Racial Disparities in School Suspension and Subsequent Outcomes: Evidence from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997

Tracey L. Shollenberger
Harvard University
27 May 2013

This is a DRAFT document. Please do not cite without permission.

Contact tshollen@fas.harvard.edu with questions.

ABSTRACT

Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, I examine the prevalence and intensity of suspension among nationally representative samples of white, black, and Hispanic youth attending secondary school during the late 1990s and follow their educational and criminal justice outcomes for roughly a decade after K-12. Consistent with prior research in individual states and districts, I find that suspension has become a common feature of the U.S. schooling experience, affecting more than one in three youth and resulting in substantial missed instructional time across K-12 (a total of one to two weeks for the typical suspendee). As with prior research, disparities by race and gender are large, with black boys suspended most frequently and most intensely: fully two in three are suspended at some point during K-12, and nearly one in five is suspended for a full month of school or more. Following youth into early adulthood, I find that suspension is highly correlated with negative educational and criminal justice outcomes in the longer term. Among boys suspended for 10 total days or more, less than half had obtained a high school diploma by their late 20s; more than three in four had been arrested; and more than one in three had been sentenced to confinement in a correctional facility. Comparing suspension to self-reported behavior – including property offenses and violent behaviors – reveals that substantial shares of suspended youth had not engaged in serious delinquency by the time they were first suspended from school. In addition, racial and ethnic gaps in suspension persist after these serious misbehaviors are controlled. In light of these findings, policymakers interested in improving educational outcomes for all youth, ensuring equity across racial and ethnic groups, and increasing public safety should promote alternatives to suspension, identify and support schools with high rates of exclusionary discipline, and fund evaluations of recent efforts to limit the use of suspension and reduce racial disparities in districts across the U.S.

INTRODUCTION

While managing student behavior has always been a concern for educators, recent decades have marked dramatic changes in schools' approaches to discipline. Several broad shifts have occurred since the 1970s including the proliferation of "zero tolerance" policies and the importation of criminal justice surveillance strategies into schools (Hirschfield 2010; Simon 2007). Evidence also suggests that referrals from schools to juvenile justice agencies have increased (Krezmien et al. 2010). Within this landscape, schools have increasingly relied on strategies that exclude students from school in response to misbehavior. Out-of-school suspension rates have increased in recent decades, more than doubling among nonwhite students (Losen and Skiba 2010:2-3). Recent national estimates—prepared by Losen and Skiba using school- and district-level data from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights[1]—indicate that 28 percent of black boys, 18 percent of black girls, 16 percent of Hispanic boys, and 10 percent of white boys attending middle school in the United States are suspended each year (2010:5).

From the perspective of teachers and administrators, the goals of suspension are clear: to improve the learning environment for other students and to deter future misbehavior. However, we know little about whether suspension accomplishes these goals (APA 2008). What we do know is that students who are suspended are often suspended repeatedly, and schools with high suspension rates tend to have low academic performance and poor school climate ratings (Christle et al. 2004; Wu et al. 1982). In addition, school discipline is associated with a range of negative outcomes at the individual level including poor academic performance, low educational attainment, and juvenile arrest (Arcia 2006; Arum & Beattie 1999; Balfanz et al. 2003; Bowditch 1993; Fabelo et al. 2011). Moreover, racial disparities in suspension are longstanding and have increased in recent years, especially among girls (Losen and Skiba 2010; Wallace et al. 2008).

Critics have challenged the use of suspension based on persistent racial disparities as well as the association of this punishment with negative outcomes. However, the systematic empirical evidence to support their claims is under-developed. While we have national estimates using school- and district-level data (Losen and Skiba 2010) or student survey data

[1] The Elementary and Secondary Civil Rights Compliance Survey—more commonly referred to as the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)—is administered every two years in all 50 states and includes school-level data on out-of-school suspension from roughly one-third of U.S. school districts.

from a single point in time (Wallace et al. 2008), as well as longitudinal studies of students within individual states, districts, and schools (Arcia 2006; Fabelo et al. 2011; Raffaele Mendez 2003), no existing study has examined how trajectories of discipline unfold over time for a nationally representative sample of youth. In addition, most studies of suspension have relied on administrative data from schools, so have not been able to link suspension to behavior.

In this paper, I use data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 to address these issues, examining how trajectories of discipline unfold over time for a nationally representative sample of youth. I track experiences with suspension across K-12 and compare them to self-reported delinquency, arrest, and incarceration. In doing so, I ask and answer three empirical questions about suspension: how prevalent it is during K-12, how strongly it correlates with subsequent outcomes, and how well it is explained by the behavior of youth. After presenting descriptive statistics, I discuss the implications of these findings for policy and for future research.

QUESTIONS

Building upon prior research, I explore three sets of empirical research questions about suspension among U.S. youth and its relationship to subsequent outcomes:

1. *How common is suspension, and what intensity is typical?*
   How early does suspension begin, and how consistently is it applied across school years? How many days of instructional time do suspended students miss across K-12? Do findings from prior longitudinal studies in individual states and districts generalize to a national sample of youth?

