Zero Tolerance for Some: The Role of Race in Zero Tolerance Exclusionary Discipline

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ZERO TOLERANCE FOR SOME:
THE ROLE OF RACE IN ZERO TOLERANCE EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE

by

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Abstract

Within the last few decades, zero tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline have become the standard way in which schools manage student behavior. These policies, namely suspension and expulsion have been shown to have negative impacts on the lives of students who are punished with them. Educationally, the removal of students from the classroom hurts their chances of achieving academic success. Furthermore, these policies have been linked with an increase in the presence of law enforcement on school campuses, which results in the arrest of students, burdening them with expensive and serious legal battles.

This research examines whether nonwhite students are more likely to be sanctioned by this form of discipline. A nationally representative sample of middle and high school students is used to estimate four logistic regression models, with exclusionary discipline as the dependent variable and race as the primary independent variable. The analysis shows that nonwhite students are more likely to suspended or expelled than white students – even when student behavior is the same. This research adds to the existing body of research on exclusionary discipline and provides a nationally generalizable study to support the claim the nonwhite students are at an increased risk to be sanctioned by zero tolerance policies.

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INTRODUCTION

Decades of standardized-test scores reveal a striking achievement gap in the educational progress between White and Black students in the United States. In 2010, 36% of White students completed a bachelor's degree within six years, while only 17% of Black achieved the same (Radford, Berkner, Wheeles, & Shepherd 2010). Even among students much younger, a substantial disparity in achievement has been noted. In 2011, 70% of fourth graders who scored above the 75th percentile in reading and math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) were white, while fewer than 8% were Black (Symms 2012).

The repercussions of this gap extend far beyond the schoolhouse doors. In a society as competitive as ours is today - where a person's income is so closely linked with their education - the importance of academic achievement cannot be understated. Educational success in the form of degrees and awards correlates to job prospects, and as such contributes to a student's future socio-economic status (Taniguchi 2005). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of 2013, the median weekly earnings for an individual with a bachelor's degree are $1,066, whereas the analogous earnings for an individual with only a high school diploma are $652, and $471 for less than a high school diploma. As of 2010, according to the U.S. Census, 30.9% of whites are college graduates, whereas the comparative number only amounts to 17% for African-Americans. If nonwhite students are consistently and overwhelmingly underperforming in school relative to white students, historic racial inequalities are being constantly perpetuated.

An alternative perspective of this problem is considering the idea of an "opportunity gap" rather than an "achievement gap." "Achievement" suggests a failure on the part of the student; but if the same gap is being seen nationwide, focusing on the individual student might not be so

telling. Considering a gap in the opportunities the students are presented with, however, broadens the focus to underlying structural and cultural factors that may play a hand in this outcome.

Recently, disciplinary measures have been examined as another area where racial disparities exist in schools. Research indicates nonwhite students are more likely to be punished for their behavior in school than white students (Fenning 2007). Disciplinary measures in school can take many forms, from notifying a parent or legal guardian about a students' behavior to more severe and punitive actions, such as exclusionary discipline. Exclusionary discipline includes any corrective measure that requires the student be removed from their normal educational environment - typically, suspension and expulsion.

Exclusionary discipline has not always been a national favorite. Prior to its popularity, student behavior was treated as an in-house matter and teachers distributed punishment as they saw fit according to context, usually in a case-by-case manner. That changed however, in the late 1980s and 1990s when exclusionary discipline became hugely fashionable (Skiba 2012). Like the culture of fear surrounding drugs in America that prevailed throughout the 1980s (which coincided with more punitive drug policy,) that same time period was characterized by a culture of fear surrounding violence in schools. As such, in 1986, the Reagan Administration recommended legislation that would require schools nationally to adopt a "zero tolerance" disciplinary policy (Skiba 2012). Although the bill was ultimately thrown out, the culture of fear remained, and official school policies across the country began to adopt ideas of "no-nonsense" and ultimately, zero tolerance. As a result, schools increased the number and length of suspensions and expulsions and expanded the list of specific infractions that warranted such measures (e.g., sometimes including dress-code violations and failure to complete homework)

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(Skiba 2013).

