Racial Threat and Punitive School Discipline

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Tests of the racial threat hypothesis, linking the racial composition of place to various measures of social control, find that where there are greater percentages of blacks, more punitive criminal justice policies are implemented. Just as the criminal justice system continues to get tougher on crime despite stagnant crime rates, it is also clear that schools are becoming harsher toward student misbehavior and delinquency despite decreases in these school-based occurrences. However, only a very limited number of studies have been able to partially explain this trend of intensifying social control in schools. Using a national sample of 294 public schools, the present study is the first to test the racial threat hypothesis within schools to determine if the racial composition of students predicts greater use of punitive controls, regardless of levels of misbehavior and delinquency. Results of multivariate analyses support the racial threat perspective, finding that schools with a larger percentage of black students are not only more likely to use punitive disciplinary responses, but also more likely to use extremely punitive discipline and to implement zero tolerance policies. They also use fewer mild disciplinary practices and restorative techniques. In addition, racial threat is more influential when school delinquency and disorder are lower.

Keywords: racial threat, school discipline, punitiveness, racial disparity, student composition.

In Discipline and Punish (1977), Michel Foucault established that the school’s role as an institution of social control has existed since public schooling began. In recent decades, however, there has been a notable intensification of formal controls in schools (Beger 2002; Skiba 2000). The discipline and punishment of students has become particularly harsh—a trend that mirrors the mounting punitiveness in the criminal justice system. And, as with falling crime rates, rates of student delinquency, student drug use, violent school victimization, and school-related deaths have actually declined since the early 1990s, despite perceived increases (Beger 2002; Brooks, Schiraldi, and Ziedenberg 1999; Devoe et al. 2005; Dinkes, Cataldi, and Lin-Kelly 2007).

While there is a range of possible responses to student misbehavior used by teachers and school administrators, some increasingly restrictive school practices are being utilized, including more teacher referrals to the principal, more exclusion from class time, and more detentions, suspensions, and expulsions (Gottfredson and Gottfredson 2001).¹ Many of the

1. References to misbehavior include any student violation of school rules (such as talking back to teachers or not submitting homework), which may or may not also include behaviors that are against the law, such as destruction of school property or drug use. Law violation, in addition to being categorized as misbehavior, is also considered delinquent. In the past, schools have dealt with the majority of all in-school misbehaviors internally. But, recently, schools have responded to certain misbehaviors, like fighting or graffiti, by calling police (Hirschfield 2008).

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more punitive practices, like suspension and expulsion, are the direct result of the implementation of zero tolerance policies, which generally refer to federally mandated suspensions for bringing guns to school, but can also include mandatory consequences for a variety of other misbehaviors identified by individual institutions (Skiba 2000; Skiba and Peterson 1999). Regardless of this ever-escalating severity, school boards, school administrators, and parents have continued to call for even harsher student treatment (Robbins 2008). It is not clear, however, what is driving this pattern of expanding school punitiveness.

**Intensification of School Punitiveness**

It is widely acknowledged that American schools—urban public schools in particular—are defining and managing student discipline with an increasingly punitive approach. Specific examples of restrictive school policies include the imposition of dress codes or uniforms to promote conformity (Gottfredson and Gottfredson 2001; Watts and Erevelles 2004), as well as the use of student ID badges to facilitate immediate identification of troublemakers and deter would-be rule breakers (Beger 2002; Brooks et al. 1999). Recent statistics indicate that over 80 percent of schools, and nearly all urban schools, now use some type of security and surveillance program (Dinkes, Kemp, and Baum 2009). Aspects of these programs include the use of metal detectors, locked or monitored doors and gates, adult supervision of hallways, uniformed security guards or uniformed and armed security resource officers (SROs), security cameras, locker searches, clear school bag requirements, and drug-sniffing dogs (Beger 2002; Devoe et al. 2005; Giroux 2003; Hirschfield 2008; Watts and Erevelles 2004).

Research suggests that these trends in school punitiveness are not inconsequential. For students perceived by teachers and administrators to be in the “school to prison pipeline” or on the “jailhouse track” (Advancement Project 2005), more punitive discipline is sanctioned, even when the particular violations are not illegal (Hirschfield 2008). Schools are more frequently responding to defiance of behavioral codes and broken laws with in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions (Brooks et al. 1999; Fantz 2008; Giroux 2003; Kupchik and Monahan 2006). Moreover, legal reforms mandate that student involvement in certain acts that are against the law, such as drug and alcohol use or weapon possession, more frequently result in referrals to law enforcement rather than being addressed internally, even when they occur on school property (Hirschfield 2008). These types of responses by teachers, administrators, and lawmakers further enhance the likelihood that notions of future criminal justice involvement will be realized. Considering the recent trend toward more restrictive school practices and punitive student discipline, it is not surprising that the students subjected to the most intense forms of social control share many of the same characteristics with those who are most likely to be accused and convicted of crime—they tend to be poor, male, and members of a racial or ethnic minority (Noguera 2003a; Singer 1996).

As Paul Hirschfield (2008) has argued, there are four general explanations for trends in school punitiveness, each of which he considers to be inadequate in important ways highlighted here. One explanation is that this approach to discipline is a direct consequence of popular anxiety about high profile campus shootings (Beger 2002; Watts and Erevelles 2004) and other notable instances of school violence (DeMitchell and Cobb 2003). However, even before these events, the public had been concerned about several well-publicized instances of school violence that did not result in more restrictive policies. Further, this explanation does not account for the continued expansion of punitiveness toward students despite recent

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2. Zero tolerance can be traced to the federal Gun-Free School Act of 1994, which sought to restrict weapons in schools, but expanded to include nonweapon related and nonviolent behaviors. While zero tolerance has been widely criticized for unintended consequences, original supporters advocated greater fairness toward students, more consistent discipline, and violence prevention (Gorman and Pauken 2003; Henault 2001).
decreases in school violence. This suggests that popular anxiety cannot totally account for
disciplinary trends, many of which did not even address violence.

Increased school accountability for the academic performance of students is another
explanation that has been offered; instead of requiring better teaching and learning, many
schools may have increased their suspensions and expulsions to facilitate the removal of those
students responsible for failing test scores (Bryk et al. 1998; Fuentes 2003). However, by trans-
ferring authority away from school officials via the implementation of zero tolerance punish-
ments, underperforming students would not necessarily be targeted for exclusion.

Some argue that concerns about possible litigation for using nonmandatory exclusion-
ary school punishments have led to the involvement of third parties to handle more severe
instances of misbehavior (Arum 2003; Toby 1998). However, Hirschfield (2008) argues this
does not adequately explain why harsher practices are used in urban schools, when afflu-
ent students in suburban schools presumably have more access to legal remedies (Arum
2003).