2. *How well does suspension predict subsequent outcomes?*
   To what degree is suspension correlated with educational attainment, arrest, and incarceration? Do the data support the notion of a "school-to-prison pipeline" at the individual level?

3. *Can disparities in suspension be explained by behavior?*
   To what extent does suspension target students who are engaging in delinquent behavior? Does controlling for self-reported delinquency eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in suspension?

DATA AND METHODS

To answer these questions, I use data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), which follows a cohort of nearly 9,000 youth born between January 1, 1980 and December 31, 1984.[2] Baseline interviews were conducted in 1997 when respondents were between 12 and 17 years old, and follow-up interviews are conducted annually. The most recent data available are from 2010, when respondents were between 26 and 31 years old (mean age 28).

For some analyses, I present results separately by gender and/or race and ethnicity. In comparisons by race and ethnicity, I divide respondents into three mutually exclusive groups: 1) white, non-Hispanic, 2) black, non-Hispanic, and 3) Hispanic.[3] For simplicity, I refer to the first two groups as white and black. Mixed race youth and youth of other races (Asian, American Indian, etc.) are included in results for the full sample, but are excluded from analyses disaggregated by race and ethnicity due to low sample size.[4]

Table 1 presents descriptive information on the 8,984 youth in the full sample. For Table 1 and for all other statistics in this paper, I have applied weights so that the results can be interpreted as nationally representative. Additional information about the NLSY97 and how I processed the data is provided in Appendix A.

FINDINGS

1. How common is suspension during K-12, and what intensity is typical?

In the NLSY97, respondents were asked whether they were suspended during each school year, and, if so, for how many total days. Using these data, I examine both the cumulative risk of suspension during K-12 and the intensity of suspension across school years.[5] Figure 1 presents statistics on cumulative risk separately by race and gender. Following a single line from left to right in the figure shows the growing share of youth in a given race/gender group who had ever been suspended from school across "on-time"[6] grades K through 12.

---

[2] Data on NLSY sampling and variables were obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics website.

[3] These terms reflect the wording of the survey. Unfortunately, I am not able to disaggregate the Hispanic category into subgroups (Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, etc.).

[4] For statistics on Asian American and American Indian students, see Wallace et al. 2008.

[5] To calculate these statistics, I examine respondents' suspension experiences across 13 school years, beginning with the school year during which they turned 6.

[6] Because students can enter school at varying ages and can repeat or skip grades, I use the term "on-time" to indicate that the statistics refer to the respondent's age rather than his or her actual grade in school. Thus, on-

The size of the increase from one year to the next reflects the share of youth who were suspended for the first time during the corresponding school year. Focusing on black boys, for example, reveals that more than one in ten (11 percent) had been suspended before or during on-time grade 4, and substantial shares were suspended for the first time during each of the next four school years. By on-time grade 8, half (50 percent) of all black boys had been suspended.

The right-most points in Figure 1 – those associated with on-time grade 12 – indicate the shares of youth who were ever suspended during their on-time K-12 careers. Consistent with prior research, black boys were at highest risk of suspension, with fully two in three (67 percent) suspended at some point during K-12. Nearly half of Hispanic boys (49 percent) and more than two in five black girls (44 percent) were suspended, while rates for white boys, Hispanic girls, and white girls were lower (38, 29, and 19 percent, respectively).[7]

Table 2 presents these statistics on cumulative risk alongside two measures of the intensity of suspension throughout K-12: the number of school years during which youth experienced suspension and the total number of days for which they were suspended from school. For both measures, suspension was most intense for black boys and least intense for white girls, with other groups of youth falling in between. Among all youth who were suspended, the typical total length of all suspensions during K-12 was between one and two school weeks (5-9 days). However, one in ten boys (10 percent) was suspended from school for 20 days or more, missing at least one full month of school during K-12 due to suspension. Among black boys, this figure was nearly one in five (19 percent).

2. To what degree does suspension predict future outcomes?

Longitudinal research within individual states and districts has documented an association between suspension and subsequent outcomes including educational attainment, arrest, and incarceration. Most recently, Fabelo and colleagues (2011) document a strong association

---

time grade 12, for example, refers to the school year in which respondents turned 18, and on-time grade 6 refers to the school year in which they turned 12.

[7] Using data from a national survey of tenth grade students, Wallace et al. (2008) found that 56% of black boys, 43% of black girls, 39% of Hispanic boys, 27% of white boys, 24% of Hispanic girls, and 12% of white girls attending tenth grade between 2001 and 2005 (the same general cohort as NLSY97 youth) had been suspended at some point during their K-10 careers (2008:54). The statistics presented for on-time grade 10 students in Figure 1 are somewhat higher. This difference might be due to This might be due at least partially to Wallace et al. deriving their estimates from a school-based survey (which excludes youth who are not attending school), while the NLSY97 employs a household-based sampling design.

between suspension and juvenile arrest. The findings presented here confirm this association in a national sample and trace the story forward through the late 20s.