This shift and its resulting policies not only mirrored the drug war but were related to it. Proponents of increasing exclusionary discipline in schools initially cited the deterrence of drug trafficking in schools as a benefit to institutionalizing the threat of suspensions and expulsions (Skiba 2013). Because of a rising fear of drugs and violence, schools systems began functioning more like the criminal justice system than ever before. This allowed for law enforcement, surveillance cameras, and metal detectors to become increasingly normalized fixtures in the American high school, especially in urban areas (Caton 2012). Furthermore, this marks transference of the responsibility to manage student behavior from teachers to superintendents and law enforcement. This means that student behavior – regardless of age - is no longer considered an "in-house" issue, as much as public behavior open to the judgment of law. One possible message is that students are increasingly being "adultified" (Caton 2012).

Examinations of the use of exclusionary measures indicate that suspension and expulsion are associated with an increased likelihood of academic failure or dropout (Robinett 2012). Since exclusionary measures disrupt learning inherently by removing the student from school, this is unsurprising. Effectiveness of these measures has also been called into question, with many experts concluding that suspension and expulsion do not reduce unwanted student behavior and fail to take into account causes of misconduct (Sullivan 2010). Alternative measures to exclusionary discipline have been proposed with the intent of promoting academic success for the student and addressing the cause of the problem. Such alternative measures include family intervention, community service, and requiring parents to actively participate in their child's school life (Sullivan 2010).

Significant evidence has been brought forth demonstrating the racial disparity in the application of drug policy beyond schoolhouse doors (Skiba 2013). This research aims to investigate the racial disparity in the application of exclusionary discipline. This is important because of the implications such a disparity has on the achievement gap between races. Because of the historical link between drug policy and school safety measures, an analogous discrepancy is a reasonable expectation for exclusionary discipline practices. Because a certain amount of discretion by authority is required to make the call to suspend or expel a student, an aspect of racial bias is plausible. In situations where race contributes to the likelihood of a student being removed from class, their opportunity to achieve academically is also affected by their race. Furthermore, students who behave out of compliance are increasingly being subject to interacting with the criminal justice system, this would also act as a piece of the pipeline sending youth from school to prison. A disproportionate number of minority students being suspended or expelled could potentially relate to the disproportionate number of minorities in America being incarcerated (Skiba 2013).

Effectiveness of Zero Tolerance

Researchers have explored "zero tolerance" and exclusionary discipline in schools for decades (Skiba 2013). Initially, "zero tolerance" policy, or the blanket and total banning of specific behaviors based on the idea of deterrence, was a punitive approach to drug crimes. As such, its application in the school setting to control student behavior has been called into question. The increased popularity in "zero tolerance" philosophy as an approach to school management demonstrates how expulsions and suspensions became norms for schools to use.

Efficiency, equality, and objectivity of these tactics have been called in to question by researchers in a number of ways.

Recently, in 2008, the American Psychological Association assembled a Zero Tolerance task force to examine the value and the effects that the expansion of exclusionary discipline measures have on schools and students. The primary concern this research brought forth regarding "zero tolerance" in schools was its ineffectiveness. Specifically, the task force reviewed data from the U.S. Department of Education and Justice to analyze how "zero tolerance" is currently affecting schools. This data came from survey responses from students to questions regarding their experience with fighting in school and their experience with school discipline. They found that school violence now is higher than it has ever been previously, indicating that since the implementation of "zero tolerance," fighting at school has not decreased. In fact, their results show that in all behavioral areas where violations are typically treated with "zero tolerance," rates of these violations are at an all time high, with 20% of students reporting having been in a physical altercation at school in 2003 – an increase from the 16% rate in 1993 (APA 2008.) This speaks to the failure of the philosophy to successfully deter students from behaving out of accordance with school rules. The failure of zero tolerance policies as a whole is relevant to this research because ineffectiveness shows they are not functioning properly. In turn, if these policies are broken they may have negative unintended or indirect consequences.

The same study, conducted by the APA, also found that in schools with higher rates of suspensions and expulsions, overall school climate was rated as less satisfactory of a learning environment. This pokes a gaping hole in the assumption that the removal of students who violate school rules will contribute to an overall better learning environment – a key tenet on

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which "zero tolerance" is based (APA 2008.) This research was cross-sectional, and therefore fails to indicate whether the school climate was rated as "less satisfactory" prior to the implementation of zero policies or afterwards. If student dissatisfaction was present prior to the schools' adoptions of "zero tolerance", that would suggest "zero tolerance" policies being disproportionately applied to schools with already low rates of student attachment for an outside reason. Any disproportionate application of these policies is questionable because of the documented negative outcomes these policies have on student lives, and the linkages that have been made between these policies and student interactions with the juvenile justice system. Finally, this study assessed the effect of "zero tolerance" on the relationship between schools and the juvenile justice system. The researchers found that the increase in the use of suspension and expulsions in schools correlated with an increase in school reliance on law enforcement type strategies such as surveillance cameras, security personnel and profiling (APA 2008.) This reveals a move towards a more prison like atmosphere in school environments than has existed before.

