,

unknowingly dressed in a particular gang's colors, may innocently fall victim to a rival gang's violent attack (Holloman, 1995; Stanley, 1996). As a result of this growing violence in schools, some students in New York City have resorted to wearing bulletproof clothing and carrying Kevlar-lined backpacks and clipboards (For New York school days, 1990).

Concomitant to the theft and violence, classroom teachers have noted increased fighting, taunts, and inattention to academics among students. Educators often attribute these difficulties to either students' envy of designer fashions worn by their classmates or humiliation surrounding their own tattered, second-hand clothing (Gursky, 1996; Walzer, 1995). These feelings of envy and/or humiliation often lead students to experience a diminished sense of school pride and unity as well as a heightened awareness of distinctions among economic classes.

Aside from these classroom difficulties, administrators have noted decreased attendance rates perceived as related to clothing appearance. Children not possessing the latest designer fashions may be reluctant to attend school for fear of harassment from classmates dressed in expensive clothing (Anderson, 1991; Posner, 1996). These same reluctant children also may skip school to engage in drug sales to finance the purchase of the latest fashions and costly athletic footwear (Anderson, 1991). Fear of violence also compels some well-dressed students to remain home from school.

#### Need for the Study

School uniform policies and their subsequent capability to improve student behavior and perceptions warrants investigation. Such an investigation is necessary due to

the lack of empirical evidence on the topic, failure of the literature to address student perceptions regarding clothing-related problems, exigency to maintain violence-free schools, and possible benefits afforded to schools that adopt uniform policies.

The lack of empirical evidence purporting the long-term effectiveness of uniforms on student behavior and perceptions emphasizes the necessity for this study so as to generate data from which to draw conclusions (Cohn & Siegel, 1996). Most studies investigating this issue have provided anecdotal evidence alleging a reduction in school crime and discipline problems following the implementation of a uniform policy. This anecdotal evidence was based largely on information supplied by administrators, teachers, and parents who primarily noted a decrease in behavior problems as little as one year following the policy implementation. Although promising, some researchers perceive this anecdotal evidence as worthless since its origins derive from popular magazines and newspaper articles, not scholarly research endeavors (Holloman, 1995). Thus, researchers promulgate the need for well-planned studies to provide empirical data as support for uniforms (Gerstein, 1995; Posner, 1996; Robinson, 1997; Thomas, 1994). However, the few studies that did report empirical evidence in favor of uniforms utilized small sample sizes that were not representative of the entire population of schools with uniform regulations, failed to operationalize the variables investigated, and/or presented preliminary, first-year results (Holloman, 1995; U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

The research often fails to consider student perceptions, and few studies actually address the topic. However, studies that have surveyed students mainly gauge their amenability toward wearing uniforms, and they neglect to measure their perceptions

regarding problems associated with clothing. These perceptions include students' fear of crime/harm, fear of violent gang encounters, concern for clothing, sense of belonging, and fear of harassment, for example.

Given the problem of school taunts and assaults spurred on by competition over clothing and gang violence, a research endeavor indicating the effectiveness of uniform policies could offer a solution to these issues. Additionally, such policies could fulfill the National Education Goal for the year 2000, which states that every American school will be "free of drugs and violence and offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning" (Furlong & Morrison, 1994; Landen, 1992; "Uniformly," 1994). Specifically, presentation of data reflecting improvements in student behavior after the adoption of uniform policies could prompt other violence-plagued school districts to implement similar policies and enjoy similar positive effects.

Furthermore, this study has implications for school administrators. The results of this endeavor could persuade these officials to adopt uniform regulations. The adoption of such regulations by schools experiencing incidents of clothing-related violence and difficulties with student behavior could deliver such benefits as decreased clothing costs for parents, increased funding for schools, and decreased dropout rates.

Uniforms, costing as little as \$20 each in some schools, may provide a cost-effective alternative to the expensive designer clothing and sneakers worn by many students. Many school administrators, teachers, and parents note this benefit, and they acknowledge the savings incurred by such a uniform policy (Cohn & Siegel, 1996; Walzer, 1995). One study, conducted at a discount department store, attempted to illustrate the

savings reaped by families purchasing uniforms. Results indicated that the average cost per family for back-to-school attire approached \$375 (Gerstein, 1995), approximately \$300 more than the cost of three uniforms.

An effective school uniform policy also could increase attendance rates and concomitantly increase the amount of funding available to a particular school. According to fiscal procedure, schools with higher attendance rates receive a greater distribution of funds than those experiencing lower rates. Aside from the benefit to schools, students also prosper academically from attending school. A researcher representing the District of Columbia's Program Assessment Branch demonstrated this assertion in her student interviews. One interviewee acknowledged that frequent absences triggered by the embarrassment surrounding her clothing resulted in her retention for a year (Posner, 1996). Similarly, Dick Van Der Laan, Director of Public and Employee Information at the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) in California, promulgates the need to prevent children from missing school even a few days a year, citing the long-term effects of truancy. He projects that students consistently truant 13 days each year will have missed a complete school year upon their high school graduation (Robinson, 1997).

Finally, the institution of a uniform policy may eliminate the problem of gang intimidation, thus, decreasing the escalating dropout rate in some schools. This assertion is predicated on evidence suggesting a correlation between gang intimidation and dropout rates. In 1984, a descriptive study implemented in two Chicago high schools revealed gang intimidation as the factor primarily responsible for the schools' 40 to 60% dropout rates. Reporting similar findings, an assistant principal at a nearby private school noted

that gang intimidation compelled 80% of her students to leave public schools. An effective uniform program could possibly eliminate this gang intimidation problem and alleviate the elevated dropout rates for some schools (“Dress codes”, 1996).

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of a mandatory school uniform policy on student behavior and perceptions. Specifically, this research endeavor poses the following research questions:

1. Do mandatory uniform policies affect the attendance rates among urban middle school students?
2. Do mandatory uniform policies affect the number of rule violations among urban middle school students?
3. Do mandatory uniform policies affect the number of conflict indicators among urban middle school students?
4. Do mandatory uniform policies affect the number of law violations among urban middle school students?
5. Do mandatory uniform policies affect perceived fear of crime/harm among urban middle school students?
6. Do mandatory uniform policies affect perceived fear of violent gang encounters among urban middle school students?
7. Do mandatory uniform policies affect perceived concern for clothing among urban middle school students?
8. Do mandatory uniform policies affect perceived fear of harassment among urban middle



school students?

9. Do mandatory uniform policies affect perceived sense of belonging among urban middle school students?

10. Do mandatory uniform policies affect perceived satisfaction with clothing policy among urban middle school students?

To investigate these research questions, the researcher has proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will have fewer attendance offenses, as measured by occasions of tardiness, class cutting, truancy, being brought to school by police, and leaving school grounds without permission, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 2: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will have fewer rule violations, as measured by instances of electronic device possession, inappropriate personal property possession, misrepresentation, disruption, repeated and continued violations of rules and regulations, and improper computer use, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 3: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will have fewer conflict indicators, as measured by instances of disrespect, insubordination, profanity, harassment, and fighting, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 4: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will have fewer law violations, as measured by instances of assault, alcohol possession, arson, bomb possession, burglary, disorderly conduct, drug offenses, extortion, inciting a riot, robbery, sexual offenses, theft, threats, trespassing, vandalism, weapons and dangerous instruments possession, miscellaneous behaviors, and stalking, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 5: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will perceive less fear of crime/harm, as measured by the *Student Perception Survey*, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 6: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will perceive less fear of violent gang encounters, as measured by the *Student Perception Survey*, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 7: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will perceive less concern for clothing, as measured by the *Student Perception Survey*, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 8: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will perceive less fear of harassment, as measured by the *Student Perception Survey*, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 9: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will perceive a greater sense of belonging to their school, as measured by the *Student Perception Survey*, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 10: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will perceive more satisfaction with their clothing policy, as measured by the *Student Perception Survey*, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

### Research Design

This study contains one independent variable and multiple dependent variables. The sole independent variable is school affiliation with two levels, School A and School B. School A has a mandatory uniform policy for students; whereas, School B does not require student uniforms. The behavioral dependent variables are attendance offenses, rule violations, conflict indicators, and law violations. The variable attendance offenses encompasses instances of tardiness, class cutting, truancy, being brought to school by police, and leaving school grounds without permission. Rule violations consist of possession of electronic devices, inappropriate personal property, tobacco products and instances of misrepresentation, repeated and continued violations of rules and regulations, and improper computer use. Conflict indicators refer to instances of disrespect, insubordination, profanity, harassment, and fighting. Law violations denote occasions of assault, alcohol possession, arson, bomb possession, bomb threats, burglary, drug offenses, extortion, inciting a riot, robbery, sexual offenses, theft, threatening, trespassing, vandalism, weapons and dangerous instruments possession, stalking, and miscellaneous

infractions. The perceptual dependent variables are fear of crime/harm, fear of violent gang encounters, concern for clothing, sense of belonging, fear of harassment, and satisfaction with clothing policy. These student perceptions are measured using the *Student Perception Survey* created by the researcher.

Since the distinctions of the independent variable occurred prior to the onset of this study, a causal comparative study was chosen. This design sought to discern differences between the two schools under investigation in terms of student behavior and perceptions.

### Limitations

Since this is a causal comparative study, there is no real possibility of ruling out alternative explanations to the hypotheses. For example, many third variable problems could exist. These third variable problems may explain the effect of a uniform policy on improving student behavior and perceptions.

The first problem concerns the subject characteristics of the participants. This problem refers to the incomplete randomization procedures exercised in this study, nonequivalent histories among the participants, and differing levels of maturation between the students in the two schools. Because of the incomplete randomization procedures utilized by the researcher, the possibility exists that the children attending the school with the uniform policy naturally demonstrate better behavior and have more positive perceptions toward clothing issues than those enrolled in the school without a uniform policy. The unequal histories between the students in the two schools may also contribute to this problem. For example, as supported by Paliokas and Rist (1996), various school

and community initiatives concurrent with the establishment of school uniform regulations may account for the reduction in attendance offenses, rule violations, conflict indicators, and law violations. These initiatives may include community policing efforts, school security measures, and drug testing for student-athletes. Other initiatives involve programs designed to reduce student tardiness, prevent drug use, limit gang efforts, promote character development, enhance conflict resolution skills, and decrease the presence of weapons in schools (Stanley, 1996). The differing levels of maturation between the students in the two schools further exacerbate this problem. The changes in development among the students in the school with a uniform policy may account for the improved student behavior and positive perceptions.

Reverse causality is another problem associated with this study. Given the omission of purposeful manipulation, concerns arise as to the temporal progression of the variables. The dependent variables may have actually preceded the independent variable, school affiliation. Thus, schools with few behavior problems and positive student perceptions regarding clothing issues may actually choose to implement uniform policies.

Besides these third variable problems, this study contains threats to external validity. These external threats refer to the Novelty Effect, Hawthorne Effect, and Experimentally Accessible Population Versus the Target Population.

Although lessened by the passage of time, the Novelty and Hawthorne Effects still may pose threats to this study. The Novelty Effect, or newness or change in the environment following the institution of the uniform regulations, not the actual uniforms, may have caused the perceived effect. The Hawthorne Effect, or the attention paid to the

subjects, occurred mainly in the form of media and press exposure subsequent to the new policy, and it may have contributed to the results acquired by the researcher.

Finally, this study contains the Experimentally Accessible Population Versus the Target Population threat. This threat refers to the limited generalizability of the results of this study. Given that the researcher analyzed students in attendance at an urban elementary school, the results of this study can only be generalized to a similar population.