Table 3 presents outcomes for boys by the time of the 2010 interview (mean age 28) by race and ethnicity. For each racial/ethnic group, six sets of statistics are presented. The first column presents data on all boys in the group. The second and third columns present data from two mutually exclusive groups: boys who never experienced suspension, and boys who experienced suspension at any point during K-12. The remaining three columns explore three dimensions of the intensity of suspension: 1) *early suspension* (being suspended by age 12), 2) *consistent suspension* (being suspended during two or more school years), and 3) *duration of suspension* (being suspended for 10 or more total days during one's school career).

The statistics in this table reveal associations in the expected direction, but the magnitudes may be surprising. Nearly half of black boys (46 percent), more than two in five Hispanic boys (42 percent), and more than one in three white boys (36 percent) who were suspended at any point during their school careers had not obtained a high school diploma by their late 20s.[8] While substantial shares of boys who were suspended had gone on to attend college, few had obtained a bachelor's degree. Furthermore, the intensity of suspension matters for educational attainment. For example, the graduation rate for Hispanic boys suspended 10 days or more was just 38 percent—compared to 81 percent among Hispanic boys who were never suspended.

The risks of arrest and incarceration are also highly stratified by suspension experience. Among white boys who were suspended 10 or more days, for example, 43 percent had been arrested three or more times, and 32 percent had been sentenced to confinement in a juvenile or adult correctional facility. The comparable figures for white boys who had never been suspended were seven to eight times lower (6 percent and 4 percent, respectively). Similar patterns exist among black and Hispanic boys.

Among boys who had never been suspended from school, more than one in four was arrested by his late 20s. However, only small shares were arrested three or more times or sentenced to confinement. Thus, while not all boys who were suspended from school experienced early sanctions from the juvenile or criminal justice systems, *few youth went on to become chronic offenders by their late 20s without first having been suspended from school.*

[8] GEDs are excluded here.

Interestingly, controlling for suspension reduces racial gaps in educational attainment, suggesting that discipline and achievement gaps may indeed be "two sides of the same coin" (Gregory et al. 2010: 59). For example, the black-white gap in high school completion among youth who were never suspended is only 5 percentage points, compared to 15 percentage points for all white and black boys. Similarly, controlling for suspension greatly reduces gaps in arrest and incarceration across racial and ethnic groups. The arrest and incarceration profiles for white, black, and Hispanic boys who were suspended 10 days or more are remarkably similar.

Table 4 presents outcomes for girls.[9] In general, they parallel those of boys, with one exception: the association between suspension and criminal justice outcomes is weaker for black girls than for any other group. Only half of black girls who had been suspended 10 total days or more had been arrested by their late 20s, compared to roughly three in four white and Hispanic girls who had been suspended 10 or more days. Likewise, suspended black girls were less likely than suspended white and Hispanic girls to have been sentenced to confinement. These findings could be due in part to a disconnect between the behaviors for which students are suspended from school and behaviors that could result in arrest. Prior research has documented that black students are especially likely to be suspended for subjective infractions (Skiba et al. 2000), such as disrespect, which might not be strongly associated with illegal activity.[10]

3. Can disparities in suspension be explained by behavior?

The strong correlation between suspension and negative outcomes for both girls and boys suggests one of two possibilities: 1) that schools are suspending students who are already at risk for dropout and arrest based on their behavior or other prior characteristics, or 2) that suspension influences subsequent trajectories of behavior, achievement, and punishment. The conventional wisdom suggests that suspended students are generally troubled youth

[9] Two columns are omitted due to low sample size.

[10] While recent trends in school discipline, such as the presence of police in schools, have led to the "criminalization" (see, e.g., Hirschfield 2008) of behaviors that would not normally result in arrest, there is often a distinction between the types of behaviors that result in suspension and the types of behaviors that result in arrest or incarceration. National data indicate that fighting, inappropriate language, tardiness, truancy, disobedience/disrespect, and "general classroom disruption" are among the most common reasons for suspension (Losen and Skiba 2010:9). In addition, suspensions of five days or more address fighting, insubordination, and drug and alcohol use much more commonly than weapons use or possession (Robers et al. 2010:72-3).

who are punished first in school and then by the juvenile and criminal justice systems as their delinquency and non-compliance ages into crime. Critics of suspension, on the other hand, argue that suspension is differentially applied and can *cause* later negative outcomes. The empirical evidence that could sort out these competing claims is under-developed. One reason for this is that most studies of suspension rely on administrative data from schools, which typically contain extensive information on observable outcomes like suspension, grade repetition, and low test scores, but little or no information about the underlying *behavior* of youth.

While the NLSY97 does not contain information on the specific behaviors for which students are suspended, it does contain extensive self-report[11] data on delinquent activities. Each year, youth are asked about their participation in a range of behaviors including destruction of property, theft of items worth less than $50, theft of items worth $50 or more (including cars), other property crimes, drug sales, physical assault,[12] carrying a handgun, gang involvement, and running away. This presents a unique opportunity to examine the extent to which suspension identifies youth who are engaging in serious misbehaviors and to determine whether differential participation in these behaviors can explain racial and ethnic gaps in suspension.