The final explanation pertains to broad support for “getting tough” in a variety of Ameri-
can institutions, including schools that developed a crime-control approach to education. This
“governing through crime” orientation (Simon 2006), however, does not address the chang-
ing nature of discipline that is not a result of federal or state initiatives because much discipline
continues to originate with individual teachers and principals, suggesting that school puniti-
iveness is not merely a byproduct of government mandates (Gottfredson et al. 2000). 3

Review of Research on School and Student Discipline

A limited number of studies have explored the effects of specific school- and student-level
characteristics on the use of more severe student discipline. Assessments of individual variables
associated with discipline are few, most likely due to the restricted availability of data from the
U.S. Department of Education. Overall, there are certain conclusions about punishment that
may be made from school- and student-level studies. One factor presumed to be closely as-
sociated with school punitiveness and disciplinary practice is the level of school crime and dis-
order (Skiba et al. 2002). Surprisingly, researchers generally conclude that changes in school
punitiveness are not driven by changes in student misconduct and delinquency (Hirschfield
2008; Kupchik and Monahan 2006; Skiba and Peterson 1999; Wu et al. 1982). It is also pos-
sible that the implementation of zero tolerance policies is resulting in more punishment of
certain students, even though studies show that there is actually a considerable amount of
individual-level discretion employed in determining which student behaviors are addressed
by them (Ferguson 2000; Vavrus and Cole 2002). For example, one qualitative study found
that mandatory sanctions are often preceded by a series of nonviolent events that culminate
in a singling out by a teacher for a single disruptive behavior (Vavrus and Cole 2002). This
finding indicates that harsher student treatment is not merely a reflection of more violations
punishable by mandated suspensions, but also importantly involves the discretion of teachers
and administrators in identifying and acknowledging those behaviors.

Aside from actual amounts of student delinquency and school disorder, it has been sug-
gested that some measures of crime salience (such as prior victimization and fear, perceived
risk and safety, and concern about crime or delinquency) may predict harsh social control in
schools (Hilarski 2004; Skiba et al. 2002). While there have been no multivariate tests predict-
ing a relationship between crime salience and punitive outcomes for individual students, the
studies examining these crime salience constructs find that where there is greater teacher and
administrative fear of violent victimization, there tends to be more preventive policies used by

3. It is possible that the “governing through crime” approach to education may have expanded indirectly to school
administrators and teachers who adopted this perspective in relating to students (Simon 2006).
Schools show that certain student socio-demographic qualities are related to harsh school discipline. Student economic disadvantage, generally operationalized as whether a student receives free or reduced-price lunches, is one of the most consistent predictors of harsh school discipline throughout the last several decades (Brantlinger 1991; McCarthy and Hoge 1987; Nichols 2004; Skiba et al. 2002). As expected, statistics indicate that poorer students are, in fact, more likely to be targeted by harsh school practices (Brantlinger 1991; Singer 1996; Skiba et al. 2002; Skiba, Peterson, and Williams 1997; Wu et al. 1982), while wealthier students more often receive mild or moderate consequences (Skiba et al. 2002). Similarly, students whose fathers do not have full-time jobs have been more likely to be suspended (Wu et al. 1982). Student gender is another factor identified as consequential for disciplinary responses: Male students receive harsher punishments (Artiles 2003; Gregory 1995; Noguera 1995a; Skiba et al. 2002).

Additionally, various school characteristics have been found to affect the social control of students. School urbanicity is one feature associated with increased student punishment, which some have speculated may, in part, be due to student race or socioeconomic status and levels or types of crime both inside and outside of urban schools (DeVoe et al. 2005; Massachusetts Advocacy Center 1986; Skiba 2000; Wu et al. 1982). Research also shows that discipline policies are more likely to effectively improve student behavior and accountability in schools with strong principal leadership (Di Lullo 2004; Lasley and Wayson 1982); good leadership includes support of teachers, consistent supervision and use of feedback, high visibility and presence, and effective planning and problem-solving (Gottfredson et al. 2000). Conversely, poor principal leadership is associated with greater use of punitive discipline (Wu et al. 1982). Discipline training is also related to the quality of a school's disciplinary response, such that more training is associated with more use of discipline (Gottfredson et al. 2000; Wu et al. 1982).

**Student Race and Punitive Student Discipline**

Racial status is another variable consistently related to student punitiveness, with minority students receiving harsher treatment more often than white students. It is now well-known that black students are more likely to be subjected to intense school control than white students (Ferguson 2000; Gottfredson and Gottfredson 2001; Nichols 2004; Welsh 2000), and are generally given punishments that are more frequent and more punitive for less serious offenses (Brown and Beckett 2006; Nichols 2004; Noguera 2003b; Skiba 2000, 2001; Wacquant 2001). This disparity can be seen with suspensions (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force 2006; Brooks et al. 1999; Gregory and Weinstein 2008; Vavrus and Cole 2002), expulsions (Gregory and Weinstein 2008; Meier, Stewart and England 1989; Skiba and Peterson 1999), and even corporal punishment (Gregory 1995; Shaw and Braden 1990). In addition, studies show that black students are less likely to receive mild disciplinary alternatives (Skiba and Peterson 2000; Skiba et al. 2002). Minority students are also more likely to be subjected to restrictive prevention tactics, such as metal detector screening, and mandatory discipline, like zero tolerance punishments (Beger 2002; DeVoe et al. 2005; Noguera 2003b; Skiba 2000; Vavrus and Cole 2002). Compounding the racial imbalance of discipline, disparities in student treatment actually increase as punishments become more punitive (Skiba et al. 2002).

Several compelling individual-level explanations for racially disparate discipline have been advanced, including disproportionate involvement in delinquency (Noguera 2003a; Skiba et al. 2002; Watts and Erevelles 2004), more involvement in zero tolerance violations (Ferguson 2000; Vavrus and Cole 2002), perceptions of misbehavior resulting from racial stereotypes or bias (Nichols 2004; Skiba and Peterson 1999), and the “adultification” of black kids by school personnel (Ferguson 2000). One of the most frequently cited explanations...
for findings about the effects of student race on discipline is that it is actually socioeconomic status that influences school punitiveness, and that any associations with race are partially, if not completely, spurious (Brantlinger 1991; Nichols 2004; Skiba and Peterson 1999; Watts and Erevelles 2004). However, results from multivariate tests of these explanations show that they are either insufficient or inaccurate; even while controlling for effects of misbehavior, attitudes, academic performance, parental attention, school organization, and economic disadvantage and poverty, black students receive harsher school punishments (Gregory and Weinstein 2008; McCarthy and Hoge 1987; Skiba and Peterson 1999; Skiba et al. 2002; Vavrus and Cole 2002).

