Oppressive Pushout: Examining Differences in Discipline and “Dropout” by Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

Danielle N. Aguilar  
*University of Colorado, Boulder, daag8270@colorado.edu*

Taylor Lewis  
*University of Michigan, lewit@umich.edu*

Jude Paul Matias Dizon  
*California State University, Stanislaus, jdizon1@csustan.edu*

Pearl Lo  
*University of Maryland, College Park, pearllo@umd.edu*

Ángel González  
*California State University, Fresno, angonzalez@mail.fresnostate.edu*

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/jqtsie](https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/jqtsie)  
[Part of the Education Commons, Gender and Sexuality Commons, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies Commons](https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/jqtsie)

**Recommended Citation**  

This Research Article is brought to you for free and open access by VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Queer and Trans Studies in Education by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact [libcompass@vcu.edu](mailto:libcompass@vcu.edu).
Oppressive Pushout: Examining Differences in Discipline and “Dropout” by Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

Authors
Danielle N. Aguilar, Taylor Lewis, Jude Paul Matias Dizon, Pearl Lo, Ángel González, Jason C. Garvey, and Mario I. Suárez

This research article is available in Journal of Queer and Trans Studies in Education:
https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/jqtsie/vol1/iss1/2
Oppressive Pushout: Examining Differences in Discipline and “Dropout” by Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

Danielle N. Aguilar,1 Taylor Lewis,2 Jude Paul Matias Dizon,3 Pear Lo,4 Ángel de Jesús González,5 Jason C. Garvey,6 & Mario I. Suárez7

1University of Colorado, Boulder, 2University of Michigan, 3California State University, Stanislaus, 4University of Maryland, College Park, 5California State University, Fresno, 6University of Vermont, 7Utah State University

Abstract: Drawing on well-established insights, our study adds nuance to the discussion regarding school pushout practices by centering race, sexual orientation, and gender beyond the binary. By way of descriptive and inferential statistics using the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), our article seeks to disrupt the cisheteronormative discussion regarding exclusionary school discipline and institutionally inflicted pushout that impacts the educational trajectories and opportunities of queer and trans Black, Indigenous, Students of Color (QT BIPOC). Results from our chi-square analyses revealed significant differences in rates of cutting/skipping class, in-school suspension, suspension or expulsion, and dropping out across our four groups: QT BIPOC students, cis-heterosexual BIPOC students, QT white students, and cis-heterosexual white students. Although effect sizes for these results were weak per phi-values, they are nonetheless meaningful in practice and policy formation.

Keywords: Race, Gender, Sexuality, Pushout, High School Longitudinal Study

Introduction

With the emergence of a national spotlight on exclusionary and zero-tolerance school discipline, a growing number of scholars have examined how such policies have impacted the educational experiences, perceptions and trajectories of minoritized students such as Black/African American and Latino boys (Cholewa et al., 2018; Noguera, 2003; Pena-Shaff et al., 2019; Trinidad, 2021), low-income students (Christle et al., 2005; Skiba et al., 2002), and students labeled as academically “at risk” (students from certain demographics who have been deemed more likely to academically fail or drop out) (Cholewa et al., 2018; Noguera, 2003).

Much of the early research regarding experiences and impacts of punitive discipline practices has focused on Boys of Color, and Black boys in particular (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Research on punitive school discipline has expanded to include Black girls (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Daniel & White, 2018; Edwards, 2020; Morris, 2012, 2016). Latina experiences (Pantoja, 2013; Peguero & Shekarkhar, 2011) and Native American student experiences in general (Ko et al., 2022; Whitford & Levine-Donnerstein, 2014) have been explored to a lesser extent. Due to traditional practices of data collection, school pushout practices regarding the intersections of race/ethnicity, gender beyond the binary, and sexual orientation are scarce.

Drawing on well-established insights, our study adds nuance to the discussion regarding school pushout practices by centering race, sexual orientation, and gender beyond the binary. By way of descriptive and inferential statistics using the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), our article seeks to disrupt the cisheteronormative discussion regarding exclusionary school discipline and institutionally inflicted pushout that impacts the educational trajectories and opportunities of queer and trans Black, Indigenous, Students of Color (QT BIPOC). Our study is guided by the following research question: Are there differences in school discipline and “dropout” between QT BIPOC, cisgender/heterosexual (cishet) BIPOC students, QT white students, and cisgender/heterosexual (cishet) white students? Our comparison of these four groups is not to pathologize “good” or “bad” behavior; instead we situate this study within a school-to-prison pipeline and abolitionist framework. We present this comparison as an opportunity to understand exclusionary school discipline practices as a construction of white cisheteronormativity that pushes students furthest from normative categories and boundaries to the margins. This allows us to begin reimagining more humanizing and life-affirming alternatives that keep all students in schools. Our study adds a necessary layer for interrogating school pushout practices that are shaped by racist and cisheterosexist ideologies that permeate our schooling system.