## Definition of Terms

Table 1

### Types of Clothing Policies

Term	Definition
Mandatory Uniform Policy	The requiring of students to wear uniforms (Holloman, 1995). Specifically, students wear white shirts and navy ties, dress slacks and skirts. Those students failing to comply with uniform mandates are assigned detention, Saturday detention, in-school suspension, and out-of-school suspension by the dean of students for each grade level (Hoffler-Riddick & Lassiter, 1996).
No Uniform Policy	Approach offering students their choice of school attire. This school attire, however, prohibits the wearing of gang-related apparel or clothing promoting drugs, alcohol, tobacco, violence, or obscene language ("Uniform policies," 1998).

Table 2

Attendance Offenses (Norfolk Public Schools, 1998)

Term	Definition
Attendance:	
Tardiness	Failure to be in a place of instruction at the assigned time without a valid excuse.
Class Cutting	Failure to report to class without proper permission, knowledge, or excuse by the school or teacher.
Truancy	Failure to report to school without prior permission, knowledge, or excuse by the school or the parent.
Brought to School by Police	Failure to be in school without prior knowledge and brought to school by the police.
Leaving School Grounds Without Permission	Failure to have been granted permission to leave the school grounds from the administrative office.



Table 3

Rule Violations (Norfolk Public Schools, 1998)

Term	Definition
Electronic Devices:	
Radio	Failure to have administrative permission to have in your possession a radio, Walkman <sup>TM</sup> , or similar devices.
Tape Recorder	Failure to have administrative permission to have in your possession a tape recorder or similar device.
Beeper	Possession of a beeper or similar devices.
Portable Phones	Possession of portable phones or similar devices.
Other	Failure to have administrative approval for an electronic device not mentioned above.
Inappropriate Personal Property:	
Food/Beverages	Consumption or possession of food and beverages in an unauthorized area, such as classrooms, auditorium and etc.
Clothing	Clothing or jewelry depicting drugs, the use of drugs or plants used to derive drugs

Table 3 Continued

Rule Violations

Term	Definition
Toys	and/or clothing or jewelry with slogans, symbols or pictures depicting weapons, gangs, or criminal activity. Wearing hats, scarves, head covers, large coats of any description inside a school building except for an official, duly approved covering worn because of religious beliefs; when worn as a matter of health and safety; when worn in connection with school sponsored programs, such as R.O.T.C., graduation, or dramatic productions.
Other	Possession of any object that has no purpose to be in school and may distract from teaching and learning.
Mace or Similar Substances	Possession of mace or similar substances.
Misrepresentation:	
Altering Notes	Tampering with official passes and notes in any manner, including forging names to any legitimate excuses or related document.

Table 3 Continued

Rule Violations

Term	Definition
False Information	Making false statements, written or oral, to anyone in authority.
Cheating	Violating rules of honesty, such as, copying another student's test, assignment, etc.
Other	Any other misrepresentation.
Tobacco Products:	
Use	Smoking (anything), or use or possession of products such as snuff or chewing tobacco, in any school building, on its grounds, or property adjacent to the school during the school day, on the school bus or at any official school function.
Possession	Smoking materials or other tobacco products will be confiscated.
Disruption:	
Chronic Talking	Repeated talking in classroom without permission.
Throwing Objects	Involved in the throwing of any object in any part of the school or school grounds in such a way as to be disruptive and endanger another.

Table 3 Continued

Rule Violations

Term	Definition
Horseplaying	Engaging in conduct that disrupts the education process or interferes with teaching, learning, and/or the operation of the school.
Teasing	Engaging in any activity that afflicts mental distress, anguish, or agitation to another person.
Refusing to Remain in Seat	Repeatedly getting out of seat or moving seat without permission of staff member.
Rude Noises	Making any unnecessary noise that disrupts the teaching and learning and/or orderly operation of the school.
Leaving Class Without Permission	Leaving the classroom or assigned area without obtaining prior approval of a staff member.
Other	Any action that causes disruption of the school environment
Multiple Disruptive Behaviors	A combination of disruptive behaviors which interrupts the learning environment.

Table 4

Conflict Indicators (Norfolk Public Schools, 1998)

Term	Definition
<b>Disrespect:</b>	
Walking Away	Leaving while a staff member is talking to you.
Talking Back	Responding orally in a rude and disrespectful manner to a staff member.
Other	Responding in any other way that demonstrates a disrespectful manner.
<b>Insubordination:</b>	
Refuses a Reasonable Request	Failure to comply with a proper and authorized direction or instruction of a staff member.
Refuses to Dress for P.E.	Failure to use the proper attire required in P.E.
Refuses to Work in Class	Failure to do assigned work in class.
Refuses Detention	Failure to report to after-school detention as directed by a staff member.
Refuses In-School Alternatives	Failure to report to in-school alternative as directed by a staff member.
Refuses to Report to Office	Failure to report to the administrative office as directed by a staff member.
Other	Failure to respond to any other reasonable direction

Table 4 Continued

Conflict Indicators

Term	Definition
	given by a staff member.
Refuses Uniform Dress	Failure to follow a board-approved uniform dress code.
Refuses Saturday School	Failure to report to Saturday school.
Refuses Inspection	Failure to allow inspection.
Profanity:	
Swearing	Saying anything that conveys a grossly offensive, obscene, or sexually suggestive message.
Obscene Gestures	Making any sign that conveys a grossly offensive, obscene, or sexually suggestive message.
Directed at Staff Member	Writing, saying, or making gestures that convey a grossly offensive, obscene, or sexually suggestive message toward a staff member.
Harassment:	
Shoving/Kicking	Willfully pushing or kicking anyone with the intent to harass and/or harm another.
Throwing Objects at Someone	Willfully throwing anything with the intent to harass and/or harm another.

Table 4 Continued

Conflict Indicators

Term	Definition
Other	Any action taken with the intent to harass and/or harm another.
Hitting Another Student	Hitting a student for the purpose of harassment.
Encouraging or Boosting a Fight	Actively promoting others to fight.
Derogatory Oral or Written Statements	Making statements orally or having any written materials or pictures that convey a grossly offensive, obscene, or sexually suggestive message.
Fighting:	
Mutual Combat	Involves the exchange of mutual physical contact between students by pushing, shoving, or hitting either with or without injury.

Table 5

Law Violations (Norfolk Public Schools, 1998)

Term	Definition
Assault:	
Assault Against Student-Battery, unlawful beating	Any physical force or violence unlawfully applied to another student. This can include jostling, tearing clothes, seizing, or striking another student causing minor injury.
Against Staff-Battery, unlawful beating	Any physical force or violence unlawfully applied to a staff member. This can include jostling, tearing clothes, seizing, or striking a staff member causing minor injury.
Other-Battery, unlawful beating	Any physical force or violence unlawfully applied to any other person while under the jurisdiction of school authority. This can include jostling, tearing clothes, seizing, or striking
Against Student- Causing Major Injury	Any physical force or violence unlawfully applied to another student. This can include jostling, tearing clothes, seizing, or striking another student causing major injury.
Against Staff-	Any physical force or violence unlawfully applied to



Table 5 Continued

Law Violations

Term	Definition
Causing Major Injury	a staff member. This can include jostling, tearing clothes, seizing, or striking a staff member causing major injury.
Alcohol:	
Use (Positive Alcolyzer)	Consumption of any alcoholic beverages while on school property or under the jurisdiction of school authority.
Possession	Possessing any alcoholic beverages in school, on school grounds, to and from school, on school bus, or at any school function while under the jurisdiction of school authority.
Sale/Distribution	Distributing or attempting to distribute any alcoholic beverage while under the jurisdiction of school authority.
Arson:	
Actual	Purposely setting a fire.
Attempted	Attempting to purposely set a fire.

## Table 5 Continued

Law Violations

Term	Definition
Bombs:	
Threat	Any device brought to school that contains combustible material or making statements that such a device exists in the school.
Exploded	Any device containing combustible material and a fuse.
Burglary:	
Actual	Unlawful entry into an unoccupied school with the intent of committing a felony, to steal, or take and carry away the property of another person.
Attempted	Unlawfully attempted entry into an unoccupied school.
Disorderly Conduct:	
Disorderly Conduct	Acting in a manner that is disruptive to the educational environment. This category is used when the police are called to cite a student for extreme disruption. It is not to be used when recording classroom disorders that result only in the

Table 5 Continued

Law Violations

Term	Definition
Drug Offenses:	student being sent to the principal's office.
Use	Use of any narcotic, illegal, or controlled drug, anabolic steroids, or any illegal substance which, when taken internally or smoked, causes a change in a person's behavior.
Possession	Possessing any illegal substance which when taken internally or smoked, causes a change in a person's behavior.
Sale/Distribution	Distribution or attempting to distribute any illegal substance.
Overdose	Taking too great a dose of any narcotic, illegal, or controlled drug, including alcoholic beverages.
Imitation/Look-Alike Drug	Possess, distribute, or use any substance that can be mistaken for an illegal substance. This includes tablets, pills, and capsules containing over-the-counter ingredients made to resemble controlled substances, depressants, hallucinogens, or narcotics.

Table 5 Continued

Law Violations

Term	Definition
Paraphernalia	Possess, distribute, or use any drug-related paraphernalia.
Inhalants	Possess, distribute, or use of any substance that could be inhaled illegally.
Medication to Include Over the Counter	Possession, use, or distribution of a medication.
Extortion:	
Actual	Use of mild threats or intimidation with intent to obtain money or something of value from another.
Attempted	Use of mild threats or intimidation in an attempt to obtain money or something of value from another.
Inciting a Riot:	
Actual	Creating a public violence, tumult, or disorder in the school.
Attempted	Attempting to create a public violence, tumult, or disorder in the school.

Table 5 Continued

Law Violations

Term	Definition
Robbery:	
Actual Robbery	Taking from a person something of value by force, violence, or fear.
Attempted Robbery	Attempting to take from a person something of value by force.
Sexual Offenses:	
Offensive Touching	Putting hands on another person's body in a way that is offensive to the other person.
Rape or Attempted Rape	Unlawful sexual intercourse by force, threat, or fear.
Indecent Exposure	Intentional exposure of one's body in a way that is offensive to others. This includes "mooning."
Sexual Assault Against Student	Other assault involving sexual abuse including, but not limited to, sodomy and inanimate object sexual penetration.
Sexual Assault Against Staff	Any sexual assault against staff.
Sexual Harassment	Includes sexual flirtations, sexual advances, propositions for sexual intercourse or sexual encounters, comments about an individual's body,

Table 5 Continued

Law Violations

Term	Definition
Other	<p>intention at and sexual exposure, or sexually degrading words used to describe an individual.</p> <p>Any other sexually offensive action, comment, or statement.</p>
Theft:	
School Property	<p>Unlawful taking and carrying away property belonging to Norfolk Public Schools with the intent to deprive the lawful owner of its use.</p>
Staff Property	<p>Unlawful taking and carrying away property belonging to a Norfolk Public Schools' staff member with intent to deprive said member of its use.</p>
Student Property	<p>Unlawful taking away of property belonging to another student.</p>
Locker Burglary	<p>Removing any property from a locker other than the one assigned to the student.</p>
Other	<p>Theft of any property while under school jurisdiction.</p>

Table 5 Continued

Law Violations

Term	Definition
Threatening:	
Staff Member	Threatening to strike, attack, or harm any staff member.
Student	Threatening to strike, attack, or harm any student.
Other	Threatening to strike, attack, or harm another.
Trespassing:	
Trespassing	Entrance upon the school or school grounds by a person neither attending nor working at that school (including suspended students).
Vandalism:	
School Property	Willful or malicious destruction of school property.
Private Property	Willful or malicious destruction of private property.
Graffiti	Willful or malicious defacing of public or private property.
Weapons and Dangerous	
Instruments:	
Weapons' Possession-Gun	Possession of any gun (loaded or unloaded) including starter pistols.