Racial Threat

While the findings about the factors associated with increased formal control of students in schools are important, there may be other ways to account for greater school punitiveness. No research to date has assessed the possibility that macro-level racial threat is behind the punitive trend in school discipline. Racial threat is different from individual student race that has predicted school punitiveness in prior research. Rooted in the conflict perspective, the racial threat hypothesis suggests that as the proportion of blacks increases in relation to whites, intensified measures of control will proliferate in response to the perceived growing threat derived from closer proximity to minorities. Hubert Blalock (1967) argued that, at the macro-social level, the presumed threat to the white majority by blacks was both economic and political, a concept he termed power threat. Research testing this perspective corroborates that perceived racial competition, a byproduct of a greater number of blacks and the subsequent concerns about limited financial resources (Taylor 1998) and political capital (Jacobs and Carmichael 2002), leads to the imposition of punitive social controls in order to maintain dominance of the majority.

Studies of this effect eventually came to include the presumption of black crime as one potential source of threat, an influence identified as social threat (Liska 1992) and, more recently due to its substantially crime-specific nature, racial threat (Baumer, Messner, and Rosenfeld 2003; Crawford, Chiricos, and Kleck 1998). Racial composition of place—the most common proxy for racial threat—is related to rates of arrest (Mosher 2001), resources and size of both law enforcement (Chamlin 1989) and corrections (Jacobs and Helms 1999), rates of incarceration (Jacobs and Kleban 2003), and executions (Tolnay, Beck, and Massey 1992). The effect of racial composition on social control also appears to be mediated by micro-level perceptions of racial threat, such that widespread associations made between blacks and dangerous predatory criminality are consequential for public support for harsh criminal policies (Chiricos, Welch, and Gertz 2004) and crime reduction expenditures (Barkan and Cohn 2005).

Contextual Effects of Racial Threat

Blalock (1967) suggested a possibility of conditional effects when noting that “different kinds of persons will not be similarly motivated by the minority percentage variable” (p. 31). Some research shows that the effects of racial threat are not equally consequential in all circumstances. Regionally, the percentage of the black population has been associated with harshness only in racially diverse cities with low segregation (Stolzenberg, D’Alessio, and Eitle 2004) and in places where concentrated disadvantage is greater (Bontrager, Bales, and Chiricos 2005), and perceived racial threat has been associated with harshness only in

4. The close association made by many Americans between blacks and crime has been extensively documented and described (see Welch 2007 for a review). It is the strength and pervasiveness of this link that has led researchers to conclude that “racial threat” (as distinct from power threat and social threat) is largely crime related.
the non-South (Chiricos et al. 2004) and Northeast (King 2007). Effects of racial composition also manifest differently over time (Behrens, Uggen, and Manza 2003). Moreover, effects of racial threat may depend on the type of crime control assessed, such as the implementation of habitual offender statutes (Crow and Johnson 2008) and sentencing adjudication (Bontrager et al. 2005) only for drug offenses.

Some of the results of contextual analyses may be surprising, because racial threat appears to be more influential in situations where one might expect less punitive measures to be implemented (Stolzenberg et al. 2004). However, it makes sense that greater effects of racial threat are likely when the effects of other influences on social control are less dominant. For example, Ted Chiricos and colleagues (2004) found that perceived racial threat increases punitiveness only when crime salience and racial prejudice are lower. Despite some inconsistent findings, most likely resulting from certain methodological limitations (Parker, Stults, and Rice 2005), there is relatively strong support for the racial threat perspective in both contextual and noncontextual analyses. Yet, no research has explored its potential implications for punitive school punishments.

The Present Study

It is plausible that crime-related racial threat is contributing to school punitiveness much in the same way that it has been found to increase the severity of numerous criminal policies and garner the public’s endorsement of them. Loïc Wacquant (2001) suggests that it is important to examine the reason that punitive discipline appears to be more intense in schools that are more heavily populated by disadvantaged black students. Because of the potential negative consequences of harsh school policies and the dramatic racial disparities in school punishments, an exploration of this possibility seems particularly critical.

While individual student race has been positively associated with school punishment, it has never been assessed at the aggregate level for punitiveness across schools. The underlying threat of black criminality perceived at the local level by policy makers, school district board members, school administrators, and teachers may lead to the enactment, implementation, and enforcement of harsher disciplinary policies and practices in schools with greater numbers of black students because of their increased proportions, as would be predicted by the racial threat hypothesis. In order to test for racial threat within the context of schools, this study examines the following hypotheses pertaining to punitive disciplinary responses: (1) Schools with a higher proportion of black students are more likely to use punitive controls, such as detention and suspension; (2) Schools with a higher proportion of black students are more likely to implement zero tolerance policies; and (3) Schools with a higher proportion of black students are more likely to use extreme punitive controls, such as expulsion and calling the police. Likewise, we expect that racial threat would diminish the willingness of schools to implement more moderate practices, instead favoring harsh techniques. Pursuant to this expectation, this study will also test the following hypotheses pertaining to restorative disciplinary responses: (4) Schools with a higher proportion of black students are less likely to use mild controls, such as parent-teacher conferences and sending students to the counselor; and (5) Schools with a higher proportion of black students are less likely to implement restitutive practices, such as community service.

Additionally, we test for possible moderating and contextual effects to determine whether the racial composition of students is more influential in circumstances in which punitive discipline is less likely, just as previous studies have found stronger racial threat effects in contexts where less punitiveness is expected. Because prior studies on school discipline have found such strong and consistent results regarding the predictive qualities of both socioeconomic disadvantage of students and higher levels of delinquency and drug use, this study will examine the possibility that the effects of racial threat will be stronger under conditions in which
discipline is not already likely to be high. Therefore, the final two hypotheses this study will test are that racial composition of students is more influential on discipline in schools with (6) a smaller percentage of poor students and (7) a lesser prevalence of delinquency and drug use.

Methods

Data

The data for this study come from the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools (Gottfredson et al. 2000). A probability sample of 1,287 public, private, and Catholic schools was originally selected, of which 848 (66.3 percent) responded to the 1997 Phase One Principal Questionnaire. Of these 848 schools, 635 (74.9 percent) responded to the 1998 Phase Two Principal Questionnaire, which asked different questions from those asked in the first survey. Student and teacher questionnaires were also administered in 1998, although only in the secondary schools. Data reported by the U.S. Department of Education (National Center for Education Statistics 2003, 2007) show that serious disciplinary action peaked during these years. Of the 558 secondary schools involved in phase two, 310 (55.6 percent) participated in the student survey and 403 (72.2 percent) participated in the teacher survey. When correlations between school and community characteristics and survey participation were examined, schools located in small towns or rural areas were significantly more likely to have participated. In addition, schools were less likely to have participated if they are located in urban areas, communities that have more female-headed households with children, and communities where more households receive public assistance. The response rates and nonrandom attrition from the study may, therefore, make this a conservative test of racial threat.5

Certain categories of schools are excluded from these analyses. The sample is limited to public schools because disciplinary policies and norms vary widely from private and religious schools; assessing these types of institutions would require separate analyses. In addition, since previous research on discipline and punishment focuses nearly exclusively on public schools, this study fits better within established theoretical frameworks (Kupchik and Monahan 2006). Alternative schools for disruptive youth are also excluded, because they include a large number of outliers on several of the study’s variables of interest. Further, it is limited to secondary schools, because the student and teacher surveys from which many of the control variables are taken were only administered in middle and high schools. Thus, the final sample for this research includes 294 public, nonalternative middle and high schools, which represents the population to which this study’s findings are generalizable.

