School Discipline Practices: Predictors of Patterns of Offending Among At-Risk Children

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Outline

• Background Information
• Data Resources
• Research Design
• Findings
• Policy Implications & Practice
The School to Prison Pipeline

- Family and personal issues
- Negative school environment
- Minor behavioral problems

Academic difficulty & low bonding to school

- School absenteeism and truancy

- Out-of-school expulsion or dropout

- Status delinquency or more serious criminal involvement
A Post Hoc Analysis

• The original study: Risk factors in a school setting for juvenile delinquency and adult criminality

• Out-of School Expulsion was identified as the strongest school-level risk factor across four offending patterns

• Expelled students from public school systems are at higher risk than high school dropouts

• A cost analysis on judicial cost is needed for four offending patterns
Study Purpose

To examine how school discipline practices predict offending patterns: early starters, late starters, adolescent-limited, and life course persisters

This is important to school social workers because their clients are both proximately and distally impacted by school discipline practices

Disproportionate Minority Contact: Poor children of color typically face harsher discipline practices than their white counterparts
Research Question

What combination demographic factors, school discipline practices, and school-related factors, best predicts the four patterns of offending: early starters, late starters, adolescent-limiteds, and life course persisters?
Data Resources (in STATA)

• Louisiana Department of Education (DOE) data: Enrollment, Discipline, & Assessment datasets—7th through 12th graders

• Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ)

• Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DOC)

• Data period: 1996-2008; Birth cohort 1980-89
Data Management Procedure

- Deleting irrelevant variables for each dataset
- Creating new variables in three DOE datasets
- Deleting multiple cases for each dataset
- Merging three DOE datasets
- Merging DOE with OJJ and DOC
Sample Structure

Sample Structure—based on offending status

- Nonoffenders in DOE
  - n=10,126
- OJJ Only
  - n=4,220
- Offenders in OJ&DOC
  - n=17,107
Sample

- Children’s DOE records from 1996-2008 – 7th to 12th graders ($N= 1.8$million)
- Birth cohort: 1980 to 1989 ($N = 407,800$)
- Sub-sample with OJJ/DOC records ($N= 45,799$)
- Early starters ($n= 14,346; 31.4\%$)
- Late starters ($n= 17,105; 37.3\%$)
- Adolescent-limiteds ($n= 10,126; 22.1\%$)
- Life course persisters ($n= 4,222; 9.2\%$)
- $[362,001 (88.8\%)$ nonoffenders]
Dependent Variables (Offending Patterns)

• Early starters (any OJJ status = OJJ only + those in both OJJ & DOC)

• Late starters (DOC only)

• Adolescent-limiteds (OJJ only)

• Life course persisters (both OJJ & DOC)
Independent Variables

• **Demographic**: gender, race, & socioeconomic status

• **Behavior**: out/in-school expulsion & out/in-school suspension

• **School engagement**: missed school days, truancy flag, dropout flag, & unexpected school transitions

• **School performance**: grade retention, highest grade completed, & fail on ELA/MATH
Data Analyses

Multivariate analyses: Hierarchical Logistic Regression for each offending pattern (four analyses)

DV s: Early Starters, Late Starters, Adolescent-Limiteds, and Life Course Persisters

IV s: Model 1: Demographics
   Model 2: Demographics + out-of-school expulsion
   Model 3: Demographics + out-of-school expulsion + school-related risk factors (three discipline charges + school engagement + school performance)
Descriptive Results

- Overall Sample (N= 407,800)
  - African-American (44.1%)
  - Caucasian (51.7%)
  - Other (4.1%)
  - Males (52.2%)  Females (47.8%)
## Descriptive Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Out-of-school</th>
<th>In-school</th>
<th>Out-of-school</th>
<th>In-school</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expulsion</td>
<td>(3.11% )</td>
<td>(2.89% )</td>
<td>(36.43% )</td>
<td>(35.68% )</td>
<td>(22.52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropouts</td>
<td>60.26%</td>
<td>52.29%</td>
<td>34.41%</td>
<td>31.69%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early starters</td>
<td>17.72%</td>
<td>14.64%</td>
<td>6.89%</td>
<td>5.52%</td>
<td>8.60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late starters</td>
<td>14.80%</td>
<td>13.83%</td>
<td>7.33%</td>
<td>6.61%</td>
<td>10.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolesc-limiteds</td>
<td>11.84%</td>
<td>9.67%</td>
<td>4.85%</td>
<td>3.92%</td>
<td>5.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifepersisters</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>2.04%</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>2.85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multivariate Results

- All models were statistically reliable in distinguishing between having and not having the offending pattern.

- In all models, Wald statistic showed in- and out-of-school suspension AND out-of-school expulsion significantly predicting each offending pattern.
Early starters: $-2 \text{ Log likelihood} = -500056.215$; $X^2(14) = 24109.71; p < .001; \text{Pseud R}^2 = .19$

Late starters: $-2 \text{ Log likelihood} = -60677.242$; $X^2(14) = 20634.12; p < .001; \text{Pseud R}^2 = .15$

Adolescent-limiteds: $-2 \text{ Log likelihood} = -40516.401$; $X^2(14) = 1380.3; p < .001; \text{Pseud R}^2 = .15$

Life course persisters: $-2 \text{ Log likelihood} = -18223.99$; $X^2(14) = 10526.95; p < .001; \text{Pseud R}^2 = .22$
Odds Ratios: Out Of School Expulsion

Students who were expelled were 11X as likely to be early starters as those who were never expelled (Exp(B)= 11.20)

Late starters (Exp(B)= 4.65)
Adolescent-limiteds (Exp(B)= 8.03)
Life course persisters (Exp(B)= 7.84)
Cost Analysis on Judicial Costs