Regarding the specific effects on individual students who are suspended or expelled, the research follows several paths. One of these paths focused on the effects related to the fact that students are physically removed from the classroom, and as such, barred from participating in their education because of a suspension or expulsion. In 2003, Casella performed an ethnographic study between the years of 1997 to 2001 in two high schools, on several students who experienced exclusionary disciplinary measures as a result of their behavior. The findings from this research denote that once a student was expelled, completing school presented significant challenges. One of the challenges these students faced was having to find a new

school to attend after being excluded from their "home" school, or assigned school by the county. Furthermore, this research found that a perceived stigma is placed on a student when they are suspended or expelled, which makes readmission into the educational environment difficult and uncomfortable (Casella 2003.) This research supplements the study done by the APA by showing that "zero tolerance" is largely ineffectual on school climate, but also negative in its effect on individual students who encounter its policy.

In 2001, the "No Child Left Behind" act mandated virtually every school in the country to construct a "code of conduct," explicitly communicating school rules and predetermined sanctions to students. In 2011, researchers performed a content analysis on these "codes of conduct" from 120 different high schools from six states. Their findings show that the number of offenses that officially warranted suspension varied state by state, as well as the type of offenses. They also found that while an overall punitive tone existed unilaterally throughout the schools' "codes of conducts," a large amount of variation existed in the expectations of students in different districts and different states (Fenning et al 2011.) This sheds light on the idea that "zero tolerance" is more subjective than the name suggests, and unfair or unequal distribution of punishment can result. Furthermore, the requisite of these codes by the "No Child Left Behind" act sheds light on the fact that rather than plateau or weaken, the "zero tolerance" approach in schools has become more stringent in the early millennia relative to it's initial introduction in the 1980s and 1990s.

Aside from the inequality inherent in the unequal application of suspensions and expulsions, research shows that these punishments can have severe and enduring consequences on the lives of individual students. In 2006, Skiba et al. conducted research linking the increase

in suspensions and expulsions to an increased police presence in schools. Since the advent of "zero tolerance," and a shift towards "get tough" punitive measures for students, more and more schools have been engaging law enforcement into their services. This demonstrates that student problems once handled by teachers and principals are now being handled with handcuffs in a police department. This research showed that court referrals from schools have hugely increased since the 1990s. Because of this, zero tolerance policies directly contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline (Skiba et al. 2006.) Unfair distribution of the exclusionary policies may not just mean an academic injustice, but also an injustice regarding who is incarcerated. At the very least, these policies in schools widen the net for who is susceptible to incarceration.

In 2013, researchers examined rates of arrest in schools and the presence of police in schools in Clayton County, GA. This work documents an exorbitant increase in student arrests since the 1990s when police were placed on middle and high school campuses. From 1990 to 2004, specifically, arrests on high school campuses in Clayton County increased by 1,248 percent (Teske et al. 2013.) Furthermore, of these arrests, 92 percent were misdemeanor offenses such as fighting and classroom disruption (Teske et al. 2013.) This is significant because it suggests that zero tolerance policies not only punish students by excluding them from the classroom, but also further burdening them with the financial demands associated with legal trouble, as well as the marring of their legal record which could contribute to their future employment prospects. Although the scope of this evidence is limited to a single county, the implications are still significant because of their magnitude. Even if the analogous numbers for the country as a whole are less prominent, the general trend towards exclusionary discipline as a means to arrest is shown by Clayton County. If this is any indication of how zero tolerance in

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schools interacts with the judicial system nationally, this shows how far-reaching one suspension or expulsion might be.