Measures

Items and scales composed from the principal, teacher, and student questionnaires are described below and descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1. Individual items included in each scale are detailed in the Appendix. Scales other than those used to measure disciplinary

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5. It is unlikely, however, that the basic results of this study would change had more of these schools been included. Exploratory analyses of potential biases introduced by the limited response rates examined participating schools that were located in similar communities as the majority of nonparticipating schools. These schools were more likely to have a greater percentage of black students and more punitive disciplinary responses than other schools. Therefore, it seems likely that the inclusion of the nonparticipating schools would have resulted in actually intensifying the relationships reported in this study. Of course, it is possible that the relationships of interest are not linear in the region of the distribution in which nonparticipating schools fall, or that some characteristic might alter the relationships established. However, the linear relationship between community characteristics and nonparticipation, racial composition of the student body, and the punitiveness of the disciplinary measures seems to indicate that, if anything, the results presented here will provide conservative estimates of the relationships.
responses are taken from the final report of the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools, and were developed and copyrighted by Gary Gottfredson (Gottfredson et al. 2000).

**Dependent Variable.** Five degrees of disciplinary response are operationalized using 22 questions from the Phase Two Principal Questionnaire that asks about possible responses to student misconduct that may be used by school administrators. Three of these scales pertain to punitive school responses. Extreme punitive disciplinary response is a four-item scale that includes court action against the student or parent, expulsion from school, calling or notifying the police, and charging the student with a crime; possible responses to items are “not used,” “used,” and “used often.” Zero tolerance is a five-item scale representing whether schools have an automatic suspension policy for possession of tobacco, alcohol, other drugs, a knife, or a gun; possible responses to items are “yes” and “no.” Punitive disciplinary response is a five-item scale that includes suspension from school, in-school suspension, after-school detention, short-term withdrawal of a privilege (e.g., field access, participation in athletics), and long-term withdrawal of a privilege; possible responses to items are “not used,” “used,” and “used often.”

The other two scales of disciplinary response are more restorative in nature. Mild disciplinary response is a five-item scale that includes sending students to the school counselor, conferences with students’ parents/guardians, oral reprimands, notifying parents/guardians about student behavior, and conferences with students; possible responses to items are “not used,” “used,” and “used often.” Finally, restitutive disciplinary response is a three-item scale that includes restitution (requiring a student to repay the school or victim for damages or harm done), community service, and work duties; possible responses to items are “not used,” “used,” and “used often.” For all scales, a school’s score is the mean of the principal’s responses to each item.6

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6. A varimax-rotated factor analysis was run using all 22 disciplinary response items, resulting in a five-factor solution illustrating these five scales. Analyses indicate this solution accounts for 56.17 percent of the variance in disciplinary response. Detailed results of this factor analysis are available upon request.
Primary Independent Variable. Racial threat is operationalized by the percent of black students in each school (percent black students), taken from the Common Core of Data, a program of the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics that collects data on public education (Gottfredson et al. 2000). Use of this variable accords with previous aggregate-level research on racial threat that uses a range of objective measures of the racial composition of place. Results show that, in this study, black students comprise 13.52 percent of an average school’s student body.

Control Variables. Findings of previous research suggest that certain factors influence the discipline management of schools or the punishment of students. Accordingly, essential variables are included in this study’s models to control for their potential effects on the dependent measures of school disciplinary response. Socioeconomic disadvantage is represented in this study as the percent of students receiving free or reduced lunches (percent students free/reduced lunch), taken from the Phase One Principal Questionnaire. In this study, the average school offers 33.26 percent of its students a free or reduced price lunch. In addition, since the relative size of the Hispanic population has been found to affect the severity of criminal justice practices (Holmes et al. 1996; Jacobs and Carmichael 2002), a higher Hispanic composition of student populations may be related to harsher school discipline, despite having never been tested in schools. Thus, this study will include the percent Hispanic students as a control variable; this item is aggregated from responses to the student survey. Hispanic students comprise 10.29 percent of the average school in this sample. The percent of male students in schools (percent male students) is also included in this research, and is aggregated from responses to the student survey; in this study, boys compose 39.11 percent of the average school’s student population.

Two separate measures of effective principal leadership are included in this study to control for their potential influence on the outcome variables. Principal leadership is a 19-item scale from the Phase One Principal Questionnaire that includes items regarding principal supervision and feedback, consideration, presence and visibility, and planning. The principals were asked about their emphasis on a variety of work activities; four possible responses were “top,” “high,” “some,” and “little.” A school’s score is the mean of the principal’s responses to each item. The second measure is administrative leadership, which is a 12-item scale from the teacher survey that measures the teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership. Examples of these true/false items include “the administration is supportive of teachers” and “teachers feel free to communicate with the principal.” A school’s score on this scale is the mean across teachers of the proportion of items endorsed. Both of these scales are expected to have a positive relationship with the disciplinary response outcomes.

This study also includes a measure of discipline training, which is operationalized by a scale from the Phase Two Principal Questionnaire. Discipline training assesses the quality and quantity of the training received by school personnel in its disciplinary procedures, and is predicted to be positively associated with each outcome measure. Scale items include questions like “how much initial in-service training in school discipline procedures was completed?” and “how much formal follow-up training on school discipline was completed?,” as well as various yes/no statement items, including “participants practiced applying the principles” and “participants’ questions and concerns about possible obstacles in applying the principles were addressed.” A school’s score on this scale was created by collapsing all nonbinary items and averaging them to form a proportion of items endorsed.

7. Racial threat has been measured at the level of community (Smith and Holmes 2003), city (Mosher 2001), county (Demuth and Steffensmeier 2004), state (Behrens et al. 2003), and nation (Jacobs and Kleban 2003).

8. The underrepresentation of male students is somewhat expected given their higher rates of both dropping out and truancy (Cataldi, Laird, and Kewal Ramani 2009; Dinkes et al. 2009). In addition, this measure is aggregated from responses to the student survey; therefore, the lower mean could reflect lower survey participation by male students rather than actual underrepresentation in schools.
Effects of student crime and delinquency are controlled by the inclusion of student delinquency and drug use, a 28-item scale from the student survey inquiring about the number of different crimes committed by the student and the variety of different drugs used by the student during the 12 months prior to the survey; possible responses were “yes” and “no.” A school’s score on this scale is the mean across respondents of the proportion of items endorsed.