Table 5 Continued

Law Violations

Term	Definition
Gun (Toy or Look-Alikes)	Possession of a cap pistol, water pistol, toy pistol, or any look-alike on school grounds, in any school vehicle, or at any school-sponsored activity (Landen, 1992).
Knife	Possession of any size or shape of knife.
Razor blade/Boxcutter	Possession of a razor blade, boxcutter, or alike.
Live Ammunition	Possession of any live bullets.
Fireworks Explosive	Possession of firecrackers or any small explosive device including caps and snapper pops.
Other	Possession of any object that could cause injury including (but not limited to) ice-pick, multi-fingered ring, metal knuckles, clubs, and the use of any object to inflict bodily injury upon students and/or any other person.
Mace or Similar Substance	Use/discharge of mace or similar substance while under school jurisdiction.
Miscellaneous:	
Forgery of Official Documents	Altering any official document such as report cards,



Table 5 Continued

Law Violations

Term	Definition
Gambling	transfers, transcripts, for the intent to deceive. Wagering money or valuable property on the outcome of a competition or game of chance or luck.
Possession of Stolen Property	Having on one's person or within one's control, property belonging to another person and taken without that person's consent (This includes school property.).
Obscene Phone Calls	Making telephone calls that are offensive to anyone.
Vehicle Complaint	Sitting in or driving in motor vehicles or bicycles after they have been parked at the beginning of the school day.
False Alarm	Calling, signaling, or initiating an automatic signal falsely indicating the presence of fire.
Smoking (Minor)	Smoke (anything or use or possession of tobacco products such as snuff or chewing tobacco in any school buildings, on the grounds or property adjacent to the school during the school day, on the

## Table 5 Continued

Law Violations

Term	Definition
Curse and Abuse	<p>school bus, or at any official school function).</p> <p>Acting in a manner toward a staff member that conveys a grossly offensive, obscene, or sexually suggestive message.</p>
Satanic Activity	<p>Involved in any activity related to satanism characterized by extreme cruelty or viciousness.</p>
Other	<p>Any criminal offense not covered above.</p>
Stalking:	
Stalking	<p>Repeated conduct with the intent to cause emotional distress to another by placing that person in reasonable fear of death or bodily injury.</p>

Table 6

Student Perceptions

Term	Definition
Crime/Harm	Student fear of violent attacks from fellow students triggered by the wearing of expensive, designer clothing.
Violent Gang Encounters	Student fear of attacks from those students belonging to a group known for its wearing of certain clothing color combinations.
Concern for Clothing	Preoccupation with designer fashions exhibited by students.
Harassment	Ridicule experienced by students not possessing the latest designer fashions.
Sense of Belonging	Feelings of school spirit and pride.
Satisfaction with Clothing Policy	Affinity for the school dress code.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

As noted, a paucity of empirical data exists to support the positive effect of uniforms on various outcomes suggested by school officials, school administrators, teachers, and parents. Instead, a plethora of anecdotal evidence has emerged alleging the success of uniform policies. Given this situation, the researcher has chosen to highlight the scarce empirical and multitude of anecdotal evidence for the purposes of this chapter. Specifically, this chapter highlights the following categories: history, variations, and effects of school uniform policies on student behavior and perceptions.

#### History of School Uniforms

Although associated historically with parochial schools, public school uniforms surfaced in urban schools in the late 1980's. During this time, a few large, inner-city schools in Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. created uniform regulations to combat appearance-related peer pressure, teach that clothing does not make the person, and blur the distinctions among economic classes ("Dress, right," 1987; Stevenson & Chunn, 1991). Moreover, uniform regulations would empower the inner-city youth with the knowledge of how to dress for future job opportunities. Such regulations received overwhelming parental support (97%), and two years later were extended to include 74% of the public schools in Baltimore and 32 schools in Washington, D.C. Moreover, that same year, uniforms gained momentum in several other inner-city locations. Uniform policies emerged in 44 Miami, Florida schools; 30 Detroit, Michigan schools; and various Bridgeport, Connecticut schools. The 1990's have witnessed a significant increase in

school uniform policies in small, rural towns as well as in large, urban cities. Specifically, urban cities, such as Chicago, Cleveland, Miami, and New York, have noted the expansion of uniform policies throughout their public school systems. Education spokespersons have reported that approximately 80% of Chicago public schools, 67% of Cleveland public schools, and 60% of Miami public schools require uniforms. Moreover, New York City's Board of Education has projected that 25% of all public schools will have implemented uniform policies by the end of this year (Lewin, 1997). Currently, various urban, suburban, and rural school districts in 22 states have implemented either mandatory or voluntary uniform regulations with the strongest surge occurring in New York city ("Uniform Policies," 1998). In accordance with a March 18, 1998 law enacted by the Board of Education, all 500,000 students in grades kindergarten through sixth will experience a mandatory uniform policy with the inception of the 1999-2000 school year (Archibold, 1998; Harden, 1998). This policy will accompany other mandatory uniform regulations established in 229, or 13%, of the state's schools ("Uniform Policies," 1998).

This growing trend in public schools is likely to continue well into the next century given uniforms' widespread appeal among administrators, educators, and the American public. Polls have reflected this support with the majority of Americans indicating their approval of such a policy implementation.

### Types of Policies

Mandatory policies require students to wear the uniform designated by school officials. Uniform styles and colors vary among schools. However, dress pants, shirts, ties, and jackets for boys and skirts, jumpers, or pants and blouses for girls are common

uniform components (Harden, 1998). Some schools designate specific colored shirts for each grade level to show distinction among students (Allen, 1997). Other schools permit students to design logos for uniform shirts and other required apparel. For example, elementary students in a Washington, D.C. school, gained media attention after the popularity of their marketing project: inexpensive, regulation sneakers adorned with the school's colors and mascot (Pittman, 1990). Such a role in the decision-making process causes students to feel more amenable toward the wearing of uniforms and, concurrently, boosts school pride.

Generally, the simple style and color scheme of uniforms render them economical compared to the cost of regular clothes (Harris, 1994). Although uniforms cost less than the clothing students typically wear to school, uniforms can pose a substantial financial burden to some families. Various schools have created the following provisions designed to assist families unable to afford uniforms: (a) school districts provide uniforms to students who cannot afford to purchase them; (b) community and business leaders provide uniforms or contribute financial support for uniforms; (c) school parents work together to make uniforms available for economically disadvantaged students; (d) schools operate exchange closets where students trade old, outgrown uniforms for new ones; and (e) graduates donate used uniforms to incoming students (Thomas, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Many school districts have demonstrated the enactment of these provisions. For example, the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) in California has acquired over \$100,000 in donations from community members and organizations to purchase the uniforms needed for some families (Gursky, 1996). Parents in the Baltimore

Schools also have worked to provide assistance for needy families. These parents have created their own businesses to make and sell inexpensive uniforms to those scarcely able to afford them.

Students who express religious objections to uniforms or who cite the necessity to wear certain clothing for health reasons may elect to opt-out of the many mandatory uniform programs with parental consent. Approximately one to two percent of students within each school district choose this option (Archibold, 1998). U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley (as cited in U.S. Department of Education, 1996) specifically outlined students' rights to religious expression in *Religious Expression in Public Schools*, a guide distributed nationwide to superintendents. According to Riley, school uniform policies must accommodate students' wearing religious attire, such as yarmulkes and headscarves, and displaying religious messages on items of clothing.

In addition to religious rights, a uniform policy must protect other student rights of expression. For example, school officials must honor students' rights to wear buttons supporting political candidates. Such buttons are condoned as long as they do not contribute to disruption by interfering with discipline or the rights of others. Thus, a school uniform policy may prohibit students from wearing a button bearing a gang insignia.

Students lacking permission to opt-out of the uniform policy must comply with the designated regulations. Failure to comply may result in the imposition of disciplinary consequences, such as exclusion from extra-curricular activities, receipt of a discipline referral, reprimand from a school administrator, or a parent-teacher conference.

By contrast, some school districts have opted for voluntary uniform policies. Such policies allow students to choose freely whether and under what circumstances they will wear school uniforms. However, students choosing not to wear the uniform may be subjected to dress code stipulations. Thomas (1994) asserts that schools with the largest percentage of students choosing to wear uniforms relate greater improvements in school climate. Seeking maximum participation, some school administrators create incentives for students who choose to wear the uniform. For example, the administration in one Chicago public school plans field trips and weekly movies for students participating in the policy (Havsy, 1998).

Students attending schools devoid of a mandatory or voluntary uniform policies have the freedom to choose their attire within certain limitations. These limitations may prohibit the wearing of gang-related attire or clothing promoting alcohol, tobacco, drugs, violence, or obscene language ("Uniform Policies," 1998).

#### Effects of Uniform Policies on Student Behavior

Although mostly anecdotal evidence exists, some schools have provided empirical evidence delineating the outcomes of uniforms on student behavior. This empirical evidence was obtained mainly through questionnaires and interviews with administrators, teachers, and counselors from various schools nationwide. Descriptive analyses of school behavioral data also comprised this empirical evidence. The following paragraphs highlight both anecdotal and empirical evidence, when available, to illustrate the effects of uniforms on student behavior.

Attendance offenses. A decrease in attendance offenses is a positive result



expected from uniform programs (Thomas, 1994). Shirley Hayes, principal of Park View Elementary School in Washington state, speculates that uniforms will eliminate competition over clothing among students and will subsequently improve her attendance rates. Hayes explained that instead of attending school, her students peddle drugs to finance their expensive wardrobe (York, 1988). Presenting descriptive statistics, several studies confirm this principal's assertion regarding increased attendance rates. A 1989 pilot study conducted within 10 schools in the LBUSD cited improved attendance rates as the major finding (Thomas, 1994). Almost a decade later, Robinson (1997) reported a 94.7% attendance rate, the highest ever recorded, within this same district. Tracking student data from 1986-1994, an elementary principal in Baltimore, Maryland reported a 6.5% increase in the attendance rate (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Similarly, a case study conducted within an elementary school in Richmond, Virginia noted an increase in attendance rates attributable to the uniform policy (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

Two doctoral dissertations also presented results demonstrating the positive effect of a uniform policy on attendance rates. In her inferential investigation of two inner-city middle schools, one with a uniform policy and one without, Gregory (1996) found a significant difference in attendance rates between the two schools. Analyzing short-term data in Portsmouth, Virginia, Ward (1999) also investigated student attendance within two urban middle schools. Like perceptions related by staff members and parents, results revealed an improvement in attendance rates just one year subsequent to the institution of a mandatory uniform policy. Second year results, however, indicated no improvement in

these rates.

Concomitant to the increase in attendance rates, school officials acknowledge a decrease in incidences of tardiness and truancy among students associated with uniform regulations. The principal of South Shore Middle School in Seattle, Washington communicated a decrease in occasions of tardiness to Department of Education officials just one year after the institution of a mandatory uniform policy (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

Contrary to the positive anecdotal and empirical effects reported above, other investigations revealed mixed results regarding the impact of school uniforms on student attendance. Utilizing descriptive statistics to present her data, Hughes (1996) found no change in attendance rates within two Texas urban/suburban middle schools just one year after the implementation of uniforms. Scher (1995) found similar results upon an examination of attendance rates in three urban elementary schools in Alabama. A review of data supplied by the school district indicated no significant difference in attendance rates after the enactment of a voluntary uniform policy. As a doctoral dissertation, Hoffler-Riddick (1998) examined the effects of uniforms on attendance within an urban middle school in southeastern Virginia. Analysis of variance results indicated that uniforms actually had a negative impact on attendance rates.

Rule violations. Detailing a short-term improvement in student behavior, staff at Ruffner Middle School, in Norfolk, Virginia, witnessed a decrease in rule violations. Specifically, they detailed a 47% decrease in leaving class without permission, and a 68% decrease in throwing objects (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). These staff

members credited the uniform policy with the reduction in problem behaviors. Research conducted by Hoffer-Riddick (1998) also noted a short-term decrease in rule violations for the participants in her study. Her analyses revealed that while rule violations for an urban middle school declined significantly during the first year following the institution of a mandatory uniform policy, they then increased considerably during the second year of the uniform program.