According to Leyva and colleagues (2022), “Cisheteropatriarchy is a term that recognizes the

1 We use the terms queer and trans to represent the expansiveness of people with marginalized sexual and gender identities (Garvey et al., 2018).
Exclusionary School Discipline: From Dropout to Pushout

We contextualize our study in literature focused on exclusionary school discipline and its relationship to school pushout among minoritized youth. Exclusionary school discipline practices (un)intentionally label students as unfit, undeserving, and/or unworthy of schooling by either separating or removing them altogether from the learning process (Edwards, 2020). Exclusionary school discipline has broadly been defined as out-of-school suspension and expulsion (Skiba et al., 2014). Societal ideologies of settler colonialism, white supremacy, cisgender identities as normative (Buenavista et al., 2021). [Leyva and colleagues] use the related term, cisheteronormativity, to refer to how queer and trans* identities are positioned as deviant or anomalous” (p. 80). We agree with Buenavista and colleagues’ (2021) assertion that cisheteropatriarchy and white supremacy are ongoing projects of settler colonialism. We use Tuck and Yang’s (2012) definition of settler colonialism, whereby “settlers come with the intention of making a new home on the land” (p. 5). We believe cisgender normativity, patriarchy, anti-Black racism, and white supremacy are integral parts of settler colonialism, and as a settler state, systems such as education and practices such as school discipline mirror the ideologies and culture embedded in settler colonialism.

Experiences of exclusionary school discipline are also mediated by white cisgender normative standards of femininity, putting Girls of Color, particularly Black girls, in a precarious position (Daniel & White, 2018; Evans-Winters, 2017; Morris, 2012; Wun, 2018). For example, Wun (2018) found that Girls of Color were labeled as problems instead of the structural and interpersonal violence the girls in the study experienced, e.g., poverty and patriarchal violence. Because the schooling system is premised on individual behaviors, attitudes, and pathologies, Edwards (2020) argues that educators and the education system absolve themselves of any responsibility for their role in student behavior. These ideologies and practices reify the notion that certain students are unfit, undeserving, or unworthy of what schooling has to offer.

Although Edwards (2020) and Evans-Winters (2017) mention sexual orientation within their study, sexual orientation was not meaningfully incorporated as a layer of identity that mediates or compounds experiences with pushout practices. Emergent research has focused on how exclusionary school discipline practices and hypercriminalization are mediated by QT bullying, gender normative sentiments, and QT school harassment (Caraves, 2017; Mitchum & Moodie-Mills, 2014; Rosentel et al., 2021; Snapp & Russell, 2016). Scholars have found that QT youth are punished for public displays of affection, violating gender norms and are blamed for their own victimization, i.e. being punished for self-protection; (Poteat et al., 2016; Snapp et al., 2015; Snapp & Lincona, 2016). Scholars have found differential pushout discipline experiences among Black trans women, LGBQ girls of color, and girls who transgress cisheterosexual definitions of femininity (Chmielewski et al., 2016; Himmelstein & Brückner, 2011; Rosentel et al., 2021; Yun et al., 2022). A number of reports by advocacy groups have documented the disproportionality in which QT youth experience exclusionary discipline policies (GLSEN, 2016; Mitchum & Moodie-Mills, 2014; MAP & CAP, 2016; Stammen & Ghandnoosh, 2022).

Although existing research has begun engaging in a nuanced understanding of pushout practices, a common theme that emerges is the restriction of the gender binary which inhibits researchers from fully understanding the extent to which exclusionary school discipline policies are employed. Drawing from HSLS:09, we add to the research by examining how exclusionary school discipline shapes educational trajectories for QT BIPOC students. In doing so, we demonstrate how the logics of social identities both restrict our understanding of exclusionary school discipline and provide an incomplete understanding of the problem. Through our empirical examination, we seek to disrupt an apartheid of knowledge that communicates exclusionary school discipline as simply a cisgender normative Student of Color concern with broader educational trajectories for QT BIPOC students. In doing so, we demonstrate how the logics of social identities both restrict our understanding of exclusionary school discipline and provide an incomplete understanding of the problem. Through our empirical examination, we seek to disrupt an apartheid of knowledge that communicates exclusionary school discipline as simply a cisgender normative Student of Color concern with broader aims of centering QT BIPOC students.

Conceptual Framework

Our conceptual framework for this study is underpinned by the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) with intersectionality and QuantCrit to elevate systems-driven implications for student-
level analyses. Throughout our frames, we aim to hold institutions and those in power responsible for the disproportionate punitive educational experiences for marginalized youth.

**School to Prison Pipeline and Abolitionist Dreaming**

The school-to-prison pipeline is a framework informed by activists and scholars that discusses minoritized students, who are criminalized in their learning environments, and explains the policies, practices, pathways, and conditions within the schooling regime that push students toward involvement in the criminal (in)justice system (Christle et al., 2005; Mitchum & Moodie-Mills, 2014; Noguera, 2003; Rodriguez, 2010; Rosentel et al., 2021; Skiba et al., 2002, 2014; Snapp et al., 2015). However, Muñiz (2021) critiqued the STPP framework for its essentialization of a relationship between schools and prisons, an ahistorical approach to the interconnectedness of schools and prisons as institutionalized systems, and a narrow focus on policy solutions. As a research team, we acknowledge the importance of research and scholarship that has shed light on the relationship between systems of schooling and prisons. As a research collective, we honor the STPP research while understanding schooling as a tool of carcerality (Davis, 2003; Gilmore, 2007; Rodriguez, 2010, 2019; Stoval, 2018). We lean into an abolitionist praxis that seeks not only to deconstruct schooling as a carceral logic but also (re)imagine an educational system rooted in freedom and joy for QT BIPOC specifically and BIPOC youth generally (Love, 2019).