Zero Tolerance and Racial Discrimination

Regarding race and zero tolerance in schools, researchers have looked to school characteristics to determine discrimination. In 2012, Welch and Payne tested a hypothesis based on racial threat, or the idea that punitive social controls will expand as a result of larger proportions of minorities. This study focused on school characteristics as an indicator of the amount of suspensions and expulsions administered by that school. The researchers in this case looked exclusively at schools in urban areas throughout the country and the specific school characteristic these researchers focused on was proportion of minority students to white students. This study looked at data from The National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools, which includes survey data from 221 schools nationwide. The schools in question also had high numbers of students on social welfare programs, indicating that a number of these students were from low socio-economic status backgrounds. Their results were that schools with higher levels of minority students were more likely to use suspension and expulsion as a mean of disciplining students, suggesting that overall minorities were more susceptible than whites to be suspended or expelled (Welch and Payne 2012.). An important consideration regarding this research is that if suspensions and expulsions are being used more often in schools with higher numbers of low-income family students, it stands to reason that the schools are also underfunded. This contributes to the idea that an achievement gap and a discipline gap are related. However, the unit of analysis in this study is schools, not individuals and it looked at the effects of school

composition on disciplinary measures, rather than specifically at the race of a student on disciplinary measures

A similar study examined data from one urban high school of 2882 students in a mid-size U.S. city and looked into the relationship between school discipline and African American males revealed consistent results (Gregory and Weinstein 2008). This one measured referrals given to African American males compared to other ethnic and gender groups. Aside from the actual discipline, the behavior that caused the discipline was taken into consideration. The findings were that compared to any other demographic, African American males were most likely to receive referrals for "defiance." A feature that distinguished this study was that the researchers also examined the student teacher relationship. Their guiding idea was that student attitudes towards teachers influence their classroom behavior which in turn affects how their behavior is treated, or if they are disciplined. To investigate this, the research surveyed students about their attitudes towards teachers and towards school. They found that African American males were also the most likely to rate teachers as distrustful and as having low expectations of them (Gregory and Weinstein 2008.) This perception speaks to the relationship between achievement gap and discipline gap in education among minority students.

It has been well documented that zero tolerance policies are not successfully managing student conduct or safety. Aside from failing to serve their function, these policies are negatively impacting young peoples' lives. Through the removal of students from their learning environment, these policies are stunting academic growth. Furthermore, it is clear that these policies have been linked with serious and expensive legal complications, such as police presence in schools and increased amounts of arrests.

CURRENT STUDY

RQ: Are nonwhite students more likely to be suspended or expelled than white students?

Much of the data used in research on school discipline as it pertains specifically to race has been very in-depth in analysis, but has been obtained from a single school or county. It is important to incorporate a more national perspective into the body of research to gain an understanding that is applicable nationally.

The main question this study seeks to find is whether nonwhites are disproportionately affected by exclusionary discipline, in a sample that is generalizable nationally, compared to their white counterparts. This will build upon the already existing knowledge about the application of exclusionary discipline and perhaps call further into question the efficiency of the practice of zero tolerance in schools. This study expects to find a disparity marked by race on the use of exclusionary discipline while controlling for pertinent factors.

METHODOLOGY

Data

The data for this study comes from the public use version of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, or Add Health, by a stratified random sample of adolescents in grades 7-12 in the United States. For this study, Wave 1 of Add Health is being used, which was gathered in the 1994-95 school year. The Add Health is able to observe aspects respondents' social, economic, and physical well-being by asking questions about the respondents' lives at home and school, peer relationships, and engagement in delinquency. A total of 6,500 respondents were included in Wave I of the public use version of the data. Further information concerning Add Health can be accessed at the Carolina Population Center webpage (www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth).

Measures

The dependent variable is school discipline, specifically the application of exclusionary discipline measures, i.e. expulsion and suspension. Respondents were asked to report whether they had ever been expelled or suspended by their schools, and if so the number of times. This measure was dummy coded 0 = No and 1 = Yes. The primary independent variable is race, coded 0 = White and 1 = Nonwhite.

In recognition of the factors that could contribute to the likelihood of a student being disciplined, this study controlled for several variables. Demographic characteristics of students such as age and gender, coded 0 = female and 1 = male. Additional controls were included for measures we believe to be related to our outcome. The subjects' socioeconomic status was controlled for, based on a measure of poverty. Specifically, this was determined by examining

the respondents' mothers' responses to the question "Are you receiving public assistance, such as welfare?" The answers were coded as 0 = No and 1 = Yes.

