

The Relations Among School Policies, Disciplinary Procedures, and School Climate and their Impact on Bullying and Youth Aggression

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About the Presenter



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Bullying

- ▶ Definition: a repeated, intentionally harmful and aggressive act that involves an imbalance of power between people (Olweus, 1993).
- ▶ The most recent national data 20.2% of students reported experiencing bullying according to the 2017 National Crime Victimization Survey.
- ▶ Students who are victimized are at risk of experiencing an array of mental health issues including internalizing or externalizing problems and suicidal ideation.

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School Climate

- School Climate is commonly defined as a school's character or quality of the environment, or overall ethos (Cohen et al., 2009; Espelage et al., 2014). A positive school climate is characterized by (Cornell et al., 2015):
 - Supportiveness
 - Safety
 - Tolerance and Respect for Others
 - Fairness in policies
- Bullying is best understood from a social-ecological approach.
- Four components: general school climate, order and discipline, student interpersonal relations, and student-teacher relations (Haynes et al., 1997).

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Disciplinary Structure

- ▶ Policies and administrative commitment to bullying is related to reduced perpetration (Low & Ryzin, 2014).
- ▶ In a meta-analytic review Tiofi and Farrington (2010) found that reduction in bullying was significantly related to firm disciplinary methods in schools.
- ▶ When adults in the school setting are aware of bullying and methods for prevention, and schools have clear policies and established procedures to identify and respond to bullying, prevention and intervention is likely to be more effective (Frey et al., 2005; Olweus & Limber, 2010).
- ▶ Cornell et al. (2015) similarly found that an increase in disciplinary structure was significantly associated with a decrease in bullying behaviors. When students perceive the rules as fair and free from bias, they may be more likely to follow the rules.

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Zero Tolerance Policies

- ▶ The American Psychological Association commissioned a task force in 2008 and found that:
 - ▶ Schools across the nation adopted zero tolerance approaches to discipline, which resulted in high rates of suspension and expulsion
 - ▶ These policies do not contribute to enhanced school safety.
- ▶ Zero tolerance policies and those involving out-of-school suspension and expulsion are associated with many negative outcomes, including:
 - Reduced student opportunities for bonding with others within the school (Skiba et al., 2011)
 - Reduced perceptions of belongingness (Bottiani et al., 2017)
 - Decreased academic achievement (Skiba & Rausch, 2006; Skiba et al., 2011)
 - School dropout (Ekstrom et al., 1986; Suh & Suh, 2007; Lee et al., 2011)
 - Criminal justice system involvement (Payne & Welch, 2010; Wald & Losen, 2003).

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Variations in Perceptions of School Climate

- ▶ Race can be a contributing factor in student perceptions of school climate (Bottiani et al., 2016; Koth et al., 2008).
- ▶ Some studies suggest that minority students, namely Black and Hispanic students often have poorer perceptions of school climate. (Bottiani et al., 2016; Voight et al., 2015)
- ▶ It appears that Black and Hispanic students often feel less connected to schools than White/European-American students.
- ▶ Questions remain whether these discrepancies may be related to socioeconomic status and diversity within the schools as a whole.

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Disproportionality in School Discipline

- ▶ Minority students are often disproportionately the recipients of school discipline (Gregory, 1997; McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; McFadden et al., 1992; Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2002; Wu et al., 1982).
- ▶ Black students, specifically, have been overrepresented as recipients of school discipline and harsher discipline for years.
- ▶ Differences have been reported (Skiba et al., 2002; Wald & Losen, 2003) in:
 - ▶ Identification of infractions
 - ▶ Rates of office referrals
 - ▶ Suspensions and Expulsions

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School Climate and Discipline

- ▶ Authoritative school climate is characterized by high levels of structure, support, and equity in disciplinary practices.
- ▶ Schools lacking in positive or authoritative school climate have:
 - ▶ Higher suspension rates for Black and White students
 - ▶ Greater discrepancies in discipline based on race.

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2018 Public School Data Reported by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)

Averages for Group to School Total Percentages of Students Disciplined by Race/Ethnicity

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Hispanic	1273	1.00	.00	1.00	.3206	.31497
Black/African-American	1630	1.00	.00	1.00	.5664	.35058
Asian	561	.54	.00	.54	.0071	.03573
White	1796	1.00	.00	1.00	.5275	.35669

Note: This is the average of percentages calculated by dividing number of students disciplined in each group by the total number of students disciplined (suspended and expelled). N reflects the number of schools.