Because various measures of crime salience have also been found to predict punitive discipline in schools, these analyses include two separate measures of it. Perceived lack of safety is an eight-item scale, which asks teachers how safe they perceive various places in the school to be. Possible responses for these items were “very unsafe,” “fairly unsafe,” “average,” “fairly safe,” and “very safe;” the scale is coded so that higher values indicate higher levels of perceived lack of safety. A school’s score on this scale is the mean across teachers of their responses to each item. Teacher victimization is measured by a nine-item scale assessing the types and amount of victimization experienced by teachers during the 12 months prior to the survey. A school’s score on this scale is the mean across respondents of the proportion of items to which teachers responded “yes.”

Finally, characteristics of the surrounding community that may influence punitive responses were measured at the school level using 1990 Census data and school districting information (Brantlinger 1991; DeVo et al. 2005; Simonsen 1998; Skiba et al. 1997). Because influential socioeconomic factors may come from surrounding communities (Welsh, Stokes, and Greene 2000), this study controls for the poverty, disorganization, and urbanicity of the census tract in which each school is located. Concentrated disadvantage, predicted to increase harsh discipline, is a factor scale that includes the following markers: welfare (average household public assistance income), female-headed households (ratio of single females with children under 18 to married couples with children under 18), median income (proportion of households with income below $27,499), poverty (ratio of persons below the 1.24 poverty level to persons above), divorce rate (ratio of persons over 15 years who are married to those who are separated, divorced, or have a spouse absent), and unemployment (proportion of unemployed males/females in the labor force). Urbanicity, also associated with increased punitiveness in schools, is included as a factor score incorporating the following markers: population size (total population), urban level (city level type), and urbanicity (the proportion of people living within an urban area). These two scales were created using results from varimax factor analyses conducted by Simonsen (1998).

**Analytic Strategy**

The distributional characteristics of these measures were examined first. Both concentrated disadvantage and urbanicity were trimmed to address three extreme outliers and resulting skewness. Then, five ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models were estimated to test this study’s first five hypotheses. For these models, each of the disciplinary response outcomes

9. It is plausible that disciplinary punitiveness is related more to student deviance occurring specifically on school grounds, rather than general student deviance. To examine this possibility, a more specific school delinquency scale was created that contained only the five deviance items that occurred within the school building, which asked whether a student had committed the following acts during the 12 months prior to the survey: damaged or destroyed school property, hit or threatened to hit a teacher or other adult at school, hit or threatened to hit other students, stolen or tried to steal something at school (from classroom, locker, cafeteria, library, etc.), and gone to school when drunk or high on some drugs. Each regression model was run once with the larger student delinquency and drug use scale and again with this more specific school delinquency scale. The findings for these two models were similar in both significance and strength. Results of these analyses are available from the authors upon request.

10. Characteristics of communities in which schools are located have more impact on school crime and disorder than characteristics of the communities in which the schools’ students live (Welsh et al. 2000).

11. These variables were trimmed by capping the values of the three outliers to three standard deviations above the variable mean (Wilcoxon 2004).
was regressed on percent black students and all control variables. For all equations, tolerance values and variance inflation factors (VIFs) were examined in order to test for multicollinearity. No tolerance values were smaller than .1, and only 5 of 60 VIFs were larger than 2.5, with the largest of these being 2.943. Thus, multicollinearity is not an apparent problem (Freund and Littell, 2000). Tests also indicate there is no presence of heteroskedasticity. Due to the directional nature of the hypotheses (positive for the first three and negative for the fourth and fifth), one-tailed $t$-values are used to determine statistical significance (Henkel 1976).

To test the final two hypotheses that the effects of racial threat on school punitiveness vary according to levels of student poverty and student delinquency and drug use, interaction terms were created by multiplying percent students free/reduced lunch and student delinquency and drug use with percent black students. The five dependent measures of disciplinary response were then regressed on them separately, along with the control variables, to determine if either interaction term was statistically significant. Each variable comprising the product terms was mean centered (Cronbach 1987). No violations of regression assumptions were detected in these models: For each model, only the interaction terms’ tolerance values were smaller than .1 (ranging from .092 to .098) and only the VIFs associated with the interaction terms and the individual variables that made up these terms were larger than 2.5. These values are to be expected when using multiplicative interaction terms (Cortina 1993). Again, one-tailed $t$-values were used to determine statistical significance.

Finally, to examine the specific effects of the statistically significant interactions, the sample was split at the 50th percentile for each of the conditioning variables used in the product terms (e.g., greater versus smaller percentage of free/reduced lunch and more versus less delinquency/drug use) and the disciplinary outcome variable was regressed on the percent black students and the control variables. $t$-tests were conducted using the unstandardized coefficients and standard errors to test whether the coefficients for percent black students were significantly different in the two equations ($t = (b_1 - b_2)/(\text{standard error}_1^2 + \text{standard error}_2^2)^{1/2}$).

### Results

Table 2 presents the results of the OLS regression estimates for the three indicators of punitive school responses. As predicted in Hypothesis 1, percent black students is significantly and positively related to punitive disciplinary response ($b = .007, p < .001$), illustrating that schools with a greater percentage of black students are more likely to use harsh forms of punishment, such as suspensions, in-school suspensions, and detentions. Not only is this measure of racial composition statistically significant in this model, it is the strongest predictor of punitive disciplinary response, with a beta of .404. This is especially notable in light of the lack of statistical significance of the student delinquency and drug use variable. The only other significant predictor is greater principal leadership. The $R^2$-squared for this equation suggests that the model explains about one-fifth of the variance in punitive discipline (.205).

12. Some research suggests the possibility of a curvilinear effect of racial threat, in which the racial composition of a school is positively related to punitiveness up to a certain point and then negatively related to punitiveness after this point is reached (Hagan, Shedd, and Payne 2005). To examine this idea, a squared percent black students variable was added to each model while retaining the regular percent black students variable. The squared percent black students variable was not significant for any of the disciplinary response outcomes, thus not supporting the idea of a curvilinear effect of racial threat.

13. While some argue that mean centering minimizes the potential effects of multicollinearity in interaction models (Cronbach 1987), it has been a questionable approach to managing this problem (Echambadi and Hess 2007). It is generally agreed, however, that mean centering is useful for facilitating interpretation of results. In additional tests for multicollinearity, we found that the independent variables in these models, particularly for the product terms, are stable and not sensitive to simultaneous inclusion (Jaccard and Turrisi 2003).
In support of Hypotheses 2 and 3, percent black students is significantly and positively related to both the implementation of zero tolerance ($b = .003, p < .001$) and the use of extreme punitive disciplinary response ($b = .003, p < .05$). Schools with a greater percentage of black students are more likely to respond even more harshly to misbehavior, such as automatically suspending students for various violations, expelling students, or even calling the police and charging students with crimes. Again, the focal independent measure of racial composition is the most powerful predictor of each of these punitive approaches to discipline (with standardized betas of .276 and .221, respectively). In fact, it is the only significant predictor of the degree to which schools execute zero tolerance policies. Discipline training is significantly and positively related to extreme punitive disciplinary response ($b = .133, p < .05$), demonstrating that schools in which the adults in the school receive more training in the discipline policies are more likely to respond very harshly to misbehavior.