A similar analysis of rule infractions revealed different results. In Murray's (1996) comparison of behavioral data, he found no significant differences in these infractions between the middle school requiring uniforms and the middle school without a uniform policy.

Conflict indicators. A 1991 survey, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, detailed that 28% of participating teachers witnessed physical contact among students (Landen, 1992). This problem of physical contact, or fighting, among students has prompted school administrators to consider adopting uniforms. A reduction in this behavior among students is another positive impact associated with the implementation of uniform regulations. Both empirical and anecdotal reports from school officials have indicated a perceived decrease in this behavior incurred by uniforms. After one year with uniforms, the LBUSD, encompassing 58,000 middle school students, witnessed a 51% decrease in fighting (Cohn, 1996; Cohn & Siegel, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Subsequently, Long Beach law enforcement officials praised the uniform policy and this positive impact on school behavior. Police Chief William Ellis further noted that schools have fewer reasons to call the police since less

conflict arises among students (Cohn, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

District survey results gathered in 1995 further validated the outcome noted by district and law enforcement officials. The results sought to discern administrator perceptions of the newly-implemented, mandatory uniform policy. After one year with uniforms, 73.9% of administrators related fewer playground fights (Stanley, 1996). Parents also noted this positive effect associated with the Long Beach uniform policy via a telephone survey. Of the 966, purposive, randomly selected sample of parents, 82.4% reported that uniforms facilitated compatibility among students (Stanley, 1996). Using U.S. Department of Education Software to track discipline data, Ruffner Middle School officials likewise have noted a 38% decrease in fighting among students just one year after the implementation of their mandatory uniform policy (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Like school officials, students favored the uniform regulations, witnessing decreased instances of fighting (Bradley, 1995). Similarly acknowledging a decrease in this behavior, the National Association of Elementary School Principals published the results of their recent survey. According to the 958 principals participating in the study, 75% believed that students no longer fought over clothing (Archibold, 1998).

Citing only anecdotal evidence, these school administrators and teachers acknowledged the decrease in fighting among students that accompanied their uniform policies. Elementary School Principal Doris Hicks noted a change in the playground atmosphere with fewer difficulties occurring among students (Stover, 1990). Similarly, the principal of William Rainey Harper High School in Chicago highlighted a reduction in conflicts among students triggered by the wearing of certain colors representative of

neighboring rival gangs (Thomas, 1994). Although in its initial stages, the mandatory uniform program at Cradock Middle School in Portsmouth, Virginia has received positive comments from teachers. Among other outcomes, teachers cited decreased fighting over clothing as indicative of the new uniform requirements (Allen, 1997).

Unlike the evidence purported by parents and school officials, students did not perceive a decrease in fighting after the institution of uniforms. Stanley (1996) surveyed elementary, middle, and high school students in the LBUSD attempting to measure the effects of the recently implemented dress policy. Short-term results indicated that the majority of student respondents did not feel that uniforms reduced instances of fighting at school.

Aside from fighting, accounts from administrators indicated a decrease in other conflict indicators. The principal and vice-principal of Ruffner Middle School deemed most notable the decrease in the number of student suspensions for disruption, insubordination, and disrespect. They acknowledge more than a 30% reduction in these infractions from the previous school year devoid of a mandatory uniform policy (Hoffler-Riddick & Lassiter, 1996).

Law violations. A reduction in law violations is a positive outcome realized upon instituting uniforms. By creating uniformity in student attire, school districts can eliminate these violations reported within their institutions. Investigating unofficial delinquency rates in Japan, Tanioka and Glaser (1991) found that the identifiability associated with wearing a uniform seemed to have prevented a sample of secondary school students from engaging in these law-violating behaviors.

Other studies conducted within the United States signify a decrease in law-violation behaviors after the implementation of a uniform policy. After one year with mandatory uniforms in their 70 elementary and middle schools, the LBUSD reported a 36% decrease in school crime, 74% decrease in sex offenses, 50% decrease in weapons offenses, 34% decrease in assault and battery offenses, and an 18% decrease in vandalism. This decreased vandalism accounted for \$100,000 in yearly savings for the large district (Cohn, 1996; Cohn & Siegel, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Similarly noting less law violations among students, the principal of South Shore Middle School in Seattle, Washington noted zero incidents of theft for the 1995-96 school year, the school's first year with mandatory uniforms (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

#### Effects of School Uniforms on Student Perceptions

The school uniform research discussed students' perceptions as related to clothing issues. Writings referred to the presence of unfavorable perceptions toward the wearing of designer clothing as a rationale for the institution of uniform regulations in public schools. Those perceptions cited in the literature are highlighted below.

Fear of crime/harm. Uniform dress may eliminate the widespread fear of crime among students. Students often attend school reluctantly, fearful of violent crime triggered by the wearing of expensive clothing occurring in schools. Gerstein (1995) estimated that 160,000 students skip school daily in an effort to evade violent attacks from fellow students. An examination of recent, violent crime statistics fails to allay these students' fears. According to one study, violent assaults in schools increased 14% from 1987-1990 (Landen, 1992). A 1995 study, conducted by the Departments of Health and

Human Services, highlighted the incidences of violent assaults in public schools after 1990. This study reported the occurrence of 105 violent, school-associated deaths nationwide for the school years 1992-1993 and 1993-1994. Homicides accounted for 85% of these violent deaths. Among these homicides, 72.4% of the victims were students. The majority of these victims were males (82.9%) with a median age of 16. Like their victims, the offenders tended to be male (95.6%) with a median age of 17 (Modzeleski, 1996). Considered fashionable, the oversized clothing worn by the offenders often facilitated the occurrence of this violence since it affords students the means to conceal weapons. Most recently, research completed by the Education Department's National Center for Education and Statistics investigated the occurrence of crimes at schools or school-sponsored events. The most significant findings discerned from questionnaires completed by public school principals detailed that 10% of schools nationwide acknowledged the occurrence of violent crimes during the 1996-97 school year. These violent incidents consisted of 11,000 physical confrontations involving a weapon, 7,000 robberies, and 4,000 sexual assaults. Analysis of these incidences indicated that large, urban schools with more than 1,000 students reported more crimes to law enforcement officials than those enrolling less than 1,000. Less significant survey findings revealed that school administrators rated absenteeism, tardiness, and fighting as the most common discipline problems occurring among students. ("Survey," 1998).

School uniform advocates attribute much of this violence to the wearing of designer fashions. They highlight newspaper and popular magazine articles replete with examples of these crimes. For instance, in 1983, a teenage male was fatally shot inside a

Baltimore high school. The perpetrator committed this crime to steal a college, basketball jacket. In May 1989, a freshman, basketball player at a Maryland high school was strangled by a teammate for his \$116 sneakers (Telander, 1990). Six months later, Detroit police reported the fatal shooting of an 18-year-old male for his goose down parka and \$70 Nike sneakers. That same month, six teenagers murdered a high school quarterback to obtain his expensive sneakers (Telander, 1990). In Chicago, four youths lost their lives for their expensive warm-up jackets (Darnton, 1990). Educators in Castro Valley, California spoke of a student robbed at gunpoint of his professional sports team jacket (Burke, 1991). Some urban, police departments confirm the frequent occurrence of such fashion-incited incidents. Police in Newark noted that leather or athletic jackets prompted 64 armed robberies that occurred between September and December 1989 (Darnton, 1990). Police districts in Chicago attest to the occurrence of at least 50 violent crimes involving jackets and approximately 12 triggered by expensive, athletic footwear per month (Telander, 1990). Similarly, during a four month span, Atlanta police reported more than 50 sportswear robberies.

Despite this prevalence of crime associated with the wearing of designer clothing, most scholarly research fails to measure student perceptions regarding the impact of uniforms on fear of crime/harm. One investigation, however, sought to measure this impact via a student survey. Results obtained soon after the institution of the uniform policy indicated that the majority of middle and high school students did not feel safer traveling to and from school. Elementary students, however, revealed that uniforms did afford them a sense of security en route to and from school (Stanley, 1996).



Fear of violent gang encounters. According to the literature, the wearing of uniforms may diminish student fear of gang attacks (“Uniformly,” 1994). The presence of gang attire within an institution often serves as the catalyst for this fear among students. The donning of gang attire can create a hostile atmosphere among student, rival gang members, and it often results in pugilistic encounters whereby innocent student bystanders may become injured. Additionally, naïve students often become the target of these encounters when they unknowingly wear colors associated with those of a rival gang (Holloman, 1995; Stanley, 1996). For example, a freshman attending a California high school riddled with warring gangs narrowly avoided gunfire prompted by her red and black clothing (Burke, 1991).

Despite the prevalence of this gang crime in schools, prior investigations have failed to measure the effects of school uniforms on student fear of gang attacks. Instead, Woods & Ogletree (1992) sought to measure the effects of the uniform policy on parent perceptions regarding school safety. The 30 parents surveyed believed that the uniform dress code provided their children some degree of safety from gang encounters.

Anecdotal evidence contended by staff members at a Chicago high school affirmed the supposition that uniforms may cease actual gang attacks, thus diminishing the fear that surrounds them. These employees have witnessed a reduction in student conflicts, particularly those incited by the wearing of certain colors representative of the neighboring rival gangs (Thomas, 1994).

The violence resulting from troublesome, non-student, gang intruders encroaching on school property also may decrease with the adoption of uniforms (“Uniformly,” 1994).

Uniforms help identify intruders to the school (Harris, 1994). This easy detection of troublesome outsiders serves to deter incidents of crime and violence (Cohn & Siegel, 1996; Robinson, 1997). School personnel at a high school in New Orleans no longer reported a problem identifying strangers invading school grounds subsequent to the adoption of a uniform policy (Thomas, 1994).

Concern for clothing. Many educators concur that uniforms diminish jealousy over designer clothing, thus affording students minimal distractions and thereby improving their classroom learning environments (Harris, 1994). Harriet Danufsky, Long Beach middle school teacher, experienced this increased readiness to learn in her English class.

According to Danufsky, the children work more diligently and spend less time worrying about their clothing (Robinson, 1997). Like Danufsky, Linda Moore, principal at Will Rogers Middle School in Long Beach, noticed the change in her classroom environment. The uniformed students in her class have the mindset that the focus of school is education, and it is not a preoccupation with dress, or wearing the latest fashions (Robinson, 1997). Laura Hand, second-grade teacher at Park Elementary in Portsmouth, Virginia also noted a positive learning climate in her classroom. Now, fewer comments about clothing are heard (Walzer, 1995). Parents at Bowling Park Elementary School, one of Norfolk, Virginia's 10 majority-black community schools, similarly highlighted the tremendous impact school uniforms have made on the learning environment. According to parents, students exhibit increased attention in the classroom since clothing distractions no longer exist. Asserting the success of his 1995 mandatory uniform policy, the principal of a Seattle, Washington middle school noted the greater academic focus exhibited by his 900

students. Prior to the uniforms, students focused primarily on each other's clothing. The principal of William Rainey Harper High School in Chicago detailed that competitive dressing among students has abated with the enactment of the 1990 uniform policy (Thomas, 1994). Experiencing similar effects, a guidance counselor at Douglas Elementary School in Memphis, Tennessee perceived an enhanced classroom environment, devoid of fashion competitiveness, resulting from the implementation of their voluntary uniform program. Given the nature of this program, 90% of students have chosen to wear uniforms on the designated days, Monday through Thursday. Only on Fridays is casual dress allowed (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

Survey results gathered in the LBUSD in 1995 confirmed notions that classrooms with uniforms entertained learning as opposed to jealousy and competition over clothing. Of the participating, district administrators, 78.4% perceived a greater classroom work ethic among students after the institution of uniform regulations. Aside from the view expressed by administrators, 81.7% of surveyed parents maintained that uniforms emphasized learning as the primary reason for attending class (Stanley, 1996).