Using these behavior data, I perform two analyses. First, I compare the onset of delinquency to the onset of suspension from school, to determine whether schools are merely identifying troubled students through the use of suspension or whether problem behaviors emerge after careers of suspension begin. If we find that the onset of delinquency happens before the onset of punishment, this would suggest that schools are merely identifying students who are already at risk of arrest or incarceration based on their behavior. However, if students are suspended before engaging in delinquency, this might suggest that schools can play a role in shaping future behavior through the application of discipline.

Table 5 shows the relationship between boys' early participation in delinquency and the timing of their first suspension from school, disaggregated by race and ethnicity. To create this table, I first divide boys into two groups based on whether they had ever been

---

[11] Self-report data can be subject to recall error and social desirability bias. However, I am encouraged by the fact that the portion of the survey that asks about delinquency and arrest is self-administered, meaning that youth enter their responses directly into the computer rather than reporting them to interviewers.

[12] Here I use the term physical assault, although some publications refer to this as "engaging in assaultive behaviors" (Puzzanchera 2000:1). Wording of the survey question is as follows: *Have you ever attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them or have* [sic] *a situation end up in a serious fight or assault of some kind?*

suspended from school by the 1996-97 school year (the year closest to the baseline survey). I then categorize boys into one of four groups based on the types of delinquency they report at the baseline survey: 1) *no delinquency*, 2) *property only* (a composite measure of destruction of property, theft under $50, theft of $50 or more, and other property crimes), 3) *violent only* (a composite measure of physical assault, carrying a handgun, and gang involvement.), and 4) *both property and violent activities*. Because the baseline survey asks whether respondents have *ever* participated in these delinquency types, I limit the analysis to the younger half of the sample in order to reduce the time interval they are describing and to observe them as early in the schooling process as possible. On average, respondents in this subsample were 13 years old at the time of the baseline interview.

Two findings in Table 5 deserve special attention. First, *white boys who had been suspended from school were more likely to report delinquency than were black and Hispanic boys who had been suspended.* Among boys who had been suspended, nearly half of white boys (47 percent) had engaged in both property delinquency and violent activity, compared to 31 percent of black boys and 28 percent of Hispanic boys. Likewise, suspension is better targeted toward delinquent youth when applied to white boys than when applied to black or Hispanic boys. The evidence for this is that gaps in self-reported delinquency between boys who were suspended and boys who were not are larger among white boys than among black and Hispanic boys. For example, 81 percent of white boys who had been suspended reported some form of delinquency compared to 48 percent of white boys who had never been suspended (a gap of 33 percentage points). Among Hispanic boys, the size of this gap is considerably smaller (11 percentage points), and the size of the gap for black boys falls in between (at 15 percentage points).

Second, *large shares of boys who had been suspended from school did not report ever having participated in any form of property delinquency or violent activity.*[13] This is true of more than two in five Hispanic boys (42 percent), nearly two in five black boys (37 percent), and just under one in five white boys (19 percent). Thus, any careers of delinquency or crime in which these boys later participated began only after they had been excluded from school.

The second analysis I perform using the behavior data is to examine whether controlling for serious misbeavior can explain the racial and ethnic disparities in suspension

[13] Delinquency data are from baseline interview administered in late 1997 or early 1998, after the end of the 1996-97 school year.

in this national sample. Here I compare suspension during the 1997-98 school year with delinquency reported between the 1997 and 1998 survey waves.[14] Figure 2 displays the results. There are two important takeaways here. First, *suspension does target delinquent youth to some degree*. We can see this because the risk of suspension within each racial group increases as we move from left to right across the figure. For example, focusing on white boys, we see that 8 percent of those who reported no delinquency were suspended, compared with 15 percent of those who reported property offenses, and 25 percent of those who reported violent behaviors (with or without property offenses). Second, and perhaps more important for policymakers, *racial and ethnic disparities persist after self-reported delinquency is controlled.* Among boys who report no delinquency, for example, 8 percent of white boys are suspended, compared with 10 percent of Hispanic boys and 19 percent of black boys. Likewise, among boys who report violent or pro-violent behaviors (physical assault, carrying a handgun, and/or gang involvement), 40 percent of black boys are suspended from school, compared with 37 percent of Hispanic boys and 25 percent of white boys. These findings corroborate prior research showing that the reasons for office referrals cannot explain racial disparities in suspension (Skiba et al. 1997) and extend it to show that more general measures of behavior, including behaviors that could lead to arrest, also cannot explain racial and ethnic gaps in suspension.

DISCUSSION

The findings presented above reveal that the associations documented by prior longitudinal research in individual states and districts generalize to a national sample of youth. Students across the United States who are suspended from school are less likely than their non-suspended peers to obtain a high school diploma and to obtain a bachelors degree by their late 20s, and are more likely to be arrested, arrested multiple times, and sentenced to confinement in a correctional facility. Moreover, racial disparities in suspension among U.S. youth cannot be explained by differential participation in delinquency; instead, they must be explained by variation in less serious behaviors, or by discrimination in the application of discipline.