**Intersectionality and QuantCrit**

Frequently, quantitative scholars make methodological choices to simplify complex social categories for the sake of efficient analysis (Keenan, 2022). However, we must remember that social identities are a colonial construct intended to justify the dehumanization and captivity of Indigenous and African communities. Numerous scholars have challenged the academy to explicitly interrogate the creation of social categories and the assumptions that underlie statistical findings (Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi, 2008; Covarrubias & Vélez, 2013; Garcia et al., 2018; Gilborn et al., 2018; Zuberi, 2001). As such, this paper is guided by QuantCrit’s five principles: the centrality of racism, numbers are not neutral, categories are neither “natural” nor given, data cannot “speak for themselves,” and numbers for social justice (Gilborn et al., 2018). Intersectionality and non-essentialism are important foundational tenets of critical race theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Utilization Examples of QuantCrit Principles</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Centrality of racism**
  - In traditional quantitative inquiry, QT BIPOC students, in particular, “fall through the cracks” when engaging in these discussions, both empirically and regarding education policy, because of the inherent transphobic and racist mechanism of quantitative methods rooted in eugenic thought. We are committed to the messiness and complexity in our analysis and interpretation because we deserve a policy that is nuanced and contextualized. We position cisheteronormativity, racism, and other systems of power at the center of our analysis rather than attributing the findings to individual behaviors and attitudes.

- **Numbers are not neutral**
  - As a predominantly QT BIPOC quantitative collective, we challenge the dearth of QT-centric quantitative social science research in general and QT BIPOC quantitative social science research specifically by reclaiming statistical methods such as the chi-square test. Although quantitative methods such as the chi-square test were created to promote white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi, 2008) and cisheteronormativity, our reclamation of such methods serves to write in QT BIPOC into the literature and talks back to the cisheteronormative positioning of exclusionary school discipline literature. As such, we attribute our statistical findings to systems of power, not individual behaviors or attitudes.

- **Categories are neither "natural" nor given**
  - When exploring QT BIPOC student experiences, we reject an additive notion of identity but rather see race, gender, and sexual orientation as inextricably connected structures of oppression and domination needing to be interrogated simultaneously (Collins, 2016).

- **Data cannot "speak for themselves"**
  - We recognize that there is power in engaging in descriptive statistics and basic inferential statistics for policy (re)formation for QT communities that have often been dismissed as outlier experiences in traditional quantitative research. As such, we attribute our statistical findings to systems of power, not individual behaviors or attitudes.

- **Numbers for social justice**
  - We connect cisheteropatriarchy to the over-policing and hyper-surveillance of QT BIPOC, highlighting schools’ gender and sexuality policing. School discipline further marginalizes QT BIPOC by pushing them out of the education pipeline (GLSEN, 2016), leading to involvement in the criminal (in)justice system, homelessness, and higher rates of violence, substance abuse, and negative psychological and physiological outcomes (MAP & CAP, 2016).

---

https://doi.org/10.60808/rgg7-9760

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) and, therefore, serve as guiding tenets to unearth the intersectional effects of domination and hegemony embedded in traditional quantitative methodological approaches. Table 1 below overviews each tenet and an example from our manuscript to demonstrate how we strived to utilize each QuantCrit principle.

Crenshaw’s (1991) theory of intersectionality analyzes issues of injustice and systemic oppression through multiple axes of power. The historical roots of today’s prison industrial complex and practices of hyper-surveillance are legacies of the economic, political, and cultural domination of marginalized communities, including the genocide of Indigenous peoples, the enslavement and disenfranchisement of Africans and African Americans, and the erasure of non-binary knowledge systems. QT BIPOC exists at the intersections of marginalization and domination. Therefore, it is important to situate our analysis within an intersectional paradigm. It is their intersecting identities that make them vulnerable to violent systems of oppression such as racism and cisheeterosexism. It is also the cumulative nature of their identities which marginalizes them from the hegemonic stronghold of white supremacist cisheeteropatriarchy in schooling (Edelman, 2014; Edwards, 2020; Sabati et al., 2022; Wun, 2018).

**Operationalizing Our Experiential Knowledge**

We enter this work as QT, predominantly BIPOC, quantitative scholars. As a collective, we were brought together through the Queer and Trans People in Education (QTPiE) Emerging Scholars initiative. As collective authors in this piece, we represent and engage our lived experiences of being first-generation, second-generation, Black, Transgender, Queer, Asian American, Latinx, Chicanx, Cisgender, and white scholars in higher education. We bring a breadth of knowledge of working as student affairs practitioners with and for students advocating for racial equity. Our identities, passion for critical quantitative methods, and ongoing discussions regarding our desires to intentionally center QT BIPOC experiences in our work ground our study. Through ongoing critical reflexivity, we acknowledge the influence of our positionalities and viewpoints as we engage in this research (Collins, 1990; Garcia et al., 2018). We recognize the tensions and limitations of working with secondary datasets, yet believe being a QT, predominantly BIPOC, quantitative collective that focuses on queer and/or trans students is transformative in itself. As a critical QT, predominantly BIPOC, quantitative collective, we are uniquely positioned to interrogate traditional uses of quantitative methods and practices of operationalizations to more accurately represent QT BIPOC communities, our community. Our intention with this study is to utilize our epistemic framings as an analytical tool that leads toward more transparency in how we understand the data, interpret the data, and leverage the data’s liberatory potential.