Table 3 presents the results of the OLS regression estimates for the two indicators of restorative disciplinary response, which are predicted to negatively relate to greater minority student composition. The results of the test of Hypothesis 4 reveal that percent black students is significantly and negatively related to mild disciplinary response ($b = -.008, p < .001$) and is also the strongest predictor of it (beta = -.397). As predicted, schools with a larger percentage of black students are less likely to use milder forms of punishment, such as counselor visits or oral reprimands, while schools with relatively fewer black students are more likely to respond to misbehavior in this manner. The percent students receiving free/reduced lunch and administrative leadership are also significantly and negatively related to mild disciplinary response ($b = -.002$ and $b = -.433, p < .05$, respectively), suggesting that schools with a greater percentage of low-income students and in which teachers have a poor perception of their principal's
leadership efficacy are less likely to use these mild forms of discipline. Finally, both principal leadership and concentrated disadvantage are significantly and positively related to mild disciplinary response ($b = .284$, $p < .001$, and $b = .133$, $p < .05$, respectively), indicating that schools in poorer, more socially disorganized areas and those with principals perceiving themselves to be effective leaders are more likely to use mild student sanctions.

Finally, as Hypothesis 5 anticipated, percent black students is significantly and negatively related to restitutive disciplinary response ($b = -.004$, $p < .05$). This signifies that schools with greater percentages of black students are less likely to facilitate practices such as restitution and community service in response to misbehavior, while schools with smaller percentages of black students are more supportive of this type of restorative response. Principal leadership, administrative leadership, and urbanicity are all significantly and positively related to restitutive disciplinary response ($b = .206$, $p < .01$; $b = .680$, $p < .001$; and $b = .057$, $p < .05$, respectively), illustrating that urban schools in which both the principal and the teachers believe that administrators are effective leaders are more likely to use these practices.

The next set of analyses examined potential conditioning effects of racial threat by regressing the five disciplinary response scales on interactions between percent black students and two contextual variables: percent students receiving free/reduced lunch and student delinquency and drug use. Hypotheses 6 and 7 predicted that there would be significant moderated relationships between these variables, such that a higher percent of black students would have a greater effect on harsh disciplinary responses in schools with a lower percentage of poorer students and with a lower amount of student delinquency and drug use.

As can be seen in Table 4, most of the interactions are not statistically significant. In fact, the only significant result observed is the effect that the interaction between percent black students and student delinquency and drug use has on extreme punitive disciplinary response ($b = -.075$, $p < .01$). This tentatively suggests that for schools with more black students and
Table 4 • Unstandardized OLS Coefficients for Regression of Disciplinary Response Indicators on Interaction Terms

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<td>Percent male students</td>
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<td>(.129)</td>
<td>(.104)</td>
<td>(.101)</td>
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<td>− .520</td>
<td>− .327</td>
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<td>.117</td>
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<td>2.513**</td>
<td>.672</td>
<td>1.352</td>
<td>1.859*</td>
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Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.
*Dependent variable
*p < .05 **p < .01 *p = .068 (one-tailed tests)
less delinquency and drug use, extremely harsh discipline is more often implemented. Only one other term, the interaction between percent black students and student delinquency and drug use on punitive disciplinary response, approaches significance at the .05 level (\(b = -.058, t = 1.548\)). The interaction between percent black students and student delinquency and drug use is not related to the other three disciplinary response outcomes and the interaction between percent black students and percent students receiving free/reduced lunch is not related to any of the disciplinary response outcomes.

To further investigate the significant and near-significant interactions, the data were split at the fiftieth percentile of student delinquency and drug use (median = .110), then extreme punitive disciplinary response was regressed on percent black students and all control variables (Table 5). In schools with high levels of student delinquency and drug use, percent

| Table 5 • OLS Coefficients with Student Delinquency/Drug Use Split at the Fiftieth Percentile |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Coefficients                    | High Student Delinquency/Drug Use | Low Student Delinquency/Drug Use |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| B                               | SE                               | Beta                            | B                               | SE                               | Beta                            |
| Constant                        | 1.908**                         | .696                            | 1.627**                         | .609                             |
| Percent black students          | .001                             | .002                             | .074                             | .003                             | .007**                         | .003                             |
| Percent students free lunch     | .001                             | .002                             | -.103                            | .003                             | .002                            | -.305                            |
| Percent Hispanic students       | .001                             | .003                             | .069                             | .004                             | .002                            | .357                             |
| Percent male students           | .000                             | .006                             | .014                             | .002                             | .004                            | .059                             |
| Principal leadership            | .086                             | .104                             | .110                             | .076                             | .102                            | .108                             |
| Administrative leadership       | -.212                            | .262                             | -.125                            | .121                             | .275                            | .074                             |
| Discipline training             | .056                             | .109                             | .068                             | .170                             | .113                            | .231                             |
| Student delinquency/drug use    | -.660                            | .707                             | -.129                            | 2.149                            | 1.772                           | .173                             |
| Perceived lack of safety        | -.046                            | .167                             | -.054                            | .171                             | .171                            | .232                             |
| Teacher victimization           | -.417                            | .669                             | -.099                            | .462                             | 1.064                           | -.093                            |
| Concentrated disadvantage       | .160                             | .074                             | .370*                            | -.028                            | .101                            | -.055                            |
| Urbanicity                      | .075                             | .051                             | .264                             | .004*                            | .002                            | .357                             |
| Model summary                   |                                  |                                  |                                  |                                  |                                  |                                  |
| R-squared                       | .183                             |                                  | .226                             |                                  |                                  |                                  |
| Adjusted R-squared              | .028                             |                                  | .044                             |                                  |                                  |                                  |
| F statistic                     | 1.046                            |                                  | 1.436                            |                                  |                                  |                                  |

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<td>Percent Hispanic students</td>
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1Dependent variable
**p < .01 *p < .05 (one-tailed tests)
black students has no significant effect on extreme punitive disciplinary response. However, in schools with low levels of student delinquency and drug use, percent black students has a significant positive effect on extreme punitive disciplinary response ($b = .007, p < .01$), as predicted. The results of the $t$-test confirm this significant difference ($t = -1.664, p < .01$). Thus, for schools with lower levels of delinquency and drug use, those that have a greater percentage of black students are more likely to respond in a very harsh manner to student misbehavior.