We also included measures related to the respondents' school experiences. First, we created a measure of grades that was based on four items. Respondents were asked about their most recent grades in English, Math, History and Science. These items were combined and coded 1-4 with a higher score reflecting lower grades. Second, a scale measuring school attachment was based on 5 items: how close they felt to other people at school, whether they feel as if they are a part of their school, how happy they felt at school, whether they felt students were treated fairly by teachers and how safe they felt at school. These were combined into a single variable and coded 1-5 with a higher score reflecting stronger attachment to school. Finally, we also controlled for attitudes towards attending college. This was measured by looking at students' answers to the question, "How much do you want to go to college?" and was coded 1-5 with a higher score reflecting a stronger desire to attend college.

It is important to consider student behavior when examining the relationship between race and student discipline. To ensure the analysis reveals the relationship between race and discipline, rather than race and behavior, we also included measures of delinquent activity and a measure of neighborhood conditions. Therefore, the scope of this research is not limited by behavioral differences. A delinquency scale was created that included 15 items, both property and violent crime), with a higher score reflects greater involvement in delinquency. The fifteen items asked questions about whether the respondents' had engaged in specific acts of delinquency such as graffiti, shoplifting, selling and using drugs and so forth. Finally, neighborhood attachment was controlled for and measured by an index including 5 items. The

survey questions for this measure examined how attitudes toward the neighborhood they resided in by asking how safe they felt in their neighborhood and how close they felt to the people in their neighborhood. This was coded so a higher score reflects a bad neighborhood.

Analytic Strategy

In order to test the hypothesis, several logistic regression models will be estimated. The dependent variable for all regression models is school discipline. First, a baseline model is estimated to examine the bivariate relationship between race and school discipline. Second, demographic characteristics (age, gender, and poverty) are added to the baseline model. Third, educational measures (grades, school attachment, and college aspirations) are added to the model. Finally, measures of delinquency and neighborhood characteristics are added to the model.

FINDINGS

The sample characteristics for all of the measures are displayed in Table 1. Approximately 27% of the sample reported exclusionary school discipline, reporting having either been suspended or expelled from school. Nearly one-quarter, 23.5%, of the sample was nonwhite. The average age of the sample was 15.8, about half of the sample (51%) was male, and 9% reported welfare or public assistance. The sample characteristics show that most students had good grades, were strongly attached to school and aspired to attend college after high school. In addition, involvement in delinquency was uncommon and most respondents liked the neighborhoods they lived in.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics (N = 5,294)

	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
School Discipline	0-1	0.271	0.450
Race (non-white)	0-1	0.235	0.473
Age	11-21	15.802	1.754
Gender (male)	0-1	0.509	0.499
Poverty	0-1	0.092	0.288
Grades	1-4	2.174	0.706
School Attachment	1-5	3.727	0.761
College	1-5	4.438	1.025
Delinquency	0-3	0.276	0.336
Neighborhood	0-5	1.620	1.113

Table 2 includes the findings from the regression analysis. In accordance with the hypothesis, the analysis shows that race has a statistically significant relationship to exclusionary school discipline. Specifically, that nonwhites have an increased risk of being suspended or expelled compared to their white counterparts. Model 1 shows the bivariate association between race and school discipline and shows that the likelihood of suspension or expulsion for nonwhites students is approximately twice that of whites (OR 2.071, 95%CI.)

The subsequent models demonstrate the relationship between race and school discipline with controls added in for demographic features of the students, academic related controls, and finally a control for behavior based on delinquency. Model 2 adds demographic controls to Model 1 and shows that males have a significantly higher risk of being suspended or expelled compared to females (OR 2.69, 95% CI), and poverty is also significantly related to discipline (OR 2.336, 95% CI.) Model 3 adds grades, school attachment, and intent to attend college, and reveals that poor grades and poor school attachment are related to higher likelihood of school punishment. Finally Model 4 adds the delinquency and neighborhood measures to Model 3 and indicates the higher rate of delinquency and poor neighborhood attachment for those who have been suspended or expelled.   Importantly, in all models race remains a statistically significant risk factor for school punishment. Demographic factors added into model two do not account for the disparity in application of exclusionary discipline in schools. The same holds true for academic features of the students, as demonstrated by model three as well as behavior of students, which is controlled for by model four, which includes delinquency.