**Method**

In the following section, we overview our methodological decisions for our examination of school discipline and “dropout” by sexual orientation, gender, and race. In alignment with our intersectional and QuantCrit framework, we name both our processes and our intentions so that readers are aware of our focus on problematizing white-dominant quantitative methods and placing an onus for disparities on oppressive institutions and structures.

**Dataset and Sample**

To address our research question, we utilize the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09). The purpose of HSLS:09 is to understand student trajectories from high school to postsecondary education and their involvement in the labor force. The U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) surveyed a nationally representative sample of 9th graders in the 2009-10 school year. This longitudinal study used a stratified, two-stage random sample design, with the primary sampling units as randomly selected schools ($n = 940$), from which students were randomly selected for the second stage ($n = 24,000$). There was a second follow-up of HSLS:09 in March 2016. For our study, we used data from the baseline survey in 2009 and the second follow-up survey in 2016. The second follow-up of HSLS:09 administered questions regarding gender beyond the binary and sexual orientation.

**Variables**

Per NCES’ guidelines, sample size numbers were rounded to the nearest ten and we used student weights for the base year, first follow-up, and second-follow-up data analyses. The independent variables under study included sexual orientation, gender, and race. To explore the intersections of sexual orientation, gender, and race, we created four groups for comparative analysis: (1) QT BIPOC, (2) cishet BIPOC, (3) QT white, and (4) cishet white. For the dependent variables, we selected several dichotomous variables from HSLS:09 related to discipline and pushout, including skipped class, in-school suspension, suspension/expulsion, and “dropped out.”

**Problematising Secondary Data**

Garcia and Mayorga (2018) argued that secondary data should be interrogated for theoretical assumptions. Although social classifications such as race, gender, and sexual orientation are frequently purported as neat categories, we understand these variables to carry a much more complex history rooted in white supremacist domination (Garcia et al., 2018; Zuberi, 2001). The racial categories, the imposition of a gender binary (woman/man), and the enforcement of cisheeteronormativity were epistemological frameworks inflicted on Indigenous communities as a means of justifying settler colonialism, genocide, and enslavement (Huhndorf & Suzack, 2010; Sabati et al., 2022). When exploring QT BIPOC student experiences, we reject an additive notion of identity but rather see race, gender, and sexual orientation as inextricably connected structures of oppression and domination that need to be interrogated simultaneously (Collins, 2016).
HSLS:09 is the first nationally representative longitudinal dataset administered by the U.S. Department of Education to ask about gender beyond the binary and sexual orientation (Garvey, 2020). In the HSLS:09 second follow-up, NCES researchers asked two questions about gender identity (Duprey et al., 2018). First, “What sex were you assigned at birth (what the doctor put on your birth certificate)?” There were two response options, “1 = male; 2 = female.” The next question states, “What is your gender? Your gender is how you feel inside and can be the same or different than your biological or birth sex.” Six response options were included, “1 = Male; 2 = Female; 3 = Transgender, male to female; 4 = Transgender, female to male; 5 = Genderqueer or gender nonconforming, or some other gender; 6 = You are not sure.” The question conflates sex, this refires the notion that sex is indicative of one’s gender. It also implies that trans people are something else other than female, male, man or woman. Keenan (2022) stated, “Trans life is commonly characterized by the constant burden of explanation” (p. 308). What is the significance of answering a question regarding assigned sex at birth if only to ensure folks who refuse the gender binary are reminded of the violent practice that occurs within minutes of entering the world? The follow-up question is, therefore, a painstakingly thin bandage. Simplifying gender to a feeling removes the onus of systematic oppression established and reified by white supremacy and cisnormativity. By framing gender as a feeling, data collection agencies forgo responsibility for how survey tools perpetuate transphobia and cisnormativity. Lastly, feeling has traditionally been identified in opposition to scientific reason due to subjectivity, although social categorization and its accompanying stratification are similarly undergirded by subjective bias.

The sexual orientation question states, “Do you think of yourself as…” With options to choose, “1 = Lesbian or gay, that is, homosexual; 2 = Straight, that is, heterosexual; 3 = Bisexual; 4 = Asexual; 5 = Something else (please specify); 6 = Don’t know” (Duprey et al., 2018). Because of the expansive nature in which people identify their sexual orientation, or choose not to, it is difficult to create an exhaustive list. The framing of the question overlooks and undermines the fluidity of sexual orientation and assumes stagnation (Garvey, 2017). The presentation of the question also essentializes the notion of a QT identity as a thought vs. a reality of being and embodying an identity with experiences in opposition to dominant ideologies of sex, gender, and sexuality.

Race and ethnicity are asked in two to four questions, depending on one’s response. If a respondent chooses Yes for “Are you Hispanic or Latino/Latina,” then there is a list of ethnicities to choose from. The next question asks, “In addition to learning about your Hispanic background, we would also like to know about your racial background. Which of the following choices describe your race? You may choose more than one. (Check all that apply.)” There are five options: 1 = White; 2 = Black or African American; 3 = Asian; 4 = Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; 5 = American Indian or Alaska Native.” If Asian is chosen, another question is prompted to select from a list of ethnicities. The limitations of racial oversimplification and oppressive history of racial categorization in statistics has been well documented (Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi, 2008; Du Bois, 1899; Garcia & Mayorga, 2018; Teranishi, 2007; Zuberi, 2001).

