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Capitalist Reproduction in Schooling: The social control of marginalized students through zero tolerance policies

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Abstract

CAPITALIST REPRODUCTION IN SCHOOLING: THE SOCIAL CONTROL OF

MARGINALIZED STUDENTS THROUGH ZERO TOLERANCE POLICIES

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Due to increasing media focus, there has been growing concern that U.S. students and the school

environment are increasingly violent, leading the public to believe that school discipline should

become more strict and punitive (Giroux 2003; Schept, Wall, & Brisman 2014). However,

scholars argue that there is little evidence that current practices of school discipline have made

the school environment safer, but instead have criminalized the school and are disproportionately

targeting students of color and disabled students (Beger 2002; Civil Rights Project 2000;

Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera 2010; Hirschfield 2008; McNeal & Dunbar 2010; U.S. Government

Office of Accountability 2018). The expansion of zero-tolerance policies and the surveillance

culture in schools have played a large role in the creation of the school-to-prison pipeline, in

which students are increasingly being suspended and expelled from school and coming in contact

with the juvenile justice system. This research explores the relation that zero tolerance policies

function as the neoliberal social control mechanism to control students who are seen to have "no

market value and [are] identified as flawed consumers because of their associations with crime

and poverty, redundancy and expendability" (Sellers & Arrigo 2018, p. 66). Zero-tolerance

policies function as the latest manifestation of capitalist reconstitution of educational institutions,

through curricula, student conduct codes, disciplinary procedures, and the hidden curriculum, constructed of the language of capitalism, disproportionately targeting students of color (Bowles & Gintis 2011). A series of OLS regression analyses were conducted to analyze how community partners and school resource officer involvement impact the rate of suspension, expulsion, and combined school disciplinary measures using the School Survey on Crime and Safety Survey 2005-06 data. It was found that community partners and school resource officers have a positive and negative relationship with disciplinary rates. This research further substantiates that racial and ethnic minority students receive disproportionate rates of discipline.

Keywords: zero tolerance, school discipline, school-to-prison pipeline, social control, social reproduction, minority

Introduction

From the beginning of the 1970s, there has been an increase of targeted criminalization of youth (Giroux 2003; Hirschfield 2008). The "Tough on Crime" movement of the 1970s coincided with the rise of the new neoliberal economy. A close examination shows that the criminalization of youth within schools has been a consequence of economic influence (Brent 2016; Hirschfield 2008; Kupchik & Monahan 2006). Due to the collusion of economics and school discipline, the concern is that "the distinction between school discipline and criminal justice has been blurred" (Brent 2016, p. 522). Many scholars claim that school discipline has been criminalized (Giroux 2003; Hirschfield 2008, Kupchik & Monahan 2006; Kupchik 2009; Noguera 2003). In fact, Hirschfield and Celinska (2011) expanded the definition of criminalization to encompass the process in which school personnel and community actors engage the issue of student behavior whilst also expanding control in discipline, security technologies, and the restructuring of curricula. Many studies have discussed how school discipline has become a form of socialization designed to meet labor market needs and as a response to insecurity and fear, particularly to school crime and racial threats (Giroux 2003; Kupchik and Monahan 2006; Mallett 2016; Noguera 2003; Sellers & Arrigo 2018). These insecurities and fears have been used by powerful actors in policy and the community in order to control students through disciplinary actions. Zero tolerance policies were the response to moral panics in the 1990s, driven by the public, teachers' unions and political actors (Hirschfield 2008; Irby 2014).

Narratives of an increasing violent school environment, particularly targeting students of color, were constructed during the 1990s— despite evidence showcasing declining crime rates. In broader society, narratives of violent youth were produced primarily to lead the public to

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believe that youth were becoming more violent over time, with attention to drugs, school shootings, and the creation of the "super predator" (Schept, Wall, & Brisman 2014). There was a large increase in juvenile crime rates and isolated school shootings during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Kupchik & Monahan 2006). However, violence within society and schools were declining during the late 1990s, and have been since, despite this negative rhetoric. For example, it was seen in 1996 that "the rate of victimization [in] U.S. schools was about 704 per 100,000 people, or 0.7%" (Beger 2002, p. 121). Despite declining crime rates, politicians and community actors used the fear and insecurity of the public to pass legislation placing strict, punitive disciplinary procedures in schools (Giroux 2003; Hirschfield 2008; McNeal & Dunbar 2010; Schept et al. 2014). Zero tolerance policies were introduced to the public school system through the Gun Safe Schools Act of 1994 under the Clinton administration, which enforced a minimum of a one-year expulsion for students that brought a firearm to school (Evans & Lester 2012; Martinez 2009; McNeal & Dunbar 2010; Schept et al. 2014; Skiba & Peterson 1999). The original intent of these policies was to target the most violent and egregious students, but these policies have expanded in definition over the years to include all student misconduct, including minor infractions like insubordination (Evans & Lester 2012; Hirschfield 2008; McNeal & Dunbar 2010).

This paper investigates the interrelation of the public and private spheres, specifically economic and educational institutions. Throughout the twentieth century, capital has embedded itself into the public sphere, especially during the neoliberal era to create new markets and to reproduce the social order (Apple 1995; Rury 2016; Sellers & Arrigo 2018). Neoliberalism is an ideology and policy model that believes the state should not interfere in the economy, creating free markets - with the ultimate goal of increasing profits under capitalism (Harvey 2005).

Neoliberal principles are seen in deregulation, outsourcing, privatization, decentralization, and automation in industry; but under neoliberalism social institutions bend to serve the interests of profit (Harvey 2005; Sellers & Arrigo 2018). Within schools, zero tolerance policies function as the neoliberal social control mechanism to control students who are seen to have "no market value and [are] identified as flawed consumers because of their associations with crime and poverty, redundancy and expendability" (Sellers & Arrigo 2018, p. 66).