[14] The time intervals over which suspension and delinquency are measured are not equivalent; however, the purpose here is descriptive, and these comparisons should provide a rough idea of the degree to which delinquency overlaps with school punishment.

Because suspension and negative outcomes are highly correlated, it is important from a policy perspective to understand the nature of these relationships: does suspension simply identify youth who are already at risk for dropout and arrest, or does it increase the likelihood of these negative outcomes? For policymakers concerned about human capital development and the provision of public safety, funding research that 1) examines the possibility of a causal relationship between suspension and subsequent outcomes and 2) compares the costs and benefits of out-of-school suspension with those of alternative interventions should be a top priority.

The findings of this study have several additional implications for education[15] policy at the federal, state, and district levels. First, given that trends previously documented at the state and district levels are present in a national sample, policymakers should consider interventions at the federal level to address the use of suspension, including offering incentives to promote promising alternatives to suspension, including restorative justice (see, e.g., Schiff in this volume). Second, policymakers at the state and district levels should identify and support schools with high rates of exclusionary discipline, not to punish them, but rather to provide additional support toward revising disciplinary practices and improving outcomes for students. Third, policymakers should consider integrating measures of school discipline into accountability frameworks and facilitating data collection that will allow for the evaluation of progress over time. Finally, policymakers should fund evaluations of recent efforts to reduce the use of suspension and related racial disparities in individual states and districts (e.g., Baltimore, MD, and Oakland, CA) to determine how the lessons learned in these pioneering districts can be scaled up to benefit students across the nation.

[15] These results also have implications for criminal justice policy, as they suggest that schools may have the capacity to influence public safety.

REFERENCES

American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force. 2008. "Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools? An Evidentiary Review and Recommendations." *American Psychologist* 63: 852-62.

Arcia, Emily. 2006. "Achievement and Enrollment Status of Suspended Students: Outcomes in a Large, Multicultural School District." *Education and Urban Society* 38(3): 359-69.

Arum, Richard, and Irene Beattie. 1999. "High School Experience and the Risk of Adult Incarceration. *Criminology* 37(3): 515-40.

Balfanz, Robert, Kurt Spiridakis, Ruth Curran Neild, and Nettie Letgers. 2003. "High-Poverty Secondary Schools and the Juvenile Justice System: How Neither Helps the Other and How that Could Change." In Wald & Losen (eds.), *Deconstructing the School-to-Prison Pipeline*, pp. 71-89. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bowditch, Christine. 1993. "Getting Rid of Troublemakers: High School Disciplinary Procedures and the Prediction of Dropouts." *Social Problems* 40(4): 493-509.

Christle, Christine, C. Michael Nelson, and Kristine Jolivette. 2004. "School Characteristics Related to the Use of Suspension." *Education and Treatment of Children* 27(4): 509-26.

Fabelo, Tony, et al. 2011. *Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement*. The Council of State Governments Justice Center.

Gregory, Anne, Russell J. Skiba, and Pedro A. Noguera. 2010. "The Achievement Gap and the Discipline Gap: Two Sides of the Same Coin?" *Educational Researcher*, 39(1): 59-68.

Hirschfield, Paul J. 2008. "Preparing for Prison? The Criminalization of School Discipline in the USA." *Theoretical Criminology* 12(1): 79-101.

Hirschfield, Paul J. 2010. "School Surveillance in America: Disparate and Unequal." In Torin Monahan & Rodolfo Torres (eds.) *Schools Under Surveillance: Cultures of Control in Public Education*. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press.

Krezmien, Michael P., Leone, Peter E., Zablocki, Mark S. and Craig S. Wells. 2010. "Juvenile Court Referrals and Public Schools; Nature and Extent of the Practice in Five States." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 26(August): 273-93.

Losen, Daniel J., and Russell Skiba. 2010. *Suspended Education: Urban Middle Schools in Crisis*. The Southern Poverty Law Center.

Puzzanchera, Charles M. 2000. "Self-Reported Delinquency by 12-Year-Olds, 1997." U.S. Department of Justice.

Raffaele Mendez, Linda M. 2003. "Predictors of Suspension and Negative School Outcomes: A Longitudinal Investigation." In Wald & Losen (eds.), *Deconstructing the School-to-Prison Pipeline*, pp. 17-33. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Robers, Simone, Jijun Zhang, and Jennifer Truman. 2010. *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2010* (NCES 2011-002/NCJ 230812). National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Washington, DC.

Simon, Jonathan. 2007. *Governing Through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear*. Oxford University Press.

Skiba, Russell J., Reece L. Peterson, and Tara Williams. 1997. "Office Referrals and Suspension: Disciplinary Intervention in Middle Schools." *Education and Treatment of Children* 20(3): 295-315.

Skiba, Russell J., Robert S. Michael, Abra Carroll Nardo, and Reece L. Peterson. 2000. "The Color of Discipline: Sources of Racial and Gender Disproportionality in School Punishment." *The Urban Review* 34(4): 317-42.