As a research collective, we also made decisions when creating our variables. We operationalize trans as an umbrella term for folks who transgress the cisheteronormative gender binary. We also acknowledge this oversimplification provides an incomplete insight into the unique experiences of transgender, gender nonconforming, and/or gender non-binary students. Due to the statistical power in numbers, we collapsed several responses when creating our variable. Our queer and/or trans variable includes participants who selected lesbian or gay; bisexual, asexual; something else; don’t know; transgender, male to female; transgender, female to male; genderqueer or gender nonconforming, or some other gender; you are not sure; n = 1,600), and our comparative sample included heterosexual students (n = 13,720).

Our BIPOC variable was inclusive of students who selected Black, Native, Asian American, or Hispanic in their responses regarding ethnicity and race. Although there are debates regarding the term BIPOC and its origins, we use BIPOC to highlight the ways in which white supremacy is foregrounded in the enslavement of African/Black and Indigenous people and the genocide and erasure of Indigenous communities.

Analyses

Because of the limited prior research on high school exclusionary discipline experiences of QT students, this study is exploratory in nature. We ran descriptive statistics followed by nonparametric statistical tests, given the nominal nature of the variables. To answer the research question, we employed chi-square tests of homogeneity. A chi-square test of homogeneity was appropriate because we have four distinct groups (QT BIPOC, cishet BIPOC, QT white, and cishet white), which are used to determine if there is a difference in the distribution of the variables of interest (skipped class, in-school suspension, suspended/expelled, “dropped out”; Franke et al., 2012, p. 250). A statistical significance for a chi-square test of homogeneity will indicate if the frequency in the observed sample differs from the expected frequency of our null hypothesis. However, it does not indicate which of the groups differ. For each statistical significance, we employed a strengths test of Cramer’s V. To explore the difference in distribution, we conducted a Kruskal-Wallis post hoc test to determine which groups were under or overrepresented. We conducted data cleaning, sampling parameters, re-coding, and analysis in SPSS Version 29.

HSLS:09 codes missing data in a variety of formats, including item missing (-1), carry-through missing (-3), not administered (-4), unit missing, component not applicable (-6), legitimate skip, not applicable (-7), unit missing (-8), and item missing, nonresponse (-9). For all cases of missingness, we utilized...
pairwise deletion to drop specific cases from an analysis with a missing value in at least one of the specified variables.

As a study rooted in a QuantCrit framework, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the roots of the chi-square test. The chi-square test is also known as Pearson’s chi-square test. Karl Pearson was a known eugenicist and was the first Galton Chair of Eugenics at University College London (Eugenics Archive, n.d.). As a predominantly QT BIPOC quantitative collective, we challenge the dearth of QT-centric quantitative social science research in general, and QT BIPOC quantitative social science research specifically, by reclaiming statistical methods such as the chi-square test. Although quantitative methods such as the chi-square test were created to promote white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi, 2008) and cis-hegemonic normativity, our reclamation of such methods serves to write in QT BIPOC students into the literature and talks back to the cis-hegemonic normative positioning of exclusionary school discipline literature.

**Discipline and Pushout Results**

We used HSLS:09 data to disrupt the cis-hegemonic discussion regarding exclusionary school discipline and institutionally inflicted pushout that impacts the educational trajectories and opportunities of QT BIPOC students. Results from our chi-square analyses revealed significant differences in rates of cutting/skipping class, in-school suspension, suspension or expulsion, and dropping out across our four groups: QT BIPOC students, cis-hegemonic BIPOC students, QT white students, and cis-hegemonic white students. QuantCrit and intersectionality theories tell us that these results should be interpreted as a reflection of how systems of power disproportionately impact QT BIPOC students, resulting in pushout, rather than viewing cutting/skipping class as being an individual behavior impacting the disciplinary rate. Although effect sizes for these results were weak per phi-values, they are nonetheless meaningful in practice and policy formation. QuantCrit principles remind us that data cannot speak for themselves and must be contextualized within systems of power. In the following paragraphs, we present results by each outcome, including post-hoc analyses (see Table 2 for more details).

Across the four groups, there were statistically significant differences in rates of ever cutting or skipping classes in students’ last six months of school ($\chi^2 = 28.773, p < 0.001$) with a phi-value of 0.10. Post-hoc analyses revealed that cishet white students had statistically lower rates of cutting or skipping classes (15.4%) compared to cis-hegemonic BIPOC students (22.5%), QT white students (21.1%), and QT BIPOC students (28.7%). In addition, there were significant differences between cishet BIPOC students (22.5%) and QT BIPOC (28.7%) students. There were no statistically significant differences between any other groups.

There were statistically significant differences in rates of in-school suspension in the last six months across the four groups ($\chi^2 = 26.340, p < 0.001$) with a phi-value of 0.10. Post-hoc analyses revealed that cis-hegemonic white students had statistically lower rates of being put on in-school suspension (8.5%) compared to QT white students (9.3%) and QT BIPOC students (18.2%). Post-hoc analyses also revealed that QT white students had statistically lower rates of being put on in-school suspension (9.3%) compared to QT BIPOC students (18.2%). There were no statistically significant differences between any other groups.