Within this paper I explore how zero tolerance policies function as the newest form of neoliberal control within schools, as the school reproduces and legitimates capital accumulation and capitalist ideologies. Schools reproduce an unequal society through the use of sorting and tracking, in which students are socialized into hierarchical rankings, and consequently recognize their place in society. As students are tracked into lower educational paths, they are more likely to escalate misbehavior and receive increasing discipline, continuing a cycle of punishment (Noguera 2003; Rios 2011). Disciplinary policies are used to control students, once students realize that the promise of an educational reward has been broken. As Noguera (2003) says, "School officials are generally aware that students on an educational path that leads nowhere will cause more trouble, and will therefore have to be subjected to more extreme forms of control" (p. 345). Zero tolerance policies are used as a tool to reproduce an unjust, unequal society, by disproportionately targeting students of color and disabled students (Apple 1995; Beger 2002; Civil Rights Project 2000; Giroux 2012; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera 2010; Hirschfield 2008; McNeal & Dunbar 2010; U.S. GOA 2018). This paper focuses on the disparate rates black students receive in school discipline and its intersection with race and capitalism, aiming to substantiate the theoretical discussions of race and capitalism with empirical analyses. This adds

to the school-to-prison literature by demonstrating how zero tolerance policies function as a neoliberal social control mechanism

Theoretical Framework

Schools historically were designed to meet a few key functions: 1) to provide a custodial function for children; 2) to disseminate American values and ideals to a large number of European immigrant children; and 3) to prepare the future workforce of the American economy (Noguera 1995). During the twentieth century, the educational system was largely restructured to better accommodate the needs of the market (Rury 2016). The school began to be seen as a tool that could reproduce an unequal society (Apple 1995). The use of sorting and tracking has been used as a tool to legitimize and reproduce capital in school and have signaled to students their social worth in society. Students that are tracked and sorted into the lower tracks in school often misbehave once they realize the social contract in schooling has been broken and they will not receive the rewards of education (Noguera 2003). This misbehavior is often misunderstood; the students most often receiving suspensions and expulsions are those labeled defiant and difficult (Noguera 2003), when they are reacting to the missed rewards of a quality education and social reproduction of capitalism on their future lives, such as a not getting into college or having a well-paid job (cite).

Changing Functions of the Educational System

U.S. schools have been designed to meet certain needs and functions. Hochschild and Scovronick (2000) claim there are two goals of public education: access to public education will give a student equal opportunity to success or the "American Dream," and that schooling ensures

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the "commitment to democracy or the collective good" (p. 210). While it is widely believed that gaining an education will lead to upward mobility, there are several societal forces that compete with this dream. In a capitalist society, students succumb to the pressures of wealth, prestige, and capital that compete against pure talent and ability; students that do not meet the average academic standards blame themselves, when in actuality they should be casting the blame onto the systemic processes and institutions causing the inequalities in these institutions (Apple 1995; Giroux 2012). Over the years, the line between public spheres and the economic market have dissipated, causing market values to bleed into public institutions, such as the school (Apple 1995; Giroux 2012). This is why scholars argue that education has become a financial good or commodity, and access to (or lack thereof) reproduces social inequality (Apple 1995; Rury 2016). The commodification of education has developed over time through the process of economic crises, deregulation, privatization, and educational restructuring (Sellers & Arrigo 2018).

Beginning in the early twentieth century, educators began to adapt school processes to be more efficient to meet the increasing urbanization and social differentiation in society (Rury 2016). Known as the "Progressive Era" of education, administrative progressives vastly changed the structure of U.S education that is still seen in modern school systems. This restructuring signaled the beginning of new leadership in school systems and the beginning of capitalist ideological dissemination. Beginning in the 1920s, local municipalities shifted from local neighborhood representation to bureaucratic forms of administration - the first local school boards. Urban schools were suddenly governed by non-partisan boards chosen to represent the community. These representatives were selected for their experience and credentials. This was the first installation of elite influence in public schools (Rury 2016).

Differentiation was another goal of administrative progressives. This led to the creation of specialized curricula that separated students and trained them for specific duties, such as vocational training, home economics, commercial and clerical training, and manual arts (Rury 2016). These programs were designed to prepare students for specific careers in the labor market (Rury 2016). The programs institutionalized in schools designated distinct pathways for students that would teach specific skills and embed ideologies that would be benefit a capitalist society.

Thus, the school functions as a tool to "reproduce an unequal society" (Apple 1995). Key principles of a capitalist society are capital accumulation and the legitimation of capitalist ideologies. Michael Apple (1995) explains, "The contested reproduction of a society's fundamental relations, which enables society to reproduce itself again, but only in the form of a dominant and subordinate social order" (p. 12-13). In order to produce capital accumulation, the school sorts or tracks students, creating a social hierarchy of the student body, and legitimates the education process by maintaining an image of a meritocratic education system (Apple 1995).

Corporate and private interests have disseminated into education. This has caused education to become a public good or commodity leading to the need for sorting and tracking of students (Rury 2016). The differentiation of students will train them for future careers, but at the cost of legitimating their place in society (Apple 1995). The restructuring of the educational system throughout the twentieth century was in relation to the urbanization of society, and the changes seen within the school system made it more efficient and easy to control, keywords highlighting the influence of capitalism.

"Social Contract" of Education

Education is seen as the key to upward mobility in society. Unfortunately, there are many obstacles that many students face that keep them from achieving the "American Dream" through a quality education. One of these obstacles is that we do not live in a meritocratic society, therefore, our educational system is inherently biased against many. There is a "social contract" embedded within education; this contract is the informal belief that as long as students obey the rules and norms within school, they will receive an education in exchange. As in most democratic societies, students are expected to relinquish a degree of freedom while they are in school to receive the benefits of an education (Noguera 2003). Therefore, students will be subjected to forms of surveillance and control for schools to maintain authority; the social contract is used as an informal control mechanism of students.

Research shows that this contract is less effective when students begin to realize that they will not receive the full benefits of an education. If they recognize that "acquisition of knowledge and skills and admission to college and access to good paying jobs" will not be available to them, they have less will to comply to rules (Noguera 2003, p. 343). If students are labeled as "defiant, maladjusted, and difficult to deal with", they are more likely to internalize these labels and act out to match these expectations (Noguera 2003, p. 343). The labeling and exclusionary practices of school discipline create a cycle of antisocial behavior. As students age, their rule breaking escalates. They continue to engage in antisocial behavior with the knowledge that it will lead to school failure, already concluding that their education will not lead to college or a middle-class job.