Wallace, John M. Jr., Sara Goodkind, Cynthia M. Wallace, and Jerald G. Bachman. 2008. "Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Differences in School Discipline among U.S. High School Students: 1991-2005." *The Negro Educational Review* 59(1-2): 47-62.

Wu, Shi-Chang, William T. Pink, Robert L. Crain, and Oliver Moles. 1982. "Student Suspension: A Critical Reappraisal." *The Urban Review* 14(4): 245-303.

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Full Sample (Weighted)

Demographics	
Mean age at baseline (in years)	14.86
Mean age at most recent interview (in years)	27.44
% Female	0.49
% White	0.67
% Black	0.15
% Hispanic	0.13
Suspension Experience	
Ever suspended during K-12	0.35
Suspended 10 total days or more	0.13
Outcomes by 2010	
Obtained high school diploma	0.78
Attended any college	0.56
Ever arrested	0.32
Arrested 3 or more times	0.12
Ever sentenced to incarceration	0.08
N	8984

Table 2. Prevalence and Cumulative Intensity of Suspension

	FULL SAMPLE	BOYS				GIRLS			
		All	White	Black	Hispanic	All	White	Black	Hispanic
Ever Suspended During K-12	0.35	0.44	0.39	0.67	0.49	0.25	0.20	0.45	0.29
Total Number of School Years Suspended									
None	0.65	0.56	0.61	0.33	0.51	0.75	0.80	0.55	0.71
One	0.17	0.20	0.18	0.25	0.25	0.15	0.12	0.23	0.18
Two	0.08	0.10	0.09	0.14	0.11	0.06	0.05	0.11	0.07
Three	0.04	0.06	0.05	0.11	0.06	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.02
Four or more	0.05	0.08	0.06	0.17	0.06	0.02	0.01	0.05	0.02
Total Number of Days Suspended									
Zero	0.65	0.56	0.61	0.33	0.51	0.75	0.80	0.55	0.71
1-4	0.14	0.17	0.16	0.21	0.21	0.12	0.09	0.19	0.15
5-9	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.16	0.10	0.06	0.05	0.12	0.07
10-19	0.06	0.08	0.07	0.11	0.09	0.04	0.03	0.07	0.03
20 or more	0.07	0.10	0.09	0.19	0.09	0.03	0.02	0.07	0.03
N	8984	4599	2286	1169	977	4385	2127	1166	924

Table 3. Boys' Outcomes by 2010 (Mean Age 28)

	White Boys						Black Boys						Hispanic Boys					
	All	Never susp	Any susp	Susp early (by age 12)	Susp during 2 or more school years	Susp 10 total days or more	All	Never susp	Any susp	Susp early (by age 12)	Susp during 2 or more school years	Susp 10 total days or more	All	Never susp	Any susp	Susp early (by age 12)	Susp during 2 or more school years	Susp 10 total days or more
Obtained…																		
High school diploma	0.78	0.87	0.64	0.56	0.55	0.49	0.63	0.82	0.54	0.56	0.49	0.42	0.70	0.81	0.58	0.58	0.47	0.38
Any college	0.54	0.66	0.35	0.32	0.27	0.23	0.36	0.53	0.28	0.31	0.25	0.20	0.43	0.55	0.31	0.30	0.27	0.24
Bachelors degree or more	0.26	0.37	0.09	0.07	0.04	0.03	0.11	0.19	0.07	0.08	0.05	0.04	0.12	0.18	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.03
Arrested…																		
Ever	0.39	0.25	0.63	0.68	0.71	0.76	0.56	0.34	0.67	0.68	0.74	0.78	0.47	0.31	0.63	0.66	0.72	0.80
Three or more times	0.16	0.06	0.31	0.36	0.39	0.43	0.28	0.11	0.37	0.39	0.46	0.52	0.20	0.08	0.32	0.30	0.41	0.50
Sentenced to…																		
Any confinement	0.10	0.04	0.21	0.28	0.27	0.32	0.22	0.09	0.28	0.29	0.32	0.38	0.15	0.07	0.23	0.20	0.28	0.35
Jail	0.08	0.03	0.15	0.20	0.20	0.23	0.13	0.07	0.15	0.14	0.16	0.19	0.10	0.05	0.15	0.13	0.17	0.22
Adult correctional facility	0.03	0.01	0.07	0.09	0.10	0.11	0.11	0.02	0.15	0.17	0.19	0.23	0.05	0.02	0.08	0.03	0.11	0.14
Juvenile correctional facility	0.02	0.00	0.04	0.07	0.05	0.08	0.05	0.01	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.10	0.04	0.02	0.07	0.07	0.09	0.13
Reform or training school	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01
N	2286	1405	881	213	466	355	1169	371	798	314	497	361	977	500	477	137	242	177

Table 4. Girls' Outcomes by 2010 (Mean Age 28)