Regarding suspension or expulsion, chi-square results were significant ($\chi^2 = 23.711, p < 0.001$, phi = 0.09), demonstrating differences across the four groups of respondents. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences in rates of suspension or expulsion, with cis-hegemonic white students (10.7%) having significantly lower rates of suspension or expulsion compared to both cishet BIPOC students (16.0%) and QT BIPOC students (22.2%). There were no other significant differences between groups.

**Table 2**

**Discipline and Dropout by Sexual Orientation, Gender, and Race**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>QT BIPOC</th>
<th>Cishet BIPOC</th>
<th>QT white</th>
<th>Cishet white</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever cut or skipped classes in last 6 months of school</td>
<td>44980 28.7</td>
<td>263560 22.5</td>
<td>29070 21.1</td>
<td>194190 15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever put on in-school suspension in last 6 months of school</td>
<td>28510 18.2</td>
<td>165480 14.1</td>
<td>12760 9.3</td>
<td>107400 8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever been suspended or expelled</td>
<td>31700 22.2</td>
<td>178890 16.0</td>
<td>17110 13.0</td>
<td>136470 10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever “dropped out” of high school</td>
<td>54210 27.4</td>
<td>318830 20.5</td>
<td>38950 21.9</td>
<td>216870 13.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05; All sample sizes rounded to the nearest 10 per National Center for Education Statistics guidelines.*

In exploration across the four groups regarding ever “dropped out” of high school, there were statistically significant differences ($\chi^2 = 43.525, p < 0.001$) with a phi-value of 0.11. Post-hoc analysis revealed that compared to cishet white students (13.4%), all groups had statically higher rates of ever “dropped out,” including cishet BIPOC students (20.5%), QT BIPOC students (21.0%), and QT white students (21.3%). In addition, cishet BIPOC students had significantly lower rates of ever “dropped out” (16.3%) compared to QT BIPOC students (27.4%) and QT white students (21.9%). There were no differences between QT BIPOC and QT white students.

Discussion

In alignment with the literature and our frameworks, the results note that educational pushout for QT BIPOC is higher than cishet white students. Overall, cishet white students experience fewer instances of pushout than cishet BIPOC, followed by all QT students. We know that pushout disproportionately impacts BIPOC communities (Fine, 1991; Morris, 2016; Tuck, 2012), and in this study, we saw similar patterns. For example, a little less than fifty percent of BIPOC and one-fifth of QT white students have “dropped out” of high school, compared to 13.4% of cishet white students. QuantCrit principles assert that categories are neither natural nor fixed, therefore it is no surprise to us as we know that cisheteronormativity and racism permeate schooling policies, practices, and environments (GLSEN, 2016; Meyer, 2022). Unfortunately, QT students are often blamed for their own victimization in battling hostile educational contexts that fail to afford them the same sense of safety and belonging their cishet white peers reap (Snapp et al., 2015; Snapp & Russell, 2016). When QT BIPOC students do not feel welcomed or safe at their respective institutions, our findings suggest they are less likely to engage and ultimately have a higher probability of skipping out on class to protect themselves.

The results from our analysis revealed that a quarter of QT BIPOC, one-fifth of cishet BIPOC, and one-fifth of QT white students have cut or skipped class in the last six months. This is alarming and should urge educators and leaders to revise what is wrong with the educational environment that so many students are skipping class rather than further victimizing QT students and placing the onus of disengagement on them versus structural and personal interrogation. When identity is at play, QuantCrit calls educators and researchers to examine systems and institutions that foster oppression rather than placing blame on minoritized students.

In-school suspension and suspension/expulsion showcase similar results to those of pushout and skipping school. Although we saw cishet white students experience in-school suspension and suspension/expulsion, the highest rates were for QT BIPOC followed by BIPOC. QuantCrit argues that patterns cannot be boiled down to individual behaviors of deviance but must be situated within systems of power (i.e., cisheteronormativity and racism). This finding suggests that pushout practices continue to be racialized, influence how we determine what are “appropriate” ways of acting in school, and continue to punish those who fall outside this normality. Recent research has documented how discrimination, harassment, and thus victimization of QT students are mediated by gender normative sentiments (Caravas, 2017; Mitchum & Moodie-Mills, 2014; Rosentel et al., 2021). The actors in suspension, namely teachers and administrators who are frequently white cisgender women, often uphold and practice hegemonic understandings of teaching that harm QT students (Kuhn, 2020; Sabati et al., 2022). We assert that these disparities disproportionately affecting QT BIPOC students have resulted from cishet white students being the primary determinants of appropriate behavior and punishment. As we shared within our theoretical underpinning, STPP research highlights how school discipline and punishment (i.e., in-school suspension and suspension/expulsion) function as a tool of criminalization that pushes students toward the criminal (in)justice systems (Jones et al. 2018; Skiba et al., 2014). Policymakers have a unique opportunity here to use numbers for social justice (Gillborn et al., 2018) by creating more equitable student protection policies that do not disproportionately impact QT BIPOC students.