"[Their] behavior constitutes more than just 'acting out.' [It is] an active rejection of middle class norms. [They] understand that their education will lead them to the factories

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where their parents have worked, and they have deliberately engaged in behavior that will ensure their educational failure" (Noguera 2003, p. 343-344).

School Discipline and Social Control

Social control operates under two forms: informal and formal forms of control. Within school discipline, social control informally controls students through the socialization process in education. As discussed above, students are socialized through the processes of tracking and sorting, but they can also be influenced by security measures in school. According to Kupchik and Monahan (2006), the increasing reliance on police officers and surveillance technologies in schools has educated students on the relationships of dependency, inequality, and instability present within the post-industrial labor market and neoliberal state. Zero tolerance policies are the formal form of social control, in which students are controlled through formal sanctions (or policies). These policies have taken the form as a social control agent through the increasing criminalization of school discipline (Hirschfield 2008). Zero tolerance policies first targeted the most violent and egregious students, specifically targeting students bringing weapons to school (Evans & Lester 2012; Martinez 2009; McNeal & Dunbar 2010; Schept et al. 2014; Skiba & Peterson 1999). However, these policies have expanded in definition to encompass most student misbehavior to now include drug and alcohol abuse, fighting, bullying, dress code violations, disrespect, truancy, and insubordination (Evans & Lester 2012; Hirschfield 2008; McNeal & Dunbar 2010). The expansion of these policies has increasingly criminalized student behavior, as more suspensions and expulsions are reported for minor offenses (Evans & Lester 2012; Hirschfield 2008; McNeal & Dunbar 2010). Therefore, it can be argued that these policies are the formal form of control in school discipline.

Zero tolerance policies are also being used to control market values. If students are labeled with less value, than they are going to be directed towards the educational path that leads to the low-wage sector (Apple 1995; Giroux 2012; Noguera 2003; Sellers & Arrigo 2018). "The enforcement of zero tolerance policies across the nation's educational system is one way that the state disciplines and removes those who are perceived to have no market value, including citizens identified as flawed consumers and/or classified as 'dangerous' others" (Sellers & Arrigo 2018, p. 61). Students labeled as deviant, dangerous, or the "bad apples," are at risk of being targeted for school discipline. These students are often targeted to be separated from the "good" students. Strict disciplinary policies attempt to mold students into future compliant employees. Students who defy the norms of this socialization are believed to hinder the future prospects of other students (Sellers & Arrigo 2018). To control student misbehavior, schools typically rely on excluding or ostracising students, in which misbehaving students are removed from the classroom environment. This exclusion can occur for a range of offenses, as minor as disrespect to more serious offenses leading to suspension. In either case, a student misses valuable time from class and instruction (Noguera 2003).

Literature Review

Zero tolerance policies were first introduced in the mid-1990s, originally enforcing strict discipline for the most violent and egregious students (Evans & Lester 2012; Martinez 2009; McNeal & Dunbar 2010; Schelpt et al. 2014; Skiba & Peterson 1999). Over time these policies have expanded and now include all student misbehavior (Evans & Lester 2012; Hirschfield 2008; McNeal & Dunbar 2010). There are several external factors that also contribute to school discipline. A school is apart of a community, and therefore, has many partners that our outside of

the school. The cooperation between parents, schools and school officials, and the community are vital to a student's success (Epstein 2010). School discipline can be largely impacted by the location of a school, as well as the school level (Gottfredson et al. 2005; Noltemeyer & McLoughlin 2010). These factors can greatly influence school discipline and the rates of discipline that students receive. It has been found that these factors all influence discipline as a whole, but disproportionately affect students of color and disabled students (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera 2010; Skiba et al. 2002; Wallace et al.2008;Welch & Payne 2010; Welch & Payne 2012).

Zero Tolerance Policies

Zero tolerance policies were first introduced in the 1980s by the U.S. Customs Agency to target the expanding drug trade. The policies introduction into the school system did not occur until the mid-1990s by the Clinton administration as the Gun Safe Schools Act of 1994, which enforced a minimum of a one-year expulsion for students that brought a firearm to school (Evans & Lester 2012; Martinez 2009; McNeal & Dunbar 2010; Schept et al. 2014; Skiba & Peterson 1999). Schools that did not enforce the bill were subject to lose federal funding from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This was the first indication of federal government or state legislation intervening in the local control of schools, which traditionally was held by school administrators. The original intent of zero tolerance policies was to target violent and egregious students; however, these policies expanded over the years to include all student conduct, including minor infractions like insubordination (Evans & Lester 2012; Hirschfield 2008; McNeal & Dunbar 2010). The net-widening effect of zero tolerance policies has transformed minor offenses such as disruptive behavior, insubordination, and dress code

violations into reason for suspension and expulsion (Hirschfield 2008; Kupchik & Monahan 2006; Martinez 2009; Sellers & Arrigo 2018).

Schools rely on forms of exclusion or ostracism to control students. For example, a misbehaving student can be sent to the back of the classroom or into the hallway for a small issue, or suspended or expelled for more egregious acts (Noguera 2003). The exclusion from the learning environment serves as the deterrent effect of zero tolerance policies. Zero tolerance operates under the assumption that harsh sanctions will deter future misbehavior of others and the removal of the most serious offenders will improve the school environment (Heilbrun, Cornell & Lovegrove 2015). However, zero tolerance policies misconceive the deterrence effect (APA 2008). Instead, school suspension and expulsion often lead to school failure and dropout. Students receiving suspensions and expulsions miss valuable time in the classroom. Arcia (2006) found that 26% of suspended students missed 10 days of school within an academic year, which is typically the amount of days a student is allowed to miss before jeopardizing promotion to the next grade level. Within this same study, they found that 1% missed 40 or more days (Arcia 2006). According to Arcia's (2006) study, the students with high suspension rates were three grade levels behind their peers within the first year. Within three years, this academic achievement gap widened as students with high suspension rates fell five grades behind their peers (Arcia 2006). Students can get caught in a cycle of failure and be "tracked into the school-to-prison pipeline where students are pushed out of school, landing on a track that for many leads to the juvenile justice system" (Evans & Lester 2012, p. 110). For example, the "adult prison population is comprised of 82% of dropouts and 85% of juvenile justice cases" (Christle et al. 2005, p. 70). Arcia (2006) also found that a proportion of students with high suspension rates dropped out of school within three years following ninth-grade. The rates varied depending on

the amount of days they missed each year due to suspension: 21% for students that missed 1 to 10 days, 32% for students who missed 11 to 20 days, and 43% of students who missed 21 or more days (Arcia 2006). Suspension and expulsion are not the only factors influencing academic underperformance and school dropout, but they greatly impact future opportunities.