Finally, similar findings can also be seen for the effect of the interaction between percent black students and student delinquency and drug use on punitive disciplinary response (also shown in Table 5), which had approached significance at the .05 level. As before, in schools with high levels of student delinquency and drug use, the effect of percent black students on punitive disciplinary response is nonsignificant. However, in schools with low levels of student delinquency and drug use, percent black students has a significant and positive effect on punitive disciplinary response ($b = .010, p < .01$). The results of the $t$-test show that the difference approaches significance at the .05 level ($t = -1.414$). Again, for schools with lower levels of delinquency and drug use, those that have a greater percentage of black students are more likely to respond in a harsh manner to student misbehavior. These findings indicate that the percentage of black students in a school has a stronger effect on punitive discipline practices in schools with lower levels of student deviance.

**Discussion**

This research is the first to test—and support—the racial threat hypothesis in the school setting. Specifically, it examines whether schools with a higher proportion of black students are more likely to use punitive and extremely punitive discipline, more likely to implement zero tolerance policies, and less likely to use mild and restitutive approaches. The results of OLS regression estimates show that each of the first five hypotheses of this study are supported in the expected directions: Schools with a larger composition of black students are more likely to respond to student misbehavior in a harsh manner and less likely to respond restoratively.

In addition, this study examined the potential moderating effects of both student economic disadvantage and student deviance, predicting that the proportion of black students would have a greater influence on discipline in schools with a smaller percentage of poor students and a lower amount of student delinquency and drug use. The results of OLS regression estimates show that these hypotheses were supported only for student delinquency and drug use, and then only for the outcomes of punitive and extremely punitive discipline. The percentage of black students has a stronger effect on punitive and extremely punitive discipline practices in schools with lower levels of student deviance. Thus, in schools where students engage in less delinquency and drug use, it appears that schools may be more likely to respond harshly and extremely harshly to misbehavior partly because of the racial composition of the student body. In conditions where delinquency and drug use are high, it is likely that student punishment is already so intense that there is less opportunity for other factors, including the racial composition of students, to have an appreciable effect. This finding corroborates what was expected based on prior research analyzing contextual differences in racial threat. In addition, even though the hypothesis predicting an interaction between racial composition of students and student poverty was not supported, results do confirm that the effect of racial threat on harsh school discipline remains present, regardless of the socioeconomic status of the students. This inconsistency of the presence of contextual effects accords with previous research.

The racial threat perspective is supported here in large part because this study was able to control for several important crime-specific influences. It is clear that there is a residual effect of racial composition of schools on disciplinary policies even after controlling for the effects of school delinquency, drug use, teacher victimization, and teacher perceptions of lack
of safety—variables that were measured irrespective of race. This indicates that there is some race-specific factor that persists in increasing punitiveness, regardless of levels of crime and crime salience in schools. It is plausible that the relationship found between racial composition and school discipline may be attributable to unmeasured individual-level intervening influences. Specifically, it may actually be that among school officials, perceived threat associated with blacks is higher in institutions in which proportionally more black students are matriculated, which may then contribute to the intensification of discipline. For example, racial composition may influence race-related factors, such as stereotypes, bias, or discrimination. In addition, racial composition may influence factors related to both race and crime, such as the fear of black crime or the stereotyping of blacks as criminals, which may then facilitate the expansion of punitive discipline. Based on the findings of previous research on the effects of micro-level factors on punitive controls reviewed earlier, these possible explanations for the established effect of racial composition on disciplinary policies are worth exploring.

This study’s findings are important because they demonstrate that the effects of racial threat extend beyond criminal justice institutions traditionally found to be influenced by it. Racial threat is not only associated with harsh sanctions for criminal offenders, but with the punitive treatment of students in school. This also suggests that the effects of racial threat may be operating even beyond these two social institutions.

The findings reported here also have substantial implications for school discipline. It is striking that the implementation and use of harsh school policies appears to at least be partially attributable to the relative size of schools’ minority populations. If racial threat is to some degree responsible for the intensified punishment—and sometimes even criminalization—of students, then it has contributed to what has been identified as “a heavy toll on students, teachers, and the entire school community” who are suffering the consequences of diminished focus on quality education (Noguera 1995a:189). By being subjected to more punitive discipline, like suspensions, expulsions, and arrests, certain students are not equally benefiting from education—if they are not in class, they will not have learning opportunities commensurate with that of their peers, the result of which is further academic disadvantage. Not surprisingly, research confirms that suspensions are linked to academic failure, grade level retention, and dropping out of school (Skiba and Peterson 2000). This not only affects future prospects of employment, but also the likelihood of involvement in crime and the criminal justice system (Gregory and Weinstein 2008; Hirschfield 2008). Furthermore, although this study does not specifically measure effects for particular students, consequences of racial threat in schools may be presumed to be most significant for black students, since harsher discipline is practiced in schools where they are present in larger percentages.

**Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

It is prudent to consider the limitations of this study, some of which derive from methodological shortcomings. The cross-sectional nature of the data makes it impossible to truly determine causality in the associations found. Also, because the sample is restricted to public, secondary, nonalternative schools, the findings are only applicable to these types of educational institutions. In addition, sample response rates are potentially problematic, although

14. For instance, while the positive association between the percent of black students in a school and the existence of punitive disciplinary responses could suggest the effects of racial threat as found here, it is also possible that a shift in the composition of student populations occurred after the creation of certain discipline policies, thus challenging this study’s conclusions. However, prior research using time-series data, for example, also supports the racial threat perspective in relation to severity of criminal policy (Kent and Jacobs 2004), so the use of more longitudinal data would likely add important dimensions to the findings revealed here. Further, it should also not be assumed that racial threat is responsible for the trend of increased punitiveness that began in the early 1980s, because the cross-sectional nature of this data make that untestable. In addition, a significant relationship between other variables, such as student delinquency and discipline, may be suppressed by the use of cross-sectional data.
some researchers have shown that studies with low participation can actually demonstrate more or equally accurate results than studies with higher response rates (Keeter et al. 2006; Visser et al. 1996). Because schools located in urban areas, in communities with more female-headed households with children, and where more households receive public assistance were less likely to have participated in the study, the results of this research may not generalize as well to schools located in such communities, although results would likely not have diminished had more of these schools been included.

Another possible limitation of this research is that the relationships herein identified are attributable to certain key constructs that are not included in the regression estimates. For example, this study was not able to control for or contextualize by the potential influence of regional variation or poor academic ability of students, which may be associated with harsh student discipline (Jacobs and Carmichael 2004; Wu et al. 1982). It might be useful to control for or contextualize by more specific details related to the delinquency and disorder in schools, as discipline likely varies according to levels of violent, property, and drug offenses as well as less serious acts of student mischief. Additionally, school climate and structure may influence disciplinary practices (Payne 2008).