Exclusionary discipline practices are often viewed as the key punishment for QT BIPOC students, which signals that this practice is a racialized phenomenon that communicates the disposability of certain groups. The results highlighted above are of extreme importance as they demonstrate how QT BIPOC students continue to be pushed out, blamed, and thus criminalized by institutional agents who are meant to support and protect them. If cishet white students were dropping out at these rates and blamed for their own victimization, it would be a national catastrophe, and there would be much greater urgency to fix systemic issues. This is evident in some school districts’ investment in community mental health care in response to the opioid crisis (Carrillo, 2023; Rafa, 2019). The opioid crisis is a construction of racialized U.S. drug policy that frames white substance (mis)use as deserving of care while preserving a punitive system for people of Color’s substance (mis)use (Netherland & Hansen, 2017). In fact, white students leave school because of substance abuse and health problems (Triplet & Ford, 2019), meaning they can also directly benefit from districts adopting a model of care. In contrast, zero-tolerance policies, influenced by the War on Drugs, have historically and contemporarily funneled Students of Color into the school-to-prison pipeline (Bell, 2015; Heitzez, 2009; Triplet & Ford, 2019). These negative experiences impact the likelihood of achieving educational goals and because of the institutional barriers (i.e., cisheteronormativity, racism, and hegemony) that punish students who experience discipline, a disruption of an educational trajectory can be devastating (Arcia, 2006; Chholewa et al., 2018; Rosentel et al., 2021; Skiba et al., 2014; Welsh & Little, 2018).

Per our results on skipping class, being suspended/expelled, or “dropping out,” there is a disproportionate and cumulative impact on QT BIPOC students that must be addressed by researchers, educators, and those with institutional power. Legislators draft bills to ban trans people from using the
bathroom that aligns with their gender identity (Trans Legislation Tracker, 2024) when they should be legislating better systems rooted in systemic justice for QT BIPOC individuals (e.g., Duarte et al., 2022; Fields & Wotipka, 2022; Lewis & Eckes, 2020; McQuillan, 2023). When we, as researchers and educators, do not examine these inequities through a critical lens that centers QT peoples, we run the risk of perpetuating a pervasive invisibility of queerness and transness in empirical research that informs our material conditions through policy. This is why employing QuantCrit serves as a tool to disrupt power imbalances and dynamics that reproduce oppression. As noted previously, using a chi-square test serves to advance QT BIPOC narratives that counter the erasure such quantitative tools were created to silence and eradicate.

The results of this study should be understood within the limitations of the dataset. While quantitative methods are not without critique for their positivist stereotypes, our study is, nonetheless, valuable and contributes to the literature on STTP (Covarrubias et al., 2021; Frisby, 2024; Gillborn et al., 2018). The study was exploratory in nature, and the results, while significant, had relatively small effect sizes. However, the differences between groups along the axes of race, gender, and sexuality illustrate the vulnerability QT BIPOC high school students experience. As stated, the data for this analysis is from 2009 and 2016; thus, our analysis does not necessarily indicate a current understanding of QT BIPOC high school students and their experiences with school discipline and pushout. However, the HSLS:09 is representative of the U.S. high school population at the time of data collection and provides a useful snapshot of school discipline and pushout among QT BIPOC students at the time.

Implications

The results from this study contribute to the emerging literature on the disproportionate experiences with exclusionary discipline policies among QT youth (GLSEN, 2016; Mitchum & Moodie-Mills, 2014; MAP & CAP, 2016; Stammen & Ghandnoosh, 2022). We engage in the principles of QuantCrit to move towards rectifying these post-positivist views. We recognize that there is power in engaging in descriptive statistics and basic inferential statistics for policy (re)formation for QT communities that have often been dismissed as outlier experiences in traditional quantitative research. Below, we offer some overarching recommendations for future research and policy based on results from our chi-square analysis.

Implications for Practice

The results from this study emphasize the urgency of abolition. Our concern with schooling as a function of carceral power is not only based in its exclusion of marginalized students; the U.S. educational system’s existence relies on violence in the form of white supremacist cisgender heteropatriarchy (Rodriguez, 2010; Stein, 2021). Abolition extends to the hegemonic paradigms that give rise to institutionalized dominance that deem marginalized youth as disposable (Rodriguez, 2010, 2019). However, abolition is not solely a “practice of negation” (Rodriguez, 2019, p. 1576) but a creative, imaginative, and experimental pedagogy that allows educators to freedom dream for the creation of life-affirming institutions (Gilmore, 2007; Love, 2019; Rodriguez, 2010; Sabati et al., 2022; Stein, 2021). For a number of years, education scholars, practitioners, and activists have documented and reflected upon the (un)learning, critical pedagogies, alternative practices, creative possibilities, tensions, and challenges that encompass abolitionist teaching in a world that has not yet embraced this view of the world (Coles et al., 2021; DeMartino et al., 2022; Dunn et al., 2021; Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Louis & King, 2022, 2023; Love, 2019; Rudolph, 2023; Smith, 2022). In addition, the Abolitionist Teaching Network, Teachers 4 Social Justice, and Quetzal Education Consulting are organizations that build community among abolitionist educators, provide grants and consultation for abolitionist teaching projects, and share resources for engaging in the radical transformation of educational spaces, including annual conferences. A safe and secure education system must be affirming and rooted in collective care, which requires an unlearning of narratives that justify normalized state-sanctioned violence (Sabati et al., 2022). Abolitionist futures give way to QT BIPOC futures (Rodriguez, 2010).