Community Partners Impacting Discipline

A school is comprised of several partners: students, teachers, administrators, families, and the community. The interaction and cooperation between these partners can influence the success of a student, and more broadly a school. Epstein (2010) claims that there are three main spheres revolving around a student – the family, school, and community. These spheres can overlap or they can remain separate. Epstein claims that the more that these spheres overlap (i.e., through communication, volunteering, decision making, etc.) students will succeed. While increased involvement could improve academic achievement or reduce misbehavior, prior research has shown that involvement decreases as students age (Epstein 2010). Considering that more disciplinary actions are represented in secondary schools (Gottfredson et al. 2005; Mendez & Knoff 2003), more involvement should be encouraged during these years. It has also been found that more affluent communities show more positive family involvement (Epstein 2010). Epstein also discusses six types of involvement. One particular type involves parents and community members in school decision-making. This research explores the relationship and influence that parents and community members have in safety and discipline policies. Epstein discusses that it's important to include parental voices in decisions, but there are also challenges. For example, parents that participate in decision-making do not represent all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Another challenge is that student voices are not represented

(Epstein 2010). This could create issues for discipline and safety, and lead to discriminatory practices.

There is one other community partner that often is overlooked: the school resource officer. The school resource officer has several roles within the school, varying from security officer to mentor to educator (Wolf 2014), that disguises them as a trusted adult. Despite the good intentions these officers may have, research shows that their presence has a negative impact on students and increases disciplinary actions (Beger 2002; Hirschfield 2008; Kupchik 2006; Na & Gottfredson 2013; Wolf 2014). School resource officers (SROs) increasingly became prevalent in schools beginning in the 1990s. This was further accelerated by federal legislation, such as the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which created the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services that funds the SRO programs (Wolf 2014). The SRO programs and budget increased under both George W. Bush and Obama administrations (Beger 2002). SROs have various duties, which can include patrolling school grounds, investigating students, and arresting students. They can also chaperone school events, provide counseling, and give presentations on substance abuse prevention (Beger 2002; Wolf 2014). Scholars suggest that SRO presence has contributed to the criminalization of the school by introducing elements of the justice system and law enforcement into the school environment (Hirschfield 2008; Kupchik 2006). The increasing prevalence of surveillance and surveillance tools (i.e., CCTV, metal detectors, etc.) exposes students to a "climate of distrust" (Kupchik 2006). Na and Gottfredson (2013) found that the presence of SROs significantly increases disciplinary actions and the likelihood that students will be reported to law enforcement for crimes. The presence of SROs in schools socializes crime as a social fact and normalizes it (Kupchik 2006). As a partner

that is meant to help students, research has found that the presence of SROs largely negatively affects students.

Disparities Amongst Marginalized Students

Zero tolerance policies have had a large impact on students of color and disabled students. Though zero tolerance policies have only existed since the 1990s, national and state data shows a disproportionate pattern of school discipline for African American students, particularly males (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera 2010; Skiba et al. 2002; Wallace et al.2008; Welch & Payne 2010; Welch & Payne 2012). A recent study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2018) found "black students represent 15.5 percent of the public school population, [but] account for 39 percent of students suspended from school - an overrepresentation by 23 percentage points" (p. 12-13). These disparities begin to present as early as preschool. Data from the Center of Public Integrity show that 25.3 black students per thousand are referred to law enforcement in the state of Virginia, which leads the country for law enforcement referrals ("Virginia tops nation...", Feb 2016). Similarly, "students with disabilities represent approximately 12 percent of the public school students, but account for 25 percent or more of students referred to law enforcement, arrested for a school-related incident, or suspended from school" (p. 16). These disparate rates of discipline are important to acknowledge and combat for a multitude of reasons. School discipline has many costs for students that can potentially lead to academic failure. African American students are more likely to be held back, placed in lower academic tracks, placed in special education, drop out, and are less likely to go to college (Rocque & Paternoster 2011). Also, as a result of zero tolerance policies in school, many

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students are being funneled from schools into the juvenile justice system and detention facilities (Mallet 2017).

One possible reasoning for the disparate rates in school discipline is the miscommunication and understanding between racial and ethnic groups. Studies have found that different racial and ethnic groups both receive and understand discipline differently (Skiba et al. 2002). White students typically receive discipline for objective offenses, such as smoking, cutting class, using obscene language, and vandalism. African American students receive discipline for subjective offenses, such as disrespect, excessive noise, threat, and loitering. White students and teachers believe that the racial disparity in discipline is unintentional and unconscious, whereas black students perceive discipline as a deliberate exercise of control (Skiba et al. 2002). This speaks further to the underlying racial bias and its origins. From the conflict perspective, the racial threat hypothesis claims that as the proportion of blacks increases in relation to whites, the measures of control will intensify (Welch & Payne 2010). This thesis originally took into consideration the political and economic threat that the African American community had on the white majority. Continuing studies have also included black crime as a social threat (Welch & Payne 2010). Due to the economic, political, and social threat of an increasing racial group, the white majority uses segregation and social control to continue their domination. In education, this practice can be seen through the use of sorting and exclusionary disciplinary policies.

It is important to understand the true nature of school discipline and its effects on students. Government and school officials will use racialized rhetoric and current events to drive public policy. Officials will argue the need for more punitive discipline, which will only be used to further control students and will criminalize the school environment (Hirschfield 2008;

Gregory, Skiba, Noguera 2010; McNeal & Dunbar 2010). In turn, these disciplinary policies are used to subjugate and control students. For the students who misbehave and deviate from the norms, they are placed on the tracks of less value in school, and consequently society.