	White Girls						Black Girls						Hispanic Girls					
	All	Never susp	Any susp	Susp early (by age 12)	Susp during 2 or more school years	Susp 10 total days or more	All	Never susp	Any susp	Susp early (by age 12)	Susp during 2 or more school years	Susp 10 total days or more	All	Never susp	Any susp	Susp early (by age 12)	Susp during 2 or more school years	Susp 10 total days or more
Obtained…																		
High school diploma	0.82	0.87	0.61		0.51	0.43	0.77	0.86	0.65	0.69	0.62	0.56	0.75	0.80	0.63		0.59	0.47
Any college	0.63	0.70	0.37		0.32	0.26	0.57	0.69	0.42	0.45	0.36	0.32	0.50	0.54	0.40		0.43	0.37
Bachelors degree or more	0.35	0.42	0.10		0.05	0.04	0.20	0.29	0.09	0.10	0.05	0.03	0.18	0.22	0.09		0.05	0.04
Arrested…																		
Ever	0.21	0.14	0.50		0.62	0.76	0.24	0.14	0.37	0.43	0.47	0.50	0.19	0.11	0.41		0.53	0.73
Three or more times	0.06	0.03	0.21		0.29	0.37	0.06	0.03	0.11	0.15	0.15	0.18	0.06	0.01	0.17		0.24	0.37
Sentenced to…																		
Any confinement	0.04	0.02	0.13		0.15	0.21	0.04	0.02	0.07	0.08	0.09	0.12	0.03	0.01	0.09		0.13	0.19
Jail	0.03	0.01	0.08		0.09	0.12	0.02	0.01	0.04	0.07	0.05	0.07	0.02	0.01	0.04		0.06	0.09
Adult correctional facility	0.01	0.00	0.03		0.03	0.04	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.02		0.03	0.00
Juvenile correctional facility	0.01	0.00	0.04		0.05	0.09	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.01	0.00	0.04		0.04	0.10
Reform or training school	0.00	0.00	0.01		0.01	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01		0.00	0.00
N	2127	1708	419	52	168	119	1166	619	547	162	264	169	924	660	264	45	100	60

Table 5. Boys' Early Participation in Delinquency by Suspension Experience

(Subsample: Younger Half of Respondents, Mean Age 13)

	White Boys		Black Boys		Hispanic Boys	
Ever suspended by 1996-97?	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
No Delinquency	0.52	0.19	0.52	0.37	0.53	0.42
Property Only	0.25	0.29	0.22	0.24	0.27	0.22
Violent Only	0.07	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.08
Both Property and Violent	0.16	0.47	0.18	0.31	0.14	0.28
N	857	225	233	291	301	147