Table 2: Relationship between race and school punishment[a]

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Race	0.727*** (.111) [2.071]	0.726*** (.112) [2.066]	0.760*** (.113) [2.137]	0.785*** (.123) [2.193]
Age		0.085* (.035) [1.088]	.067 (.035) [1.069]	0.083* (.037) [1.086]
Male		1.043*** (.077) [2.837]	.989*** (.083) [2.691]	0.880*** (.090) [2.411]
Poverty		1.023*** (.117) [2.783]	0.848*** (.126) [2.336]	0.890*** (.139) [2.434]
Grades			0.838*** (.059) [2.311]	0.752*** (.062) [2.121]
School Attachment			-0.480 (.048) [0.619]	-0.371*** (.054) [0.690]
College			-0.168*** (.044) [0.845]	-0.175*** (.044) [0.839]
Delinquency				1.716*** (.156) [5.563]
Neighborhood				-0.081* (.036) [0.922]

a. Logistic regression models estimated with unstandardized regression coefficient, (linearized standard error), and [odds ratio] shown in the table, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to examine inequalities in the application of exclusionary discipline in schools. This is of critical importance because removing students from the classroom removes them from meaningful educational opportunities that affect their future and eventual socioeconomic status. As the findings of this study indicate, exclusionary discipline is not equitable and leaves some students at a marked disadvantage, namely students of color. The fact that there is a significantly disparate application of these policies puts nonwhite students at risk has serious implications about the achievement gap that exists between white and nonwhite students.

Furthermore, the significance of this research extends beyond a disciplinary tactic as zero tolerance policies not only disconnect students from their studies, but also often results in intervention from law enforcement (Skiba 2013.) Thus, if one group of students is being disproportionately subject to these consequences, as the findings suggest, they may be more likely to come into contact with the police and find themselves arrested. This contributes to the so-called school to prison pipeline (Welch and Payne 2012). Beyond schools and youth, this idea is important because it echoes into the lives of adults in the real world. The fact that minorities are more likely to be arrested, convicted, and incarcerated for drug related offenses mirrors the unequal application of school sanctions (Skiba 2013.)Ultimately, this can criminalize nonwhite youth in a society that aims for equal opportunity for all. As such, issue of inequitable school punishments cannot be ignored.

This research is consistent with other studies that have confirmed a disparity in the distribution of exclusionary discipline and the inequality can be in part explained the racial threat

hypothesis (Symms 2012, Skiba 2013). This perspective reasons that expanding minority populations pose a threat to the power and the social status of the dominant group. nonwhite students are targeted by exclusionary discipline at higher rates than white students due to the threat to power and status expanding minority populations pose based on presumed competition (Payne and Welch, 2010.)

Limitations:

This research has several limitations. One such limitation is that specific school characteristics were not accounted for, as the data used came from responses of students nationally. Furthermore, the use of already existing survey data limited the scope of the questions asked. This research relied on existing questions not specifically designed for this research question. For example, the survey used did not ask about student perceptions of school policies or any questions about how schools administer exclusionary discipline. It is likely that schools vary in codes of conduct and in what specific behaviors they choose to sanction with expulsion and suspension. Furthermore, the current study focuses on nonwhite students as compared to white students, and does not account for specific nonwhite races and cannot speak to how policy application compares for specific races. One of the controls, academic achievement, relied on survey responses to questions on students' grades in History, Science, Math and English, however, the fact not all students were enrolled in these courses had to be taken into account.

Implications

The findings of this study can inform schools of possible issues with their handling of student conduct. Abandoning zero tolerance does not mean turning a blind eye. Rather than measures based on the idea of deterrence, schools can adopt a more in-house approach to

reducing unwanted behavior. Furthermore, to avoid the negative consequences associated with student encounters with the legal system, schools should teach their students their Miranda rights and offer other basic legal advice – especially if they continue to rely on the use of law enforcement within school campuses. Furthermore, schools can manage student behavior better by relying on mental health and behavioral experts. It cannot be said conclusively that policy change is the only means of achieving a more fair system, as the problem may very well be systemic and there are likely other factors that need to be addressed such as societal attitudes, beliefs and norms, however, ever entering a police precinct or a courtroom, students should enter a principal's office.

Future Research

Moving forward, examining the disparity's in exclusionary discipline between specific ethnicities, rather than just white and nonwhite would be an important application of this study. Furthermore, taking a different approach to the same question and looking at specific students, their perceptions, and zero tolerance in schools would add the already existing body of knowledge. This could be done through a similar study with a primary source of survey data.

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