Factors Impacting Discipline

For several decades, scholars have been interested in the effect of community and school characteristics on school climate and discipline (G.D. Gottfredson & Gottfredson 1985; Gottfredson et al. 2005; Mendez & Knoff 2003; Noltemeyer & McLoughlin 2010; Stewart 2006; Wu et al. 1982). School and community factors, including school size, community socioeconomic level, community crime and disorganization, school level, and school type have been found to significantly increase disciplinary actions (Gottfredson et al. 2005; Noltemeyer & McLoughlin 2010). While many school and community factors likely contribute to discipline, these characteristics are difficult to control for confounding results. However, "schools are affected by the communities in which they are embedded and reflect larger community-level processes" (Stewart 2006, p. 597). For this reason, these characteristics must be taken into consideration.

The community or zip code a school resides in can have several lasting impacts. A school's placement (urban, suburban, or rural) can change the amount of resources allocated, community socioeconomic level, crime and disorganization within the community (which can influence policies and surveillance), and the racial heterogeneity of the student body (Gottfredson et al. 2005; Noltemeyer & McLoughlin 2010). There is a significant difference across school areas and the amount of discipline they report. In the National Education Longitudinal Survey of 1988, it was reported that 25% of urban teachers spent time towards

maintaining order and discipline, versus 13% of teachers in rural schools and 16% in suburban areas (Noltemeyer & McLoughlin 2010, p. 27). Similarly, Brown and Payne (1992) found that urban teachers were spending a significant more time (67%) on discipline than their rural (42%) or suburban (47%) counterparts. More discipline has been found in high-poverty, urban areas (Gottfredson et al. 2005, Noltemeyer & McLoughlin 2010).

Another leading factor contributing to school discipline is school level. The maximum amount of disciplinary actions, both suspensions and expulsions, occur within middle school (Gottfredson et al. 2005). It is found that disciplinary rates from elementary to middle school, and then begin to decline once more in high school. It is theorized that this occurs due to the number of students that drop out in high school. In fact, Mendez and Knoff (2003) found that 3.36% students experienced at least one suspension in elementary school, compared to 24.41% of middle school students and 18.46% of high school students (p. 29). These factors in conjunction with certain student characteristics (i.e. race, gender, disability) increase the likelihood of suspension and expulsion.

Research Questions & Hypotheses

The immersion of capital and markets into the school has created the neoliberal era of education. As a result, zero tolerance policies have become a mechanism to control students, disproportionately targeting students of color. Studies show that community partners are important to student success. However, are community partners also detrimental to students future outcomes? If community partners are involved in safety and discipline policy decisions, how does this affect student discipline? Also, due to the diverse roles of school resource officers,

how do this affect student discipline? How do these predictors interact with race? Therefore, I expect to find:

H1) the rate of disciplinary actions (suspension and/or expulsion) will differ as follows:

H1a) parental involvement will decrease disciplinary actions

H1b) human services involvement will decrease disciplinary actions

H1c) corporate/civic involvement will increase disciplinary actions

H2) the rate of disciplinary actions will increase with school security involvement in school practices

H3) increased numbers of racial and ethnic minorities will increase disciplinary actions

Data and Methods

Data Source

For this research I used the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) for the academic year 2005-06. This is a cross-sectional survey managed by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) for the U.S. Department of Education. The survey asks principals and administrators questions about their school safety protocols and policies to protect students, as well as incidents and disciplinary measures.

Sampling Procedure

The sampling frame for the SSOCS 2006 uses information from the 2003-04 Common Core of Data (CCD) Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe data file. The CCD is an annual survey of all public K-12 public schools and school districts. Certain schools are excluded from the CCD, including special education schools, vocational schools, alternative schools (e.g.

adult education schools), newly closed schools, home schools, ungraded schools, schools in the U.S. outlying areas and Puerto Rico, overseas Department of Defense schools, and Bureau of Indian Education schools. Charter schools and schools with partial or total magnet programs were included in the sampling frame.

A general sample design was used in the 2006 SSOCS. "The objective of the sample design was twofold: to obtain overall cross-sectional and subgroup estimates of important indicators of school crime and safety and to develop precise estimates of change in various characteristics relating to crime" (NCES 2006). To meet these objectives, a stratified sample of 3,565 regular public schools was drawn. The original goal was to collect data from a minimum of 2,550 schools, taking into consideration nonresponse. Then, the sample would need to be divided and weighted to proportionately sample the U.S. public school population since the majority of U.S. schools are primary schools and the majority of violence is reported in secondary schools. Therefore, the target sample would be stratified as 640 primary schools, 895 middle schools, 915 high schools, and 100 combined schools. The sample size within each stratum was inflated to adjust for nonresponse. A total of 2,724 public schools responded to the survey: 715 primary schools, 948 middle schools, 924 high schools, and 137 combined schools. The response rate for the 2005-6 academic year was 81 percent.

Variables

Three separate dependent variables are used in subsequent analyses: *number of suspensions, number of removals,* and *total number of actions* (suspensions and removals combined). The SSOCS 2006 does not have variables for total number of suspensions or removals. Therefore, the dependent variables total number of removals and total number of

suspensions were created by combining the the total number of suspensions or removals from every major category of offense within the survey: use/possession of a firearm or explosive; use or possession of weapon other than firearm; the use, distribution, or possession of illegal drugs or alcohol; physical attacks or fighting; or insubordination. Finally, the total action variable was created by combining the newly created total suspension and removal variables.