Parents surveyed in both Chicago and Philadelphia, one of the first large urban school districts to implement a uniform program, expressed a similar belief. Responses to a questionnaire distributed to parents in an urban Chicago elementary school revealed that the majority of adults surveyed (60%) believed that the uniform policy allowed their children to devote more attention to learning and studying. The reason for this benefit, acknowledged by these parents, was the reduced competition over clothing that accompanied the uniform program (Woods & Ogletree, 1992). An evaluation of the

Philadelphia program (as cited in Woods & Ogletree, 1992) revealed high levels of parental support, with 91% of parents supporting the policy. Of these favorable respondents, 88% believed the uniform regulations reduced competition among students to wear designer clothing and thus fostered a better learning environment.

Despite the beliefs expressed by parents, students surveyed in a large, urban school district in Washington, D.C. overwhelmingly expressed their dissatisfaction with the prospective adoption of a dress code. Although acknowledging the existence of clothing-related peer pressure within their schools, these students in grades 5 through 11 believed that uniforms would not decrease concern for clothing among their classmates (Stevenson & Chunn, 1991).

Other uniform advocates acknowledge the relationship between uniforms and learning, but further cite the long-term benefit of success in achieving future goals. In his 1986 book, Nathan Joseph identifies appearance as an important component in role establishment. Thus, students dressed in uniforms may exhibit a higher readiness to learn and a greater likelihood of accomplishing success in future roles than those students dressed in regular clothing (Joseph, 1986; Kennedy & Riccardi, 1994).

After noting these promising assertions, especially those expressed by the LBUSD employees, President Clinton endorsed uniforms, asserting their ability to reduce jealousy among students over clothing. This endorsement supported his family values platform, and created an additional priority in the 1996 campaign for reelection: to reduce competitiveness and jealousy in the schools. To help accomplish this goal, President Clinton directed the Education Department to distribute a manual to all of the nation's

16,000 school districts suggesting guidelines for establishing mandatory school uniform policies (Cohn, 1996; “President,” 1997).

Fear of harassment. According to the literature, students not possessing the latest, designer fashions often fear harassment by other students. A 1990 study, conducted by the National School Safety Center, confirmed this assertion. Results indicated that approximately 800,000 students, motivated by fear of harassment, became truant at least one day per month (Landen, 1992). Uniform advocates cite uniforms as a possible solution. They assert that a decreased fear of harassment among students often accompanies the institution of uniform regulations. One study, conducted within the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), confirmed this perception. This study sought to gauge parental interest in mandating uniforms throughout the district. Of the 268 respondents to the survey, 236 indicated a need for a uniform policy in their child’s school. Among the reasons for this belief was the notion that uniforms could eliminate ridicule experienced by students without designer clothes (Woods & Ogletree, 1992).

Sense of belonging. Uniform advocates maintain that students attending schools with a uniform policy experience an increased sense of school spirit and pride, or sense of belonging to the school community. Therefore, according to Stanley (1996), school districts should require uniforms since they may enhance these desirable qualities. Uniforms diminish the distinctions among students’ economic levels and ethnicities that designer fashions often create, thus fostering a sense of oneness and belonging within the school community (Cohn & Siegel, 1996). Mary Marquez, principal of John G. Whittier Elementary in Long Beach, maintains that uniforms provide children with low-income

backgrounds a chance to feel part of and identify with the school (Robinson, 1997). Other uniform advocates also note the sense of belonging that may accompany the wearing of uniforms. They further assert that this outcome may compensate for the instability experienced by many students at home, a factor perceived as the main reason children seek gang membership (Robinson, 1997). Still others maintain that the enhanced feelings of belonging produced by uniforms foster high self-esteem among students and subsequently improve academic performance. According to Sunny Johnson, teacher at Cherry Hill Elementary in Baltimore, Maryland, students wearing uniforms experience a sense of belonging to a group, have improved self-images, and subsequently, perform better in the classroom (Walzer, 1995). Like Johnson, school officials in Kansas City, Missouri noted an increased sense of community surrounding Carver Elementary School after the institution of a mandatory uniform policy. Principal Philomina Harshaw reported that her 320 students have an increased sense of pride and self-concept since the uniforms were adopted (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

Parents also have indicated the increased sense of belonging experienced by students after the commencement of a uniform policy. A survey administered to parents in an inner-city, high school in New Zealand, sought to assess parents' views regarding the potential abolition of the current uniform program. In Barrington and Marshall's (1975) descriptive study, they noted that the survey results further reinforced the view that parents overwhelmingly support uniform regulations. These researchers reported that over two-thirds of the 481 parents surveyed favored the existent policy and voted for its retention. According to their speculations, parents rejected the abolition of the uniform

regulations because they believed that such guidelines would blur the distinctions between socio-economic classes and promote a strong sense of cohesion among students (Barrington & Marshall, 1975).

Parents surveyed in the United States also expressed this belief. Descriptive research conducted in a Chicago elementary school sought to gauge parent perceptions regarding the school uniform policy. The 30 parents surveyed agreed that uniforms afforded students many benefits. Among these benefits, 70% of parents believed that uniforms promoted feelings of oneness within the school community.

Although adults cite this increased sense of cohesion, most students do not. Stanley (1996) examined short-term perceptual data regarding student cohesion in the LBUSD. Results indicated that the majority of middle (76.4%) and high school (62.5%) students surveyed revealed that uniforms do not foster a sense of belonging to the school family. Elementary students, on the other hand, did indicate that uniforms provided them with a sense of cohesion at school (Stanley, 1996).

Satisfaction with clothing policy. According to anecdotal evidence, the establishment of uniform regulations may result in more students favoring the school clothing policy. Although initially reluctant, students eventually may express great satisfaction with wearing uniforms. According to anecdotal evidence, urban middle school students in the Hampton Roads area echoed this sentiment. Students in Portsmouth, Virginia, previously opposed to leaving their designer fashions at home, now enjoy wearing uniforms and the tranquil atmosphere that accompanied the inception of a mandatory uniform policy (Allen, 1997). Similarly, Norfolk, Virginia teenagers have

endorsed current uniform regulations since they afford students less stress when dressing for school in the morning and less peer pressure and teasing while in the classroom (Bradley, 1995). Like the students in Norfolk, urban middle school students in Los Angeles have gained an affinity for uniforms. Based on their conversations with the school principal, they admit spending less time choosing attire for school, which results in less stressful mornings and decreased instances of tardiness for these students (Kommer, 1999).

Like the anecdotal evidence provided by students, two empirical investigations (Behling 1994, 1995) examining the effects of dress on perceptions produced positive results regarding student satisfaction. The earlier of the two studies specifically investigated the effects of school uniforms on student perceptions in both a public high school and a private school. Student participants reviewed a series of pictures revealing only the attire worn by the models in the photographs. This attire included a formal uniform, which included a blazer; a casual dress uniform consisting of a sweater, shirt, and khakis; and an outfit typical of the style worn by public high school students. After this review of the clothing, participants chose the models they preferred in the photographs. Results revealed that student participants perceived those dressed in the formal uniform as better behaved, more academically successful, and possessing greater academic potential than the students clothed in the other dress categories (Behling, 1994).

Contrary to the anecdotal and empirical evidence cited above, recent empirical investigations do not support these prior findings. Presenting results of descriptive research conducted within three high schools, Kim (1998) discovered that teachers and



parents expressed more positive attitudes toward uniforms than students. Additionally, those students required to wear uniforms felt less positive toward the clothing policy than those students permitted to choose clothing reflective of their school color scheme. Findings presented by Hughes (1996) also indicated student dissatisfaction with uniforms. Urban/suburban middle school students surveyed in Texas perceived uniforms as a violation of their individual rights. These respondents also felt that uniforms did not positively affect behavior or overall school climate.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### Participants

The participants in this study consisted of students from two large, urban middle schools in Virginia: School A and School B. School A had a mandatory uniform policy in effect since the inception of the 1995-96 school year; while School B has never instituted a mandatory uniform policy. As of December 1998, School A enrolled 982 students, and School B had 764 students. The official district membership report for the 1998-99 school year classified the students from School A as American Indian/Alaska Native (.3%); Asian/Pacific Islander (1.2%); African-American/Black (66.6%); Hispanic (1.6%); and White/Caucasian (30.3%). Similarly, students representing School B were identified as American Indian/Alaska Native (0.0%); Asian/Pacific Islander (1.4%); African-American/Black (75.3%); Hispanic (1.8%); and White/Caucasian (21.5%) (Norfolk Public Schools, 1998).

All students in each school were included in the data collection for attendance offenses, rule violations, conflict indicators, and law violations. The school district supplied these data for these behavior categories. These data contained counts of each student violation. Student violations observed by school personnel are recorded by the observant on an incident referral form supplied by the district. A designated school office member from each school categorizes the violation based on the description provided in the incident referral form. The district staff development administrator provides training for office members regarding the categorization of student violations. Aside from the

initial training, no further processes are conducted to ensure the reliability of categorization across schools or within schools.

All students attending each school were asked to participate in a survey constructed by the researcher. Consent forms, detailing the nature of the survey, were distributed to students by a staff member designated by the school principal. Those students obtaining parental consent completed the researcher's survey. In School A, 179 students responded, representing an 18% response rate. These respondents consisted of 69 sixth-grade students, 59 seventh-grade students, and 51 eighth-grade students. Of these respondents, 64 were males and 115 were female. Demographic data collected from the survey revealed the following information about the participants from this school: American Indian/Alaska Native (0.0%); Asian/Pacific Islander (0.0%); African-American/Black (53.6%); Hispanic (3.4%); White/Caucasian (38.0%); and Other (5.0%).

In School B, 163 students responded, representing a 21% response rate. These respondents consisted of 78 sixth-grade students, 44 seventh-grade students, and 41 eighth-grade students. Of these respondents, 81 were male and 82 were females. Demographic data collected from the survey revealed the following information about the participants from this school: American Indian/Alaska Native (0.0%); Asian/Pacific Islander (1.2%); African-American/Black (70.6%); Hispanic (3.7%); White/Caucasian (20.2%); and Other (4.3%). In general, sample demographics were representative of the school populations and comparable between schools. The two exceptions are a higher representation of females in School A (64.2%) versus School B (50.3%) and a higher representation of African-Americans/Blacks in School B (70.6%) than in School A

(53.6%). To test for possible confounds, analyses were performed to assess interactions between the demographic variables and school affiliation. See Results section.

### Measures

The researcher developed an instrument, the *Student Perception Survey* (McCarty, 1999), to measure the following student attitudes: fear of crime/harm, fear of violent gang encounters, concern for clothing, fear of harassment, sense of belonging, and satisfaction with clothing policy. These attitudes are described in the literature as possible benefits of school uniform policies (Barrington & Marshall, 1975; Burke, 1991; Cohn, 1996; Cohn & Siegel, 1996; Darnton, 1990; Gerstein, 1995; Harris, 1994; Holloman, 1995; Joseph, 1986; Kennedy & Riccardi, 1994; Landen, 1992; Modzeleski, 1996; "President," 1997; Robinson, 1997; Stanley, 1996; "Survey," 1998; Telander, 1990; Thomas, 1994; "Uniformly," 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 1996; Walzer, 1995; Woods & Ogletree, 1992). Items were generated by the researcher for each of the constructs. These items were then reviewed and modified by the participating schools' principals. This process yielded the final edition of the student survey which was distributed to the student participants in both schools. The survey items are shown in Appendix A.