Implications for Research

At a broad level, further quantitative research needs to be conducted to examine QT student experiences within large education datasets. We know this is not easy; however, it is a challenge we must commit to as critical scholars who seek to hold systems accountable. Conversations are needed to create a more nuanced understanding of discipline and pushout. Students should have agency in responding to and selecting social identities in surveys that best represent how they identify; therefore, having an array of QT identities that does not conflate gender and sexuality is crucial to running analyses accordingly (Federal Evidence Agenda on LGBTQI+ Equity, 2023).

We analyzed dichotomous variables to operationalize discipline and pushout, but these variables can be limiting since students can only respond with “yes” or “no.” These variables do not capture the frequency, severity, or reason for skipping class, being suspended or expelled, or “dropping out.” Future researchers and survey developers should consider variables that better gauge the magnitude of pushout on QT BIPOC, who may be experiencing pushout in ways that are distinct from their white cisgender heterosexual peers. Structural equation modeling and path analysis may be valuable to operationalize and better define discipline and pushout as latent variables (Garvey & Dolen, 2021). Future studies should disaggregate data by race, sexuality, and gender to more accurately represent equity gaps for particular student groups, especially those with intersecting identities. A mixed methods or qualitative approach would be beneficial in exploring qualitatively how race, sexuality, and gender interact to influence “dropping out.” Since we do not know the reasons...
why students “drop out,” engaging with them in a qualitative way would allow them to share stories that cannot be quantified.

**Implications for Policy**

We unapologetically demand that student safety and well-being move beyond symbolic and superficial gestures of inclusion and belonging (i.e., rainbow capitalism). Rainbow capitalism is the communication and essentializing of QT experiences into feel-good moments that overlook the reality of being under daily attack by state-sanctioned violence. It is the mask of inclusive systems of education often put on for very specific audiences that center institutional prestige and reputation over actual QT students’ well-being. Examples include one-off PRIDE events, performative safe zone stickers, and the rainbow flag risings at institutions with no material support for QT students. While these types of events and activities have shown promising outcomes, particularly for white QT students (Kosciw et al., 2013; Marx & Kettrey, 2016), Kokozos and Gonzalez (2020) warn that these spaces give the “illusion of safety...while leaving unaddressed the need for structural change (p.155).” With over 300 pieces of anti-QT legislation and widespread anti-CRT rhetoric, we, as QT BIPOC people, are at war with state-sanctioned violence. Inclusive spaces and activities must be coupled in schools with better policies that are evidence-based and center the needs of QT BIPOC students. It is critical for researchers within this national context, especially at the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality, to shed light on the oppressive pushout experienced by QT BIPOC. Policies are value-laden, thus, their formulation and implementation are dependent on policy actors’ beliefs. They determine who then is seen as a policy target or deviant. In the case of educational leaders, if most are cishet white individuals, their practices are likely to replicate such power dynamics. As of now, there is a void of policy analysis that includes QT BIPOC students (and sexuality, gender, and race) in education policy.

**Conclusion**

In our paper, we aim to contribute to critical scholarship that situates educational institutions as agents in the carceral apparatus (Sabati et al., 2022; Shedd, 2015) by examining QT BIPOC experiences with school discipline policies and practices and utilizing the concept of racialized, gendered, and heteronormative policing to analyze their experiences (Payne & Smith, 2016). We connect cisgender patriarchy to the over-policing and hyper-surveillance of QT BIPOC, highlighting schools’ gender and sexuality policing. School discipline further marginalizes QT BIPOC by pushing them out of the education pipeline (GLSEN, 2016), leading to involvement in the criminal (in)justice system, homelessness, and higher rates of violence, substance abuse, and negative psychological and physiological outcomes (MAP & CAP, 2016). Our goal is to provide a nuanced understanding and approach to school discipline that is informed by gender and queer analysis. Through this analysis, our hope is to push abolitionist conversations and theoretical frameworks in education literature and praxis.

This study is foundational for QT BIPOC advocacy as it is among the first empirical studies regarding exclusionary disciplinary and pushout practices through an intersectional analysis that considers race, sexuality, and gender. The results echo the unique and exacerbated oppressive experiences of QT BIPOC individuals, which contrast to cishet white students who hold privilege within their whiteness and cisgender heterosexuality, an inherent privilege that cuts across disciplinary actions and experiences. By leveraging the HSLS:09 data for studying identity-salient outcomes through a QuantCrit and intersectional approach, we can hold institutions accountable for developing policies and practices that promote QT BIPOC academic success, safety, and holistic well-being. In traditional quantitative inquiry, QT BIPOC students, in particular, “fall thru the cracks” when engaging in these discussions, both empirically and regarding education policy, because of the inherent transphobic and racist mechanism of quantitative methods rooted in egocentric thought. We are committed to the messiness and complexity in our analysis and interpretation because we deserve policy that is nuanced and contextualized. This study contributes to the dearth of research of QT BIPOC scholars studying QT BIPOC experiences, and in particular using federal data and statistics given the historical legacy of quantitative inquiry on BIPOC and QT (and QT BIPOC) communities. Our approach is not perfect, but we believe we are marching toward intersectional justice with solidarity and care by not only focusing on QT BIPOC research but also research by us and for us.

**References**


https://doi.org/10.6080/rgg7-9760


https://doi.org/10.6080/rgg7-9760