The key independent variables of interest are *parent/community involvement partners* and *school resource officer roles*. The measurement of the independent variables are nominal because they are simple yes or no questions. The *parent/community involvement partners* is derived from a set of questions that asks administrators which outside actors were involved, if any, in promoting school safety. Groups include parents, social service agencies, juvenile justice agencies, law enforcement, mental health agencies, civic organizations, businesses, and religious organizations. I used the Kuder-Richardson formula (KR-20) to determine if it was appropriate to create a scale (or scales) using this set of questions. The KR-20 formula determines the internal reliability of variables within a given category and if it is appropriate to combine those items. In order to parse out the relationship each of these partners had to the school and their influence in discipline, three separate scales were tested. The eight variables were collapsed into three scales based on their role in the community and/or job function: parent/religious organizations, human services (social service agencies, juvenile justice agencies, law enforcement agencies, law enforcement), and corporate partners (business and civic organizations). I conducted a KR-20 test on each grouping to establish their reliability as a measure. Based on the results of the KR-20, I created three separate scale variables for these groups. The Cronbach's alpha for each were as follow: parent/religious organizations (0.26); human services (0.71); and corporate organizations (0.65).

School resource officer roles focuses on the roles of security officers. Several variables

are analyzed to determine the roles of a security officer in school. The survey asks which roles

the security personnel partake in, including: maintain discipline, coordinate with local police,

identify problems and seek solutions, train teachers in school safety, and teach or train students.

Rather than collapse these variables into a scale, I chose to run them individually in my

regression models to understand the relationship each type of role had on disciplinary actions.

The analysis also includes control variables, to describe the demographics of the sample

and control for variables identified in the literature that impact school discipline. To analyze the

disproportionate rates of discipline that students of color receive, I control for minority status,

which is measured in the SSOCS by percentage of minority students (less than 5%, 5-20%, 20-

50%, and 50% or more) within the school. I also control for percentage of special education

students, as disabled students are also disproportionately targeted by discipline. Controls for

crime where the school is located (high, moderate, low, and various) are included, as this tends to

affect disciplinary policies (Gregory et al. 2010; Wallace et al. 2008). Finally, school level

(elementary, middle, secondary, and combined) will also be controlled, as the literature and past

research has shown that more discipline outcomes occur in secondary schools (Arica 2006).

Methodology

Given the dichotomous nature of the variables measuring *parent/religious and community

involvement partners*, I used the Kuder-Richardson formula (KR-20) to determine if it was

appropriate to create indexes from these variables. This formula determined the internal

reliability of the variables within each category. This determined that these items could be

combined into their respective index (parent/religious; human services; and corporate) to create an index measuring the involvement of parent/religious and community actors.

To conduct this analysis, I conducted a series of OLS regression analyses; three OLS regression models were used, one for each type of disciplinary outcome. An OLS regression analysis was the correct statistical test because the data is sampled randomly and the dependent variables are continuous, on a scale from zero to infinity. OLS regression allowed for an analysis of how the independent variables, *parent and community involvement partners* or *security resource officer roles*, had an impact on each outcome (expulsions, suspensions, and combined). Tests for linearity were conducted, which indicated no problems with multicollinearity. All variance inflation factors (VIF) were under 2 with a mean of 1.31. To meet the assumptions of OLS, I plotted scatterplots within SPSS to analyze the linearity of the data. The data was searched for outliers by using the "casewise diagnostics" tool in SPSS. Casewise diagnostics reported outliers in the *number of suspensions* (schools reporting more than 100 suspensions) and *number of removals* (schools reporting more than 25 removals) regression models. To test the impact of these cases on the results, cases that had a z-score outside of a normal standard deviation of 3 were recoded as missing values. Regression analyses for these two models were then re-run. Outliers were retained in the final models because removal of outlying cases did not impact the magnitude or direction of results. Lastly, to ensure the normal distribution of the data, P-Plots were plotted and analyzed.

Results

Data was received from the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) for the academic year 2005-06. This wave gave a total of 2,724 cases. The mean and standard deviation

of disciplinary actions is depicted in Table 1. The mean number of suspensions was 15.49. The

mean number of removals was 1.30, and the mean number of total actions was 74.52. It was

found that most of the schools in this analysis were between 20-50 percent minority

(mean=2.67). The crime level surrounding the schools were predominantly perceived as

moderate or low. The majority of the schools were either middle or secondary schools.

Table 1. Descriptives for all Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Security Enforcement +	1669	1.13	0.33	1	2
Maintain School Discipline +	1669	1.24	0.42	1	2
Coordinate with Police +	1669	1.12	0.32	1	2
Identify Problems/Seek Solutions +	1669	1.14	0.34	1	2
Train Teachers in Safety +	1669	1.44	0.50	1	2
Mentor Students +	1669	1.24	0.43	1	2
Drug Related Education +	1669	1.50	0.50	1	2
Level of Crime (High, Moderate, Low, Variant)	2724	2.70	0.58	1	4
Percent Special Education	2724	13.78	9.21	0	100
Percent Minority (<5%, 5-20%, 20-50%, 50% or >)	2648	2.68	1.08	1	4
School Level (Elementary, Middle, Secondary, Combined)	2724	2.18	0.88	1	4
Community Involvement +					
Parent/Religious Organization	2724	1.51	0.33	1	2
Human Services	2724	1.32	0.33	1	2
Corporate	2724	1.61	0.42	1	2
# of Suspensions	2724	15.49	46.30	0	897
# of Removals	2724	1.30	12.98	0	626
# of Total Actions	2724	74.52	134.98	0	1872

This table represents the descriptives for each variable.
+These variables are coded as 1=yes, 2=no.

The first regression model on the *total number of suspensions,* shown in Table 2. The

model for total number of suspensions was highly significant (F=14.86; df=14; p < 0.01). R-

square was 0.10, indicating that the variables in the model account for 10% of the variation in

number in suspensions. A few variables were significant within this model.First,school resource

officers' role in maintaining discipline significantly decreases the number of suspensions ($p <$ 0.05) when holding all other variables constant. Suspensions are significantly decreased ($p <$ 0.01) where the crime level surrounding the school is lower. The number of suspensions is significantly increased ($p < 0.01$) in schools with a larger number of special education students. The number of suspensions is significantly increased ($p < 0.01$) in schools with a larger percentage of minority students present in school. School level also significantly increases the number of suspensions ($p < 0.01$), with secondary schools having more suspensions.