The survey consisted of four items assessing perceptions concerning students' fear of crime/harm as discerned from the literature review conducted by the researcher; four items assessing beliefs regarding students' fear of gang activity; six items assessing students' concern for clothing; four items assessing students' sense of belonging to their school; and two items assessing students' satisfaction with the clothing policies instituted at each school. Middle school participants indicated their level of agreement with each

item using a five point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). Additionally, participants were asked to provide their gender, grade level, ethnicity, and age.

### Scale Quality

Factor analyses were performed to determine if the items loaded on their intended dimension. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the intrascale reliability of the measures. Items were deleted that had intrascale loadings less than .4, or loaded highly on several scales, or had poor scale reliability. Results are presented in Chapter IV.

### Procedures

The behavior referral data were obtained from the Director of Research and Testing for the school district. The referral data from 1995-98 from both middle schools were compared to identify any difference in student behavior between the two schools, as well as any trends over time within each school. The *Student Perception Survey* (McCarty, 1999) was administered by the researcher during the Fall semester of the 1998-99 school year. Based on their middle school experiences, students were asked to express their opinions relating to fear of crime/harm, fear of violent gang encounters, concern for clothing, fear of harassment, sense of belonging, and satisfaction with clothing policies.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis. The results will address the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will have fewer attendance offenses, as measured by occasions of tardiness, class cutting, truancy, being brought to school by police, and leaving school grounds without permission, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 2: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will have fewer rule violations, as measured by instances of electronic device possession, inappropriate personal property possession, misrepresentation, disruption, repeated and continued violations of rules and regulations, and improper computer use, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 3: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will have fewer conflict indicators, as measured by instances of disrespect, insubordination, profanity, harassment, and fighting, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 4: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will have fewer law violations, as measured by instances of assault, alcohol possession, arson,

bomb possession, burglary, disorderly conduct, drug offenses, extortion, inciting a riot, robbery, sexual offenses, theft, threats, trespassing, vandalism, weapons' and dangerous instruments' possession, miscellaneous behaviors, and stalking than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 5: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will perceive less fear of crime/harm, as measured by the *Student Perception Survey*, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

Hypothesis 9: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will perceive a greater sense of belonging to their school, as measured by the *Student Perception Survey*, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

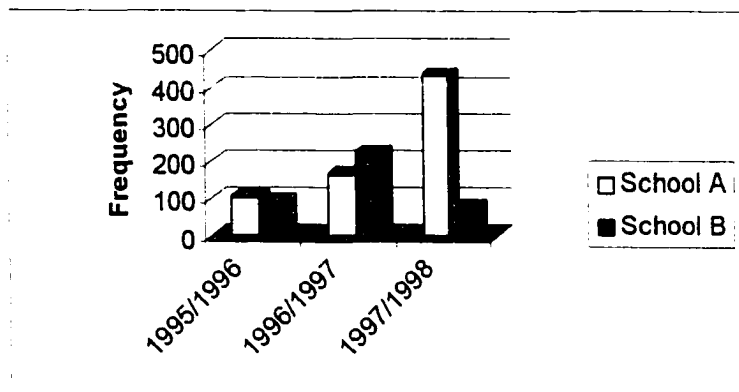
Hypothesis 10: Students of an urban middle school with a mandatory uniform policy will perceive more satisfaction with their clothing policy, as measured by the *Student Perception Survey*, than students of an urban middle school without a uniform policy.

### Student Behavior

Behavioral data were reviewed for trends over time both between and within schools. Figure 1 presents the data by frequency, by year. In addition, the data also were reviewed on a monthly basis and on a per student basis. However, these additional analyses revealed no additional information.

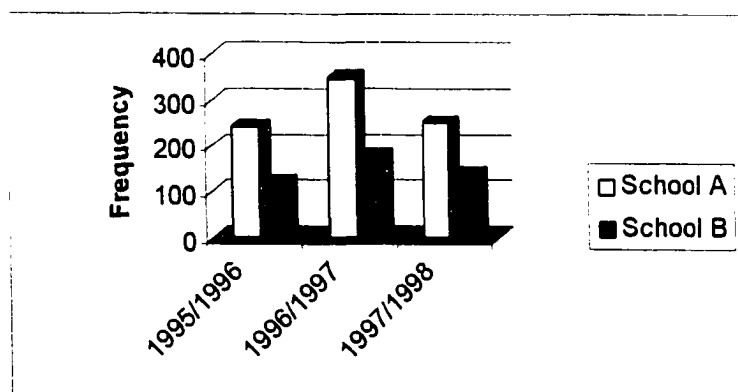
### Attendance Offenses

Year	School A	School B
1995/1996	107	94
1996/1997	167	225
1997/1998	435	79



### Rule Violations

Year	School A	School B
1995/1996	243	119
1996/1997	351	177
1997/1998	252	139



**Figure 1. Student Violations (1995-1998)**

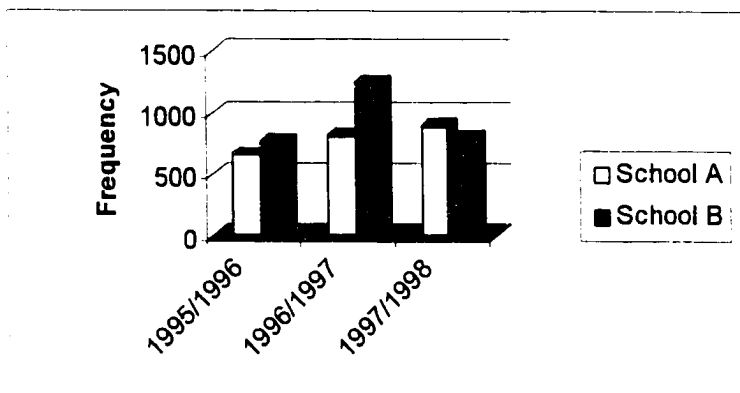
**Note.** Student Enrollment

Year	School A	School B
1995/1996	981	907
1996/1997	1050	905
1997/1998	1032	881



Conflict Indicators

Year	School A	School B
1995/1996	657	769
1996/1997	819	1253
1997/1998	899	806



Law Violations

Year	School A	School B
1995/1996	53	75
1996/1997	52	100
1997/1998	69	56

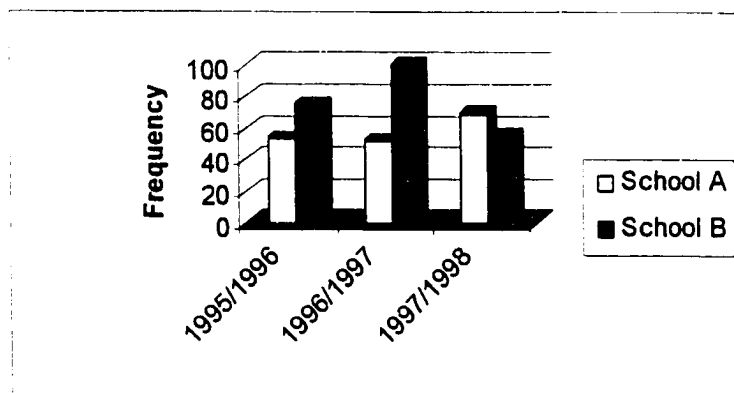


Figure 1 Continued. Student Violations (1995-1998)

Note. Student Enrollment

Year	School A	School B
1995/1996	981	907
1996/1997	1050	905
1997/1998	1032	881

### Student Perceptions

Scale quality. Based on factor analyses, theoretical review of item content, and estimates of internal reliability, items were removed from the measurement model. Initial factor analyses are shown in Table 7. Items 8, 9, and 13 loaded highly on multiple factors, and, therefore were removed. Items 4 and 14 were removed due to moderate cross loadings (i.e.,  $>.20$ ), poor intrascale reliability (i.e.,  $<.20$ ), and the lack of a theoretical basis for inclusion of a factor constructed of these two items. After these adjustments, interscale analyses were again performed. See Table 8. From this analysis, the items composing factors 4 and 5 were removed. Factor 4 (items 10, 11, 12) had unacceptable internal scale reliability ( $\alpha = .20$ ). Factor 5 consisted of only one item (item #3) which proved to be only tangentially related to the purpose of the study. The final, adjusted factor solution is shown in Table 9. Thus, the remaining scales were perceived sense of belonging, perceived fear of crime/harm, and satisfaction with clothing policy.

Internal consistency of these scales was estimated using Cronbach's alpha measure of internal reliability. These analyses indicated sufficient reliability estimates for each scale. See Table 10.

### Tests of Hypotheses

Student behavior. Hypotheses 1 through 4 were analyzed by comparing the behavior violations from both schools for the three years subsequent to the enactment of a mandatory uniform policy. The data revealed erratic increases and decreases in behavior violations for both schools. For example, the 1997/98 attendance offenses for School A more than doubled from the previous school year. Similarly, 1996/97 attendance offenses

Table 7

Interscale Factor Analysis

Item Number	Factors						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17	<b>.8103</b>	.0132	.0212	-.0167	.1719	.0812	-.0698
15	<b>.7977</b>	.0547	.1463	.0179	.1177	.0599	-.0136
18	<b>.7582</b>	.1440	-.0237	.0349	-.0821	.0015	.0251
16	<b>.7488</b>	-.0323	.1227	-.0150	-.2179	.0566	.0793
19	.0613	<b>.8792</b>	.0366	.0717	.0662	.0564	-.0698
20	.1305	<b>.8427</b>	.0354	.0755	.0221	-.0549	.0429
9	-.1042	.3542	.3054	.1735	-.3039	.1944	.2233
2	.0538	-.0271	<b>.7863</b>	.0169	.0369	.0434	.0299
8	.1472	.3349	<b>.4748</b>	.3643	-.0282	-.0720	-.0777
1	-.0747	.1286	<b>.4717</b>	-.0776	.4612	.1380	.1899
12	-.1137	.0679	-.1368	<b>.7415</b>	-.0329	.2152	.0607
7	.0264	.1222	.2792	<b>.6963</b>	.0599	-.1543	.1022
5	.1072	-.0207	.3322	<b>.3976</b>	.2862	.1830	-.3018
3	-.0205	-.0011	-.0117	.0000	<b>.7079</b>	.1073	.0014
6	.1222	.0886	.4085	.3407	<b>.5576</b>	-.2399	.1642
10	.1993	-.0146	-.1426	.2762	.1003	<b>.6982</b>	-.0069
13	-.1092	.2542	.2352	-.1667	.2382	<b>.5867</b>	-.0731
11	.2339	-.3123	.1391	-.0487	-.2972	<b>.5355</b>	.1508
14	.2411	.1817	-.1524	-.0394	.2219	.1579	<b>.7363</b>
4	-.1562	-.0604	.2724	.1677	-.0744	-.1144	<b>.6124</b>

Note. Factor loadings above 0.40 are in bold. Item numbers correspond to survey items in Appendix A.

Table 8

Interscale Factor Analysis Representing the Extraction of Five Items

Item Number	<u>Factors</u>				
	1	2	3	4	5
17	<b>.8105</b>	.0984	-.0102	.0215	.1474
15	<b>.8049</b>	-.0161	.0650	.0203	-.0163
16	<b>.7675</b>	.0043	-.0436	.0551	-.1576
18	<b>.7545</b>	-.0582	.1490	.0594	.0254
6	.0889	<b>.7823</b>	.1568	-.1072	.1076
7	-.0382	<b>.6312</b>	.2201	.2598	-.4221
2	-.0441	<b>.6202</b>	-.0889	-.0312	-.0234
1	-.0608	<b>.5719</b>	.0861	-.0118	.3240
5	.0809	<b>.4969</b>	.0058	.3281	.1184
19	.0765	.0649	<b>.8756</b>	.0777	.0318
20	.1327	.0524	<b>.8674</b>	.0311	-.0019
10	.2075	-.0532	-.0037	<b>.7507</b>	.2977
12	-.1563	.1473	.1739	<b>.6164</b>	-.1963
11	.2431	-.0871	-.4016	<b>.4459</b>	-.0894
3	-.0288	.1982	.0658	.0603	<b>.8186</b>

Note. Factor loadings above 0.40 are in bold.