Finally, a greater understanding of how racial threat operates in schools may be derived by future research that examines the micro-processes involved in creating the effects of racial threat. For example, this study was not able to determine whether it is black students who were being punished more harshly within schools. While establishing individual-level relationships is neither a necessary, nor common, component of tests of racial threat, studying various dimensions of racially disparate applications of discipline, racial stereotypes, bias, and discrimination among local policy makers, administrators, and teachers may partially explain how it affects school policies. Previous studies have noted the importance of racial beliefs and prejudice to student treatment (Brown and Beckett 2006; Ferguson 2000; Giroux 2003; Noguera 2003b; Skiba and Peterson 1999; Skiba et al. 2002; Watts and Erevelles 2004), but none have connected it by multivariate analyses with punitive disciplinary outcomes in schools. It may also be instructive to test whether perceptual indicators of racial threat are influential within schools and whether other school characteristics, such as gender distributions, moderates the relationships found in this research.

Conclusion

This is the first multivariate test of the effects of racial composition of students on punitive school discipline. This research supports the racial threat hypothesis by showing that schools are more punitive and less restorative when there are more black students enrolled in them. This is independent of the types and levels of delinquency in those schools and independent of other influences that have been shown to affect discipline practices, such as student economic status and gender, school crime salience, school urbanicity, and the training of faculty and administrative staff. In addition, while the proportion of black students in schools affects punitive and extremely punitive punishments even more when school delinquency and disorder are low, the effects of racial threat are otherwise not subject to contextual differences. Thus, racial threat remains a powerful explanation for greater use of harsh discipline and reduced use of restorative discipline, regardless of the amount of school misbehavior or student economic disadvantage. These findings suggest that not only do the trends in school policies and punishment mirror those that are sanctioned by the criminal justice system, but that part of the reason is also similar. The conclusions of this study reveal important findings about the broad extent of racial threat and the applicability of its influence in various settings. They also expose notable flaws in school discipline policies and practices and call for serious consideration of ways to rid them of their racially disparate application.
Appendix. Items Included in Study Scales

Disciplinary Responses

Punitive Disciplinary Response
- Suspension from school (exclusion of student from membership for periods of 30 days or less)
- Brief exclusion of student from attendance in regular classes (e.g., in-school suspension)
- After-school detention
- Short-term (5 days or less) withdrawal of a privilege (e.g., playground, athletic participation)
- Long-term (more than 5 days) withdrawal of a privilege (e.g., playground, athletic participation)
- Zero Tolerance (automatic suspension if . . .
  - Possession of alcohol
  - Possession of other drugs (e.g., marijuana, LSD, cocaine)
  - Possession of a knife
  - Possession of a gun

Extreme Punitive Disciplinary Response
- Court action against student or parent
- Expulsion from school (exclusion of student from membership for periods of time over 30 days)
- Calling or notifying the police
- Charging student with a crime

Mild Disciplinary Response
- Sending student to school counselor
- Conferences with student’s parents/guardians
- Oral reprimand
- Notifying parents about student’s behavior
- Conference with student

Restitutive Disciplinary Response
- Restitution (requiring a student to repay the school or a victim for damages or harm done)
- Community service
- Work duties, chores, or tasks as punishment

Control Variables

Principal Leadership
- Tour the school to establish my presence
- Observe teachers’ instruction and classroom management practices
- Formally assess the needs or problems of the school
- Use reason or passion to generate staff commitment to tasks
- Plan staff meetings
- Discuss quality of work performance with staff members
- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing school practices
- Check with teachers before making changes that may affect them
- Assign responsibilities to teachers
- Discuss teacher performance with individual teachers in a formal evaluation
- Discuss alternative plans for school improvement with staff, district personnel, or community
- Praise teachers or recognize effective staff performance
- Mention observed strengths and weaknesses in performance to teachers at the time of observation
- Establish policies or standard operation procedures to cover most day-to-day decisions
- Be patient with and helpful to faculty
- Communicate performance expectations
- Review progress on improvement plans with individual staff members
- Set schools improvement goals, taking into account such things as time, resources, obstacles, cost
- Offer support or sympathy when a staff member experiences a difficulty

Teacher Victimization (This year in school have any of the following happened to you in this school?)
- Damage to personal property worth more than $10.00
- Theft of personal property worth less than $10.00
- Theft of personal property worth more than $10.00
- Was physically attacked and had to see a doctor
- Was physically attacked but not seriously enough to see a doctor
- Received obscene remarks or gestures from a student
Was threatened in remarks by a student
Had a weapon pulled on me
Perceived Lack of Safety (At your school during school hours, how safe from vandalism, personal attacks, and theft is each of the following places? (reverse coded))
Your classroom while teaching
Empty classrooms
Hallways and stairs
The cafeteria
The restrooms used by the students
Locker room or gym
Parking lot
Elsewhere outside on school grounds
Administrative Leadership
The school's administration makes it easy to get supplies, equipment, or other arrangements.
In your opinion, how well do teachers and administrators get along at your school?
Administrators and teachers collaborate toward making the school run effectively.
There is little administrator-teacher tension in this school.
Our principal is a good representative of our school before the superintendent and the board.
The principal is aware of and lets staff and students know when they have done something well.
Teachers or students can arrange to deviate from the prescribed program of the school.
Teachers feel free to communicate with the principal.
The administration is supportive of teachers.
It is hard to change established procedures here.
The principal of our school is informal.
The principal of our school is open to staff input.
Discipline Training
If there was in-service training in discipline, which of the following describe the training?
The presentation was clear and organized.
Principles to be followed were presented.
Principles were illustrated with examples.
Participants practiced applying the principles.
Participants received feedback on their performance in applying the principles.
Participants' questions and concerns about possible obstacles were addressed.
How much formal follow-up training on school discipline was completed by the average individual who manages discipline?
None
One occasion
Two occasions
Three or more occasions
Student Delinquency and Drug Use (In last 12 months, have you . . . )
Purposely damaged or destroyed property belonging to a school?
Purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you?
Stolen or tried to steal something worth more than $50?
Carried a hidden weapon other than a pocket knife?
Been involved in gang fights?
Hit or threatened to hit a teacher or other adult at school?
Hit or threatened to hit other students?
Taken a car for a ride (or drive) without the owner's permission?
Used force or strong-arm methods to get money or things from a person?
Stolen or tried to steal things worth less than $50?
Stolen or tried to steal something at school?
Broken into or tried to break into a building/car to steal something or just to look around?
Belonged to a gang that has a name and engages in fighting, stealing or selling drugs?
Sold marijuana or other drugs?
Smoked cigarettes?
Used smokeless tobacco?
Drunk beer, wine, or “hard” liquor?
Gone to school when you were drunk or high on some drugs?
Sniffed glue, paint, or other spray?
Smoked marijuana (weed, grass, pot, hash, ganja)?
Taken hallucinogens (LSD, mescaline, PCP peyote, acid)?
Taken sedatives (barbiturates, downers, Quaaludes, Reds)?
Taken amphetamines (uppers, speed, whites)?
Taken tranquilizers (Valium, Librium)?
Taken heroine (horse, smack)?
Taken cocaine (coke)?
Used crack?
Used other narcotics (codeine, Demerol, dilaudid)?
Taken steroids?

References

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