Table 2. Linear Regression of Community Involvement and School Resource Officer Roles on Suspensions from the 2005-06 SSOCS

Variable (reference group)		SE B	β	Sig.
Community Partner				
	Parent/Religious Organization	0.08	0.02	0.59
	Human Services	0.08	-0.03	0.22
	Corporate	0.06	0.02	0.58
School Resource Officer Role				
	Security Enforcement	0.81	-0.02	0.50
	Maintain School Discipline	0.06	-0.06	0.03*
	Coordinate with Police	0.09	-0.03	0.40
	Identify Problems/Seek Solutions	0.08	0.00	0.99
	Train Teachers in Safety	0.05	0.02	0.43
	Mentor Students	0.06	0.00	0.97
	Drug-Related Education	0.05	-0.02	0.55
Level of Crime		0.04	-0.12	0.00**
Percent Special Education		0.00	0.04	0.11
Percent Minority		0.01	0.08	0.00**
School Level		0.03	0.26	0.00**
Adjusted R-square		0.09		
F		12.68		
df		14		
N		2724		

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$

The model *total number of removals* was highly significant as well, shown in Table 3 (F=6.55; df=14; p < 0.01). R-square was 0.05, indicating that the variables within this model account for 5% of the variation in number of removals. The only variables significant in this model were control variables, "Level of Crime" and "School Level." Removals are significantly decreased where the crime levels surrounding the school is lower. The school level will significantly increase the number of suspensions by 0.19 (Both variables had a p < 0.01).

Table 3. Linear Regression of Community Involvement and School Resource Officer Roles on Removals from the 2005-06 SSOCS

Variable (reference group)	SE B	β	Sig.
Community Partner			
Parent/Religious Organization	0.05	0.00	0.94
Human Services	0.05	0.02	0.53
Corporate	0.04	-0.03	0.33
School Resource Officer Role			
Security Enforcement	0.05	0.01	0.84
Maintain School Discipline	0.04	-0.02	0.56
Coordinate with Police	0.06	-0.01	0.81
Identify Problems/Seek Solutions	0.05	-0.02	0.55
Train Teachers in Safety	0.03	-0.01	0.65
Mentor Students	0.04	-0.02	0.40
Drug-Related Education	0.03	-0.03	0.33
Level of Crime	0.03	-0.10	0.00**
Percent Special Education	0.00	-0.02	0.41
Percent Minority	0.01	0.01	0.85
School Level	0.02	0.19	0.00**
Adjusted R-square	0.04		
F	6.23		
df	14		
N	2724		

* p ≤ 0.05; ** p ≤ 0.01

The *total actions* model was also highly significant, as shown in Table 4 (F=22.61; df=14; p < 0.01). R-square was 0.15, meaning that the variables within this model account for 15% of variation in total actions. The linear regression of *total actions* returned several significant values. The number of total actions significantly increases with parental and religious organization involvement. Total actions significantly decrease with human services involvement in school safety and discipline. There is a positive relationship between corporate involvement and total actions, significant increase in total actions when more corporate involvement is present. There is an overall pattern of decrease in total actions when SRO's are involved. Specifically, The number of total actions significantly decrease in schools where school resource officers enforce security, maintain discipline, and where SRO's help identify problems and seek solutions concerning safety. Total actions significantly decrease where the crime levels surrounding the school is lower. Total actions will increase by 0.05 by the increasing percentage of special education students. The number of total actions will increase by 0.08 by the increasing percentage of minority students in school. The school level will increase the number of total actions by 0.19. All variables stated above have a p-value < 0.01, except for "percent special education," which still found significant at p < 0.05. All other variables were not significant predictors in the model.

Table 4. Linear Regression of Community Involvement and School Resource Officer Roles on Total Actions from the 2005-06 SSOCS

Variable (reference group)		SE B	β	Sig.
Community Partner				
	Parent/Religious Organization	0.15	0.06	0.01**
	Human Services	0.16	-0.06	0.01**
	Corporate	0.12	0.08	0.00**
School Resource Officer Role				
	Security Enforcement	0.16	-0.09	0.00**
	Maintain School Discipline	0.12	-0.09	0.00**
	Coordinate with Police	0.17	-0.03	0.27
	Identify Problems/Seek Solutions	0.17	-0.10	0.00**
	Train Teachers in Safety	0.10	0.03	0.20
	Mentor Students	0.12	-0.01	0.66
	Drug-Related Education	0.10	0.04	0.12
Level of Crime		0.08	-0.14	0.00**
Percent Special Education		0.01	0.05	0.02*
Percent Minority		0.02	0.08	0.00**
School Level		0.06	0.19	0.00**
Adjusted R-square		0.15		
F		22.61		
df		14		
N		2724		

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$

Discussion

This research has focused on the dissolution of the private and public spheres and the consequence this has had for the public education system, particularly in regards to discipline. Focusing on the relationship between community partners and disciplinary policies, this research has sought to explore how zero tolerance policies serve as a neoliberal control mechanism enacted by the dissemination of capital into the public sphere. The relationship between community partners and disciplinary actions was substantiated, but only in the model of *total actions*. Each model provided varied results dependent on the outcome variable. The predictors

that resulted in significant results across all models were mostly control variables. This is not surprising given that control variables have been found significant in previous research and are held constant in a regression model in order to not affect the relationship between another predictor variable and the outcome. The models for *number of suspensions* and *number of removals* resulted in very few significant results. Aside from the control variables, the models for *number of suspensions* and *number of removals* could not be empirically substantiated because there was not enough evidence to support them. The *number of suspensions* resulted in one other significant predictor that was not a control variable: school resource officers' role in maintaining discipline. Overall, the school resource officers' role in maintaining discipline decreases the amount of disciplinary actions (suspensions and removals). It is plausible that by maintaining discipline, school resource officers create a safe environment for students by decreasing the likelihood of misbehavior and victimization. The *number of removals* provided only significant results for control variables. This result is likely due to the fact that there were fewer removals than suspensions (max=626; mean=1.30). A removal is an extreme form of discipline. It is essentially the last option an administration has as a disciplinary action. The model for *total actions* resulted in significant results for many predictors. This model had more significant results due to the composition of the outcome variable. *Total actions* was comprised of both suspensions and removals, providing more *disciplinary actions* to analyze.