Table 9

Interscale Factor Analysis Representing the Extraction of Four Items

<u>Perceived Sense of Belonging</u>	<u>Factors</u>		
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
17. Our school has good spirit.	<b>.8251</b>	.1026	-.0201
15. Our school has good pride.	<b>.8111</b>	-.0193	.0621
16. I am proud of my school.	<b>.7617</b>	-.0059	-.0219
18. I feel that I belong to this school.	<b>.7609</b>	-.0579	.1776
<u>Perceived Fear of Crime/Harm</u>			
6. I fear attacks from gang members.	.0861	<b>.7635</b>	.0893
7. Other students fear attacks from gang members.	-.0253	<b>.6279</b>	.2048
1. I often fear being attacked or injured by other students.	-.0807	<b>.6094</b>	.0875
2. Students in my school worry about being shot.	-.0713	<b>.5978</b>	-.0592
5. In my school, I can tell who is in a gang.	.1196	<b>.5668</b>	-.0111
<u>Satisfaction With Clothing Policy</u>			
19. I like the clothing policy at my school.	.0482	.1115	<b>.9033</b>
20. I would not change the current clothing policy at my school.	.0972	.0916	<b>.8974</b>
Eigenvalue	2.6869	2.2024	1.4361
Percentage of variance	24.40	20.00	13.10
Cumulative percentage of variance	24.40	44.40	57.50

Note. Factor loadings above 0.40 are in bold. Factor 1 = Perceived Sense of Belonging; Factor 2 = Perceived Fear of Crime/Harm; Factor 3 = Perceived Satisfaction With Clothing Policy

Table 10

Means, Standard Deviations, Intercorrelations, and Internal Reliabilities of Measures

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. SB	3.67	0.96	(.80)						
2. FCH	2.56	0.80	0.00	(.64)					
3. SCP	2.53	1.39	0.14*	0.21**	(.81)				
4. Gender			0.02	0.04	-0.15*	----			
5. Grade			-0.16*	-0.25**	-0.16*	0.07	----		
6. Age	12.04	1.00	-0.24**	-0.16*	-0.18*	0.11*	0.83**	----	
7. Ethnicity			0.19**	0.07	-0.10	-0.01	0.00	-0.08	----

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$

Note. Values in parentheses represent Cronbach's coefficient alpha scale reliability estimates. SB = Perceived Sense of Belonging; FCH = Perceived Fear of Crime/Harm; SCP = Perceived Satisfaction With Clothing Policy

for School B more than doubled from the previous school year. Moreover, the 1997/98 attendance offenses for School B then decreased by more than half from the previous year. See Figure 1.

Similar trends, or lack thereof, existed for the other behavior violations. For example, during the 1996/97 school year, rule violations for School A increased by more than 100 counts from the previous year. In the following school year, rule violations for School A then decreased by about 100 counts. Similarly, School B witnessed an erratic increase in rule violations during the 1996/97 school year and a subsequent decrease for the 1997/98 school year. In School A, the 1996/97 conflict indicators increased by more than 100 counts from the previous school year. Similarly, in School B, the 1996/97 conflict indicators almost doubled from the previous school year. The conflict indicators for School B then decreased by more than 400 counts for the 1997/98 school year. During the 1996/97 school year, School B witnessed an increase in the number of law violations, which then decreased by almost half during the following 1997/98 school year. See Figure 1. When asked about these changes, the school administrators and staff members from both schools could not offer any explanation to account for these erratic increases and decreases.

Given these data and the lack of information from school administrators and personnel to explain the erratic increases and decreases in violations, no meaningful trends in behavior could be established between schools and within schools. Moreover, no reliable conclusion regarding Hypotheses 1 through 4 can be made. See Figure 1.

Student perceptions. A multivariate analysis of variance was conducted by the

researcher. School affiliation demonstrated a significant multivariate effect ( $F(3,337) = 43.60$ ;  $p < .05$ ). In support of hypotheses 5 and 9, there was a significant univariate effect for school affiliation on the measures of fear of crime/harm and sense of belonging (Hypotheses 6, 7, and 8 were untestable; items composing the measurement scales for these hypotheses were removed from the study after assessing scale quality.). These analyses indicated that the items composing the measurement scales for these hypotheses had moderate cross loadings, poor intrascale reliability, and/or the lack of a theoretical basis for their inclusion. Students at School A perceived significantly less fear of crime/harm ( $M = 2.43$ ) than students at School B ( $M = 2.70$ ). Also, students at School A demonstrated a significantly greater sense of belonging to their school ( $M = 3.79$ ) than students at School B ( $M = 3.52$ ).

The results did not support hypothesis 10. Contrary to the hypothesized relationships, students at School B reported significantly more satisfaction with school clothing policy ( $M = 3.24$ ) than students at School A ( $M = 1.90$ ). The univariate analysis of variance results are presented in Table 11.

Further tests were performed to determine if there were effects from the demographic variables. Multivariate factorial analyses of variance revealed no significant interactions between the demographic variables (i.e., gender, grade level, age) and school affiliation. However, there were significant univariate main effects for gender on satisfaction with clothing policy ( $F(1, 339) = 8.09$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and race/ethnicity on sense of belonging ( $F(4, 337) = 4.00$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Also, grade demonstrated univariate effects on all three measures: sense of belonging ( $F(2,338) = 5.84$ ;  $p < .05$ ); fear of crime/harm ( $F(2, 338) = 12.16$ ;  $p <$



Table 11

Univariate Analysis of Variance Results


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Source	df	MS	F	Eta <sup>2</sup>
SB	1	6.43	7.12*	.02
FCH	1	6.77	10.92*	.03
SCP	1	150.25	101.34*	.23

---

Within-Groups: 339

\*p &lt; .05

Note. SB = Perceived Sense of Belonging; FCH = Perceived Fear of Crime/Harm; SCP = Perceived Satisfaction With Clothing Policy

.05); and satisfaction with clothing policy ( $F(2, 338) = 5.96; p < .05$ ). Age was highly correlated with grade ( $r = .83$ ), and had similar effects on the three dependent measures. Only grade will be discussed, but the results apply similarly to age.

Female students were less satisfied with the school clothing policy ( $M = 2.35$ ) than male students ( $M = 2.78$ ). As noted above, factorial analysis of variance demonstrated that there was not a significant interaction between school affiliation and gender.

Whites/Caucasians rated sense of belonging significantly higher ( $M = 3.96$ ) than African-American/Black students ( $M = 3.53$ ). Like grade level, factorial analysis of variance demonstrated that there was not a significant interaction between school affiliation and race/ethnicity;  $F(2, 319) = 1.72, p > .05$ .

Post-hoc analyses indicated that eighth grade students expressed greater fear of crime/harm ( $M = 2.24$ ) than sixth and seventh grade students ( $M = 2.73; M = 2.60$ , respectively). Sixth grade students rated sense of belonging higher ( $M = 3.87$ ) than seventh and eighth grade students ( $M = 3.50; M = 3.53$ , respectively). Sixth grade students were more satisfied with the school clothing policy ( $M = 2.82$ ) than seventh and eighth grade students ( $M = 2.31; M = 2.32$ , respectively). Like ethnicity, factorial analysis of variance revealed no significant interaction between school affiliation and grade level.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### Student Behavior

Contrary to prior school uniform research, this study attempted to examine the long-term effects of school uniforms on student behavior. This long-term examination of the behavioral data revealed erratic increases and decreases in the number of violations for which school personnel were unable to explain. No reliable conclusions could be established regarding the hypotheses that students in School A commit fewer attendance offenses, rule violations, conflict indicators, and law violations than those students attending School B.

These findings do not support the anecdotal evidence presented by school personnel who overwhelmingly claim that uniforms improve student behavior (Allen, 1997; Stover, 1990; Thomas, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 1996; York, 1988). Moreover, the results of this study do not support the empirical research analyzing student behavior. Prior short-term empirical investigations mainly indicated that school uniforms produce no effect (Hughes, 1996; Sher, 1995; Stanley, 1996) on attendance rates, or have a positive effect on attendance rates (Gregory, 1996; Ward, 1999), or have a positive impact on behavior infractions (Hoffler-Riddick, 1998; Hoffler-Riddick & Lassiter, 1996; Hughes, 1996; Stanley, 1996).

The reason for the findings obtained in this study may lie with the reliability of the behavioral data. The possibility exists that the violation recording process has produced inconsistencies in these data both within and between schools. With this process, each

teacher observes and then documents the violation on a referral form provided by the school district. Following documentation, no accuracy checks occur to ensure recording consistencies among the individual teachers. The completed behavior referral forms are then interpreted and coded by an employee within each school office. Although these employees did receive initial training regarding their role in the referral process, no further accuracy checks occur to check for coding inconsistencies.

The inconsistencies produced by the violation recording process could affect prospective research projects conducted by the school system. Future attempts to compare behavior violations across time and schools may result in unreliable conclusions. Thus, any decisions regarding the adoption or continuation of uniform programs could be based on unreliable data. Additionally, these inconsistencies could affect the accuracy of school crime reports. Given successful lobbying by the Clinton administration, schools may soon be required to publish these reports. Their publication could relate misinformation to the general public regarding the amount of crime in a particular school and, subsequently, create a false image regarding student safety within individual schools (Page, 1999).

To improve the reliability of conclusions drawn from behavioral data, the school district could aim to eliminate inconsistencies produced by the violation recording process. This effort would include frequent training sessions for teacher observers and staff coders. A knowledgeable trainer could review the specific behaviors that constitute a violation. The trainer also could provide written examples of problem behaviors for teacher use when writing referrals. Additionally, during these sessions, the office staff could engage in

supervised exercises to practice coding fabricated behavior referrals. These data gathered during the exercises could then be used to assess and estimate inter-rater reliability.

Aside from these sessions, trainers frequently could visit the schools to review documented referrals and their subsequent coding. Such practices may ensure greater consistencies in the recording and coding of behavioral violations, generate different results in future research enterprises examining trends in student behavior, and eliminate the publication of inaccurate school crime reports.

### Student Perceptions

This study explored the effects of school uniforms on student perceptions toward fear of crime/harm, sense of belonging, and satisfaction with current school clothing policy. Results indicated that uniforms may have both a positive and negative effect on student perceptions.

Satisfaction with clothing policy. As can be seen in Table 11, of all the effects, the effect on student satisfaction was strongest. Students required to wear uniforms were significantly less satisfied with the current school clothing policy than those students permitted to choose their school clothing. This finding contradicts the anecdotal evidence in the literature provided by school personnel. For example, Bradley (1995) and Allen (1997) concluded that students actually feel an affinity for school uniforms. These conclusions were based on interviews with students from two different middle schools that had recently adopted mandatory uniform policies.

The results obtained in this study also contradict the empirical evidence purported by Behling (1993). After presenting participants with photographs of various dress code

options, students expressed their satisfaction with uniforms. These participants perceived the students in the photographs wearing uniforms as better behaved and more academically successful than those dressed in other clothing options.

Other empirical investigations gauging student attitudes toward uniforms actually support the findings obtained in this study. Results of these studies indicated that student survey respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the current uniform policy (Hughes, 1996; Kim, 1998). According to Hughes (1996), students perceived the dress policy as a violation of their individual rights.