Property = any destruction of property, theft, and/or other property crimes

Violent = assaultive behavior, carrying a handgun, and/or belonging to a gang

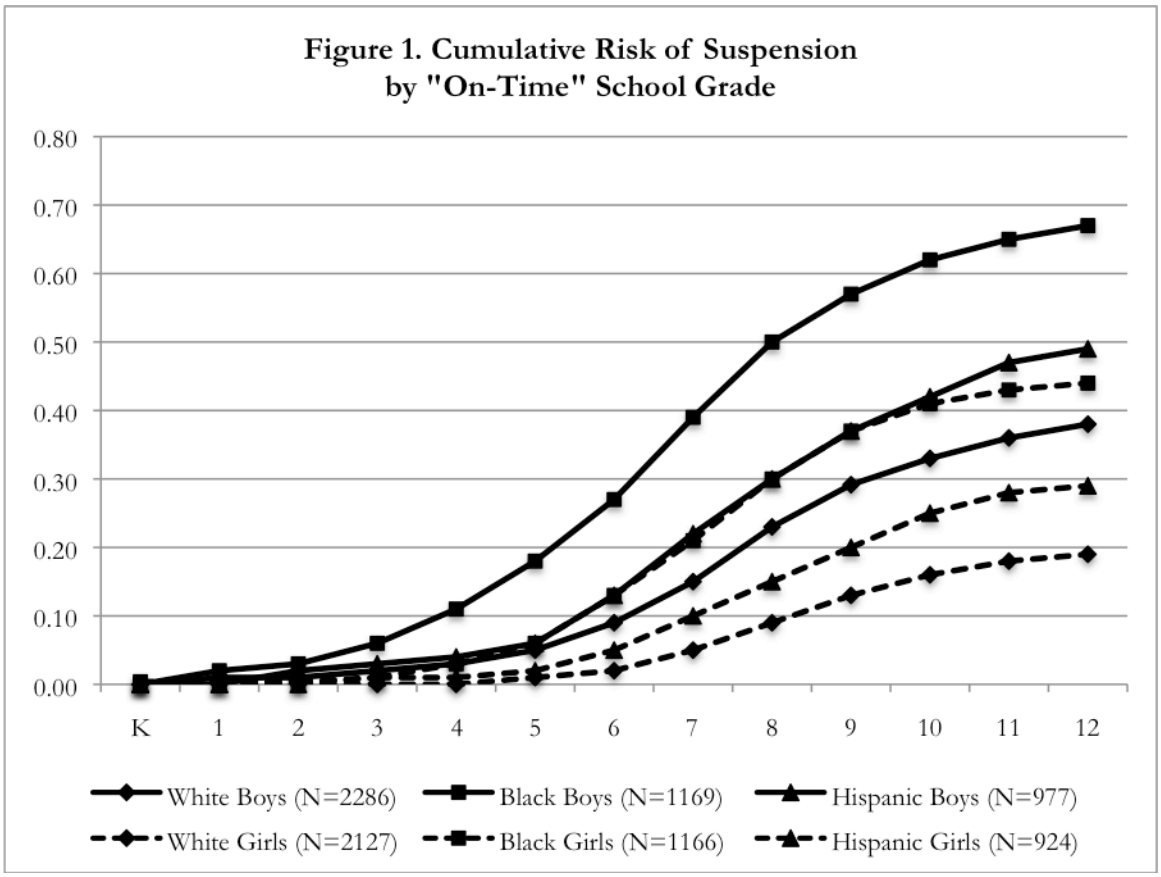
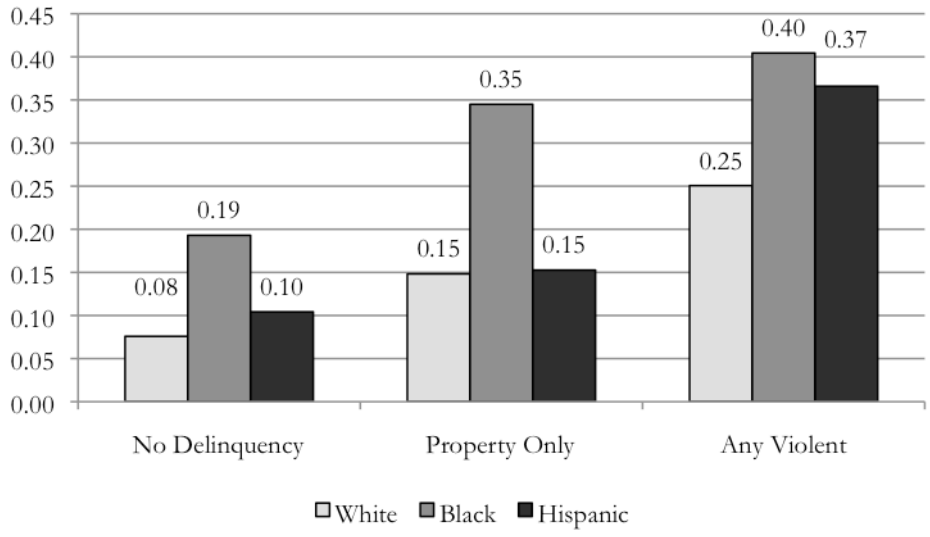


Figure 1. Cumulative Risk of Suspension
by "On-Time" School Grade
0.80
0.70
0.60
0.50
0.40
0.30
0.20
0.10
0.00
K
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
White Boys (N=2286)
Black Boys (N=1169)
Hispanic Boys (N=977)
White Girls (N=2127)
Black Girls (N=1166)
Hispanic Girls (N=924)

Figure 2. Boys' Risk of Suspension During the 1997-98 School Year by Recent Delinquency Type

Subsample: Younger Half of Respondents, Mean Age 14



APPENDIX A
Details on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997

Suitability

Developed primarily to study employment, the NLSY97 provides a unique opportunity to examine school discipline and delinquency among a nationally representative sample of youth. The data are exceptionally rich, containing detailed event history data on schooling experiences and annual self-report data on delinquent behavior and arrest for all respondents through the eighth survey wave.[16] In addition, intentional oversampling of black and Hispanic youth allows for comparisons of delinquency and arrest across racial and ethnic groups. Moreover, the NLSY97 sampling strategy is household-based rather than school-based, increasing the likelihood that it captures the experiences of seriously delinquent or truant youth who are not attending school and are of critical importance to this study.

Sampling and weights

The NLSY97 is composed of two independent probability samples: a cross-sectional sample (N=6,748) and a supplemental sample of black and Hispanic youth (N=2,236).[17] In this paper, I include data from both samples to increase the precision of estimates for black and Hispanic youth. I also apply weights so that statistics for the full sample can be interpreted as nationally representative.[18] The unweighted size of the full sample is 8,984.

[16] Only youth who report delinquency during the first eight survey waves and a small comparison group are asked about criminal activity and arrest beyond this point.

[17] The same two-stage procedure is used to obtain each sample. In the first stage, households are identified from within randomly selected segments within randomly selected PSUs. During the second stage, eligible respondents are identified within each household. It should be noted that PSUs are defined differently when drawing the two samples, with the oversample aggregating counties containing large percentages of black and Latino residents. For more information, see the following BLS website: http://www.nlsinfo.org/nlsy97/nlsdocs/nlsy97/97sample/sample.html

[18] I use the "cumulative cases" weights prepared by the BLS, which account for several features of the sampling design and recruitment process including the probability of selection into the two samples, early nonresponse, and the oversampling of black and Hispanic youth.