The perceived crime level surrounding schools overall decreased the amount of disciplinary actions, negating findings from prior literature (Gregory et al. 2010; Wallace et al. 2008). The number of disciplinary actions increased with school level, with the average occuring in middle or secondary school. Crosstab results for suspensions, removals, and total actions are highest in middle schools. This is congruent with past research that middle school students

receive more disciplinary actions then high school students, most likely due to the number of students dropping out (Arica 2006).

Community partners have both a negative and positive impact on school safety and discipline. It was found that parents and religious organizations have a negative impact on school safety and discipline, increasing the number of total actions. This disproves H1a. This is surprising considering the positive impact that these groups usually have, especially parents. This research explored the effect that parents and religious organizations have in relation to safety and discipline, specifically in regards to decisions and policies made in schools. Epstein (2010) describes several challenges involving parents and community partners in decision making due to racial and ethnic disparities amongst parent and community groups that participate, specifically noting that parental and community members are not fully represented in decision making. Future research could investigate the partners involved in decision making and how they impact discipline more in depth; analyzing the policies, their demographics, and outcomes. Human service organizations decrease the amount of disciplinary actions, supporting H1b. Lastly, corporate organizations increase the amount of disciplinary actions, substantiating H1c. These results show that various community partners have a direct impact on the amount of disciplinary actions that students receive, impacting school discipine in varying ways.

Another important community partner resides within the school environment on a daily basis: the school resource officer. These officers have a large influence on school safety and discipline. Overall, it was found that the daily roles that these officers partake in decrease the amount of disciplinary actions. This negates H2 that disciplinary actions will increase with school security involvement. Based on prior research, it has been theorized that SRO presence criminalizes the school environment (Hirschfield 2008; Kupchik & Monahan 2006) and also

increases student contact with law enforcement (Na & Gottfredson 2013). Therefore, the finding that SRO daily roles decrease disciplinary actions is unexpected. This can most likely be explained by SROs' various roles and how they counteract some negative implications or interactions with students and/or school officials. School resource officers operate using the "triad method" (Wolf 2014), meaning that they act as a security officer, educator, and counselor. I hypothesize that these various roles likely characterize a SRO as a trusted adult that can offer advice and mentorship to a student, outweighing any negative experiences a student may encounter. It is also likely that due to decreased school disciplinary actions by SROs, this could create a dystopic safe haven for students. However, a decrease in school discipline (i.e., suspensions and expulsions) does not equate to a decrease in school criminalization. The presence of a school resource officer is still known to increase the amount of referrals to law enforcement and juvenile justice agencies (Hirschfield 2008; Kupchik & Monahan 2006; "Virginia Tops Nation…", Feb 2016). Instead of the school system handling the punishment, discipline is more often diverted in front of a judge. Therefore, while SRO roles overall does decrease school disciplinary actions, I propose these officers use the state penal system and zero tolerance policies to create a climate of mistrust with students and are falsely creating a safe haven using their various roles while simultaneously utilizing their power to divert misbehaving students to court.

Results also substantiate H3, that the rate of disciplinary actions will increase with an increased proportion of minority and ethnic students. Crosstab results found an increase in suspensions and removals as the percentage of minority and ethnic students increased. The regression model for *number of removals* did not prove significant when combined with other predictors, but the models for *number of suspensions* and *number of total actions* were

significant for minority and ethnic students. These results coincide with the racial threat hypothesis that as the proportion of blacks to whites increases, social control will increase (Welch & Payne 2010). Similar patterns of discipline were found as the percentage of special education students increased. These findings support the patterns of disparate rates of discipline students of color and disabled students receive. These findings are especially important to highlight given that these students are often a small percentage of the student body (U.S. GOA 2018) but still receive disproportionate rates of discipline. These disparate rates need to be addressed in future educational policy to ensure that these students are not disparately being targeted by school discipline.

This research had many limitations. In particular, this analysis cannot depict the complex narrative of capital and how zero tolerance policies have become a neoliberal social control mechanism. There are very few surveys that research school discipline and safety. The SSOCS is one option that provides a national, representative sample. However, it does not ask about many key variables that were of interest (e.g., zero tolerance can only be inferred from actions taken). Suspensions were ill-defined in the survey, separated as suspensions for more than five days (outside suspension) and other actions, which included detentions, in-school suspensions, and suspensions less than five days. In order to not conflate my outcome variable with actions that were not suspensions (e.g., detentions), I made the decision to not include other actions. Originally, the intention was to use SSOCS 2007-8 for analysis to use the most recent data available. However, there were many inconsistencies within the dataset. Key variables of interest were not reported in this wave of the survey, and therefore, analyses could not be conducted. Therefore, it was decided to use the previous wave (2005-06). School discipline and safety is

very important given the disparate amount of minority students that get funneled into the school-to-prison pipeline. Thus it is imperative to have updated surveys and research on this issue.

Conclusion

Through this research analysis I aimed to examine how zero tolerance policies and the involvement of community actors have disparate impact on racial and ethnic minorities. This research found that community members, both external and internal to the school, have an impact on school discipline. Moving forward, I propose that administrators' and schools need to critically assess their policy decision models and those who partake in decision making. Epstein (2010) claims that the involvement of community members can make a school successful, however, there needs to be cooperation between all members. It is also vital that there are more inclusive models for policy decisions, where all voices can be heard and represented. The most important finding in this study is that students of color are still being disproportionately suspended and expelled. To address these continual disparate rates, administrators should have all staff members partake in implicit bias training to signal any unconcious bias and how to overcome it without harming students.

The combination of neoliberal principles with zero tolerance policies increases the risk that certain students will be suspended or expelled from school and will lead to negative future consequences such as academic failure, poor job opportunities and/or unemployment (Mallett 2017; Gregory et al. 2010; Noguera 2003; Sellers & Arrigo 2018). These risks are increased further for students of color and disabled students, who are disproportionately represented in school discipline incidents. The relation between capital and education is very complex, and the dissemination of capitalist ideology into discipline cannot be substantiated at this time. This

research further substantiates that zero tolerance policies disproportionately target students of color and disabled students, while community partners have an impact on school disciplinary actions.

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