To help combat the negative effects of uniforms on student satisfaction, administrators could involve students in the creation of a uniform policy. In this study, the students required to wear uniforms did not participate in the design of the uniforms. Their participation in this area may have resulted in more positive results regarding their satisfaction with the uniform policy. Much research and theory supports the idea that participative decision-making leads to greater commitment and satisfaction among participants (e.g., Vroom & Jago, 1978; Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

To involve students in the decision to wear uniforms, administrators could create various opportunities for students to offer this input. One opportunity involves the formation of student focus groups. These groups could discuss the clothing-related problems that triggered the need for uniforms. Such discussion may help students understand the rationale for requiring uniforms and result in greater acceptance of the policy.

Another opportunity includes involving students in the uniform design. Selecting

the design and colors of the uniforms may result in a greater sense of satisfaction with the finished product. Administrators and parents affiliated with a Washington, D.C. elementary school highlighted the tremendous satisfaction that accompanied the marketing of their student-designed sneakers, which bear the school colors and logos. According to anecdotal evidence cited by school personnel, this project resulted in a greater sense of pride and camaraderie among students. Moreover, the low cost of these sneakers alleviated some of the financial burden for parents of purchasing expensive, designer footwear (Pittman, 1990).

Greater satisfaction with uniforms may also result from allowing students to select the style of the uniforms. Student committees could meet and peruse the various uniform catalogs available to school administrators before choosing several uniform styles. Allowing students the opportunity to choose from a range of styles may increase their liking of the uniforms. For instance, girls could select blouses, polos, or sweatshirts and either jumpers, skirts, or shorts to wear to school. Boys could alternate between polos, dress shirts, or sweatshirts and dress pants or shorts. A Los Angeles middle school principal noted increased interest in and acceptance of the uniform policy after allowing students the freedom to choose their uniform style. After a fashion show presenting several uniform options, students chose the uniform they preferred to wear. Their input into the uniform selection resulted in greater interest in and acceptance of the clothing policy (Kommer, 1999). Empirical evidence presented by Kim (1998) also suggests that students permitted to choose their preferred uniform style express greater satisfaction with the school clothing policy than those students required to wear the uniform chosen by the

administration.

Permitting students to select the uniform fabric may boost their satisfaction with the policy. According to Costa and Goldberg (1998), stylish fabrics may create greater student affinity for uniforms. These authors highlighted lycra as the new polyester. According to manufacturers, this fabric produces the same comfort, durability, and good looks as polyester without the opposition from students who abhor traditional polyester uniforms (Costa & Goldberg, 1998).

Sense of belonging. Students wearing uniforms felt a greater sense of belonging to the school community than those students permitted to choose their school clothing. This finding is consistent with research which cited this outcome as a benefit associated with mandatory uniform policies (e.g., Robinson, 1997; Stanley, 1996; Walzer, 1995). According to this anecdotal evidence gathered from interviews with school administrators and teachers, uniforms blur the distinctions among student socioeconomic levels and ethnicities, thus promoting a sense of belonging to the school community. Moreover, school administrators associate this enhanced sense of belonging with both improved self-esteem and academic performance among students.

Although supportive of the anecdotal evidence, these findings do not support most results obtained by Stanley (1996) in her short-term investigation of the LBUSD mandatory uniform policy. Although noting the positive effect of uniforms at the elementary level, Stanley (1996) found that the majority of middle and high school survey respondents indicated that uniforms did not produce feelings of belonging to the school community.



Fear of crime/harm. Students wearing uniforms feel safer at school compared to those not wearing uniforms. These feelings support the beliefs presented by Robinson (1997) and Darnton (1990). As noted in Chapter 2, these authors claim that uniforms may foster a safer school climate. According to their speculations, dress codes may eliminate the increasing crime/violence involving designer clothing that has alarmed police in recent years. The removal of the sports jackets, expensive jewelry, and designer footwear from schools could curb the materialism that compels youngsters to steal and assault fellow students for these items (Darnton, 1990).

Aside from the anecdotal evidence, the findings obtained in this study do support those obtained by a 1996 study conducted on the West Coast. According to Stanley (1996), half of the elementary students surveyed in the LBUUSD revealed that uniforms made them feel safer when traveling to and from school. These uniforms afforded these youngsters protection from neighborhood gangs who often attack innocent students based on the color combinations their designer fashions display.

Gender and satisfaction with clothing policy. Female students were less satisfied than males with the school clothing policy. This finding is consistent with a plethora of empirical evidence indicating that women are more concerned with their appearance than males, and this sex difference decreases with age (e.g., Cash, Winstead, & Janda, 1986; Pliner, Chaiken, & Flett, 1990). When designing clothing policies, school personnel should recognize these gender differences. Their recognition of this difference may result in greater acceptance of the policy among female students.

Grade and satisfaction with clothing policy. Sixth grade students expressed more

satisfaction with the school clothing policy than seventh and eighth grade students. The explanation for this finding may be that younger students are less concerned with appearance than older students. According to Woods and Ogletree (1992), concern for self-expression through clothing increases with age. Other uniform advocates also support this positive relationship between the concern for self-expression through clothing and age. Majestic and Smith (1995) suggest that elementary and middle school youth are more compliant and have less need to assert their individuality through clothing than adolescents.

Grade and sense of belonging. Sixth grade students noted a greater sense of belonging than seventh and eighth grade students. At this time, the researcher is unsure of the cause for this finding.

Grade and fear of crime/harm. Eighth grade students, in particular, feel less safe at school than sixth and seventh grade students. This finding is supported in the gang-related literature. According to Klein (1995), the ages of gang members range from 14-22. Therefore, older students are more likely to be involved in gangs than younger students. Moreover, since gang membership tends to involve assaults and intimidating behavior, eighth grade students may be more likely to fear crime/harm at school.

### Recommendations

Based on these perceptual findings, School A would profit from the continuation of its mandatory uniform program. This policy fosters feelings of safety and cohesion among students. School B also could profit from a mandatory uniform policy. Like those attending school A, students at this school may begin to feel safer from crime/harm and

experience a greater sense of belonging subsequent to the implementation of such a policy. As discussed, the schools may negate the negative effects of uniforms on satisfaction by allowing the students to participate in the creation of a mandatory uniform policy.

### Implications for Future Research

The results of this study suggest the need for school administrators to assess student perceptions regarding clothing-related school problems, an area overlooked in prior research endeavors. The unique, survey instrument created for the purposes of this study can aid administrators in this task. The data generated by this instrument in future practice can offer valuable insights into student fear of crime/harm, sense of belonging, and satisfaction with clothing policy. These insights would detect the need for a school uniform policy to combat clothing-related problems within schools, and they would deter the outbreak of violence and taunting associated with these problems. Thus, equipped with this empirical evidence, administrators would now have a basis for making decisions regarding the adoption or modification of a school uniform policy.

Moreover, these findings have highlighted other aspects that warrant investigation in future school uniform research. Uniform policies in suburban and rural schools should be investigated to gauge their effects on student behavior and perceptions. Other student populations, such as elementary and high school students, should be surveyed to determine their perceptions of clothing-related issues. Researchers also could evaluate satisfaction with student-designed uniforms. Finally, future studies could examine the relationship between uniforms and other variables, such as student attendance and performance.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**STUDENT PERCEPTION SURVEY**

## STUDENT PERCEPTION SURVEY

This survey is about clothing. For each of the items below, write the number that most closely agrees with your feelings.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

### Perceived Fear of Crime/Harm

- \_\_\_\_ 1. I often fear being attacked or injured by other students.
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Students in my school worry about being shot.
- \_\_\_\_ 3. I worry less about being hurt when I am not at school.
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Other students sometimes steal things like jewelry, sports jackets, and sneakers from other students.

### Perceived Fear of Violent Gang Encounters

- \_\_\_\_ 5. In my school, I can tell who is in a gang.
- \_\_\_\_ 6. I fear attacks from gang members.
- \_\_\_\_ 7. Other students fear attacks from gang members.
- \_\_\_\_ 8. I worry about non-students coming into the school and causing problems.

### Perceived Concern for Clothing

- \_\_\_\_ 9. Students who dress poorly are harassed by other students.
- \_\_\_\_ 10. It is important to me to wear clothes that look good at school.
- \_\_\_\_ 11. While at school, my friends and I often talk about clothing and styles.
- \_\_\_\_ 12. Some students are jealous of other students' clothing.
- \_\_\_\_ 13. While in the classroom, I am often distracted from learning.

\_\_\_\_\_ 14. Doing well in class is really important to me.

---

Perceived Sense of Belonging

\_\_\_\_\_ 15. Our school has good spirit.

\_\_\_\_\_ 16. Our school has good pride.

\_\_\_\_\_ 17. I am proud of my school.

\_\_\_\_\_ 18. I feel that I belong to this school.

---

Perceived Satisfaction With Clothing Policy

\_\_\_\_\_ 19. I like the clothing policy at my school.

\_\_\_\_\_ 20. I would not change the current clothing policy at my school.

Please check the items that apply to you.

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. <b>Gender:</b>      | 2. <b>Ethnicity:</b>                   |
| Male _____             | American Indian/Alaskan Native _____   |
| Female _____           | Asian/Pacific Islander _____           |
|                        | Black _____                            |
|                        | Hispanic _____                         |
|                        | White _____                            |
|                        | Other _____                            |
| 3. <b>Grade Level:</b> | 4. <b>Age (Please fill in.):</b> _____ |
| 6 _____                |  |
| 7 _____                |  |
| 8 _____                |  |

**APPENDIX B**  
**COVER LETTER TO PARENTS**

Dear Middle School Parents,

As a doctoral candidate, I am researching the effects of school uniforms. With your permission, your student at xxxxx Middle School can aid me in my research. Your child will complete a brief survey created to measure students' perceptions of clothing-related issues in schools. The survey results may help public school administrators assess the need for school uniform policies in their districts.

As a participant in my project, your child's involvement is strictly voluntary and will not affect his/her standing at xxxxx Middle School. Moreover, your refusal to permit your child to participate will not result in a penalty or loss of benefits to which you or your child is otherwise entitled. There is no personal risk or discomfort directly involved with this research, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your child's participation at any time. **Please note the attached consent form. If you grant permission for your child to participate in this project, please complete the consent form and return it to school as soon as possible. Whether or not you wish your child to participate**, I would appreciate your returning this consent form.

If you have any questions or problems regarding your child's participation in this study, please contact Jacqueline McCarty, the researcher, through her Old Dominion University committee chairman, Dr. Maurice Berube, at 683-3322. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline McCarty, Researcher  
Doctoral Candidate, Old Dominion University

**APPENDIX C**  
**PARENT CONSENT FORM**



## Parent Consent Form - School Uniform Research Project

Please check the appropriate statements below, sign, and return to your child's school.

\_\_\_\_\_ I grant permission for my child, \_\_\_\_\_,  
to participate in this research project.

\_\_\_\_\_ I **do not** grant permission for my child,  
\_\_\_\_\_, to participate in this research  
project.

Grade level of student:	6 _____	Gender of student:	Male _____
	7 _____		Female _____
	8 _____		

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/Guardian Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## VITA

Jacqueline M. McCarty received her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Urban Services/Urban Education Concentration from Old Dominion University in August of 1999. Her dissertation is titled The effects of school uniforms on student behavior and perceptions in an urban middle school. The chairperson of her dissertation committee is Dr. Maurice R. Berube.

Dr. McCarty earned her Masters of Education degree in Elementary Education from Chestnut Hill College in May of 1994. While at Chestnut Hill college, she conducted research under the guidance of Dr. Carol Zinn. The title of this research was Birth order and academic achievement: Are firstborns destined to succeed?. She completed her undergraduate training at Villanova University where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science in May of 1991.

While studying at Old Dominion University, Dr. McCarty worked full-time. She taught second grade at a local private school with a mandatory uniform policy. This experience triggered her interest in school uniforms and led her to pursue this interest as a dissertation topic.

The address of Dr. McCarty's department of study is as follows: Old Dominion University, Department of Educational Leadership, 110 Education Building, Norfolk, Virginia 23529.