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2018 Public School Data Reported by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)

Average Discrepancies Between Percent Disciplined vs. Percent Enrolled by Race/Ethnicity

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Hispanic	1000	1.57	-.93	.85	-.0328	.15401
Black/African-American	1413	1.29	-.34	.95	-.1746	.15920
White	1536	1.15	-.61	.55	-.0618	.12823
Asian	101	.45	-.36	.09	-.0595	.06698
Valid N (listwise)	87					

Note: This is the average of discrepancies calculated by subtracting the percent of students in each race/ethnic group enrolled at the school from the percentage of students in each group who were disciplined (suspended and expelled). N reflects the number of schools, but schools are listed up to 3 times as separate cases for ISS, OSS and expulsion. Valid N (listwise) reflects the number of schools reporting data for all listed racial/ethnic groups.

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2018 Public School Data Reported by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)

Mean Differences in Discipline Discrepancies Scores by Race/Ethnic Groups

	Paired Differences						t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	SEM	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Black/African American vs. White	-.30741	.21378	.00880	-.29013	-.32470	34.929	589	.000	
Black/African American vs. Hispanic	-.24352	.25141	.00993	-.22403	-.26302	24.524	640	.000	
White vs. Hispanic	-.09912	.23647	.00997	-.11871	-.07953	-9.937	561	.000	

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2018 Public School Data Reported by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)

Correlations Between 5Essentials Survey Scores, Discipline and Infractions

	Suspensions & Expulsions	Effective Leaders	Collaborative Teachers	Involved Families	Supportive Environment
Suspensions & Expulsions	1.00	-0.116**	-0.086**	-0.12**	0.02
Violence Physical Injury	0.269**	-0.078**	-0.062**	-0.109**	0.01
Violence w/o Injury	0.448**	-0.126**	-0.111**	-0.144**	-0.005
Drug Offenses	0.281**	-0.044**	0.025	0.031	0.137
Tobacco	0.276**	-0.041*	0	0.032	0.09

Note: N = 3483 schools
 ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level; * Correlation is significant at .05 level

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NIJ Survey Data 2018: Correspondence between Youth and Teacher Report

Correlations Among Youth and Teacher Report Scales

Scale	Teacher - Climate	Teacher - Safety	Teacher - Bullying Problems
Climate	0.255	0.301	0.467
Safety	0.293	0.314	0.493
Bullied	0.001	0.329	0.407
Witness	0.226	0.442	0.62
Perpetrate	0.002	0.371	0.295

N = 24 p < .05
 N = number of districts

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NIJ Student Survey and School Policy Data 2018

Correlations Between School Climate Survey Scores and Disciplinary Policies

Discipline/Infraction	Climate	Safety	Bullied
OSS - Class Disturbance	0.024	-0.062**	0.007
Exp - Class Disturbance	0.095**	0.01	0.043**
OSS - Physical Injury Peer	-0.005	-0.035**	-0.007
Exp - Physical Injury Peer	-0.055**	0.026*	0.017
OSS - Alcohol Possession	-0.075**	-0.098**	-0.039**
Exp - Alcohol Possession	0.039**	-0.038*	0.007
OSS - Drug Possession	-0.057**	-0.083**	-0.043**
Exp - Drug Possession	0.021	-0.056**	-0.01
OSS - Weapons	-0.083**	-0.059**	-0.029**
Exp - Weapons	-0.023	-0.07**	-0.018

Note: N = 5852 students. Climate and safety scores are reverse coded—higher score reflect poorer perceptions.
 ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level; * Correlation is significant at .05 level

School policies that include/allow for the listed consequences for first time offenses were coded based on review of school policy handbooks. OSS = Out of school suspension. Exp = Expulsion.


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Recommendations & Future Directions

- ▶ There is a need for continued research to understand the relations between student and teacher perceptions of school climate and the components that may differ between them.
- ▶ Consistent and equitable discipline is important for achieving positive school climate, improving school safety and preventing bullying.
 - ▶ There is a continued need to evaluate the factors underlying potentially disproportionate behavioral incidents and disciplinary consequences across student groups.
 - ▶ There is a need to identify policies that support both school climate and overall school safety. Programs that focus on balanced and restorative justice procedures may be one way to bridge that gap.

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Up Next!



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