- Average annual DOC cost per person: $4,750 (data from DOC)
  Average annual OJJ cost per person: $(17.07 \times 0.7 + 136.26 \times 0.23 + 119.49 \times 0.07) \times 365.25 = $18,865$ (data from OJJ by placement)
  Average annual DOC & OJJ cost per person: $151,179$ in 2010 dollars (Lewis, Terrell, & Guin, 2008)

- Expelled students ($n = 12,669$): offenders in OJJ ($n = 1,500$), in DOC ($n = 1,875$), and those who had records in both OJJ & DOC ($n = 745$)

  - DOC: $(4,750 \times 1,875)/12,669 = $703$
  - OJJ: $(18,865 \times 1,500)/12,669 = $2,234$
  - DOC & OJJ: $(151,179 \times 745)/12,669 = $8,890$

- Average judicial cost per expelled student: $(703 + 2,234 + 8,890) = $11,827$
Another Cost Analysis on Judicial Costs

• 1,500 dropouts cost DOC $7,121,440 (Xu, et al., 2011); 7,634 dropouts among the expelled students in this study cost DOC $36,234,381

• Average annual DOC cost per expelled student: 
  \( \frac{36,234,381}{12,669} = 2,860 \)

• Average annual OJJ cost per expelled student: 
  \( \left( \frac{18,865}{4,750} \right) \times \left( \frac{1,500}{1,875} \right) \times 2,860 = 9,090 \)

• The total amount of judicial cost on average, per expelled student, is 2,860 + 9,090 + 8,890 (average cost on the life course persisters) = $20,841 in 2010 dollars
Cost Analysis Results

• Annual judicial cost per out-of-school expulsion: $12k-21k

• 4-year in OJJ followed by 10-year in DOC per expelled student (Cohen’s formula): $25k-111k

• 12,669 expelled students in this study cost Louisiana justice system: $0.3 billion-1.4 billion

• All expelled students in DOE from 1996-2008 cost Louisiana: $1.5-7 billion
Policy Implications

• Expelled students had higher risk of criminal activity than school dropouts across four offending patterns, especially for the young offenders

• Expelled students are very expensive regarding the judicial costs, not including the cost for other social institutions, potential tax loss, nonmonetary affects on the victims

• The cost could justify alternative education settings and services for the expelled students
Set of policies that emphasize punitive consequences, student exclusion, and juvenile justice system intervention over education

Direct: misapplication of zero-tolerance policies, school-based arrest for minor offenses

Indirect: out-of-school suspension & expulsion, high-stakes testing, referral to alternative schools with inferior educational programs, failure to re-integrate students returning from expulsions & juvenile justice placements
Zero Tolerance Policies

- Early 1990s
- Aimed to protect schools from “super-predators”—extremely violent youth
- 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act: requires all schools receiving federal funding to expel students caught with firearms on campus for a year
- Little research support for these policies
  - 2003: American Academy of Pediatrics
  - 2008: American Psychological Association Zero-Tolerance Task Force
Disproportionate School Discipline Charges

- Males
- African-American
- Hispanic
- Disability
Recommended Solutions

- Policy advocacy
  - At both the federal- and state-levels
  - Limiting zero-tolerance policies to offenses that pose immediate, serious threat to school safety
  - Funding for evidence-based problem behavior prevention & intervention programs
  - Promoting incentives for schools to keep students in school & reducing school disciplinary action
Recommended Solutions

- Prevention & intervention programs
  - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)
  - Restorative Justice
  - In-school professional mental health and behavior support
  - Programs focused on staff development, school climate, and classroom management
Elev8

- Baltimore, Chicago, New Mexico, & Oakland
- Provides:
  - After-school and summer educational opportunities
  - School-based health services for students & their families, including mental health and behavioral support
  - Family support & resources focused on continuing education, economic stability, & better health
- Middle school students
- Focus on “whole child”
- Outcomes:
  - In 2009-2010 school year, out-of-school suspensions dropped 80% at one Chicago school
  - In Alburquerque, NM, one middle school went from 50 school-based arrests the year prior to program implementation to only 4 after Elev8
Denver, CO

- Padres y Jovenes Unidos & Advancement Project
- Rewrote discipline policy for Denver Public Schools in 2008-2009 school year to include:
  - Having school officials handle minor discipline problems within school setting
  - Schools to collect data on discipline charges
  - Eliminating racial disparities in discipline charges
  - Clarifying explanation of due process for parents & students
- Implemented restorative justice programs in schools

Outcomes:
- 63% reduction in referral to law enforcement within Denver Public Schools
- 43% reduction in out-of-school suspensions
Los Angeles, CA

- Community Asset Development Re-Defining Education (CADRE)
- Advocated for passage of district-wide school discipline policy based on PBIS designed to:
  - Provide teachers, administrators, students, & parents the resources they needed to prevent misbehavior from occurring
  - Resolve problems that arise without removing students from classroom
Models

- New Orleans, LA
  - Schools First! (Juvenile Justice Project of New Orleans)
  - Past work:
    - 2008: Revision of the Orleans Parish Recovery School District (RSD) School Discipline Code, to reduce the number of suspendable and expellable offenses and increase positive behavior interventions in the classroom
    - 2008: Worked with community organization to reduce number of security guards in high schools by one-third and in elementary schools by one-half
    - 2010: Advocacy against use of handcuffs and fixed restraints for children under age 10
  - Current work:
    - Stand Up for Each Other!: legal representation for students facing suspension & expulsion by law students at Loyola
    - Reform school security in New Orleans
    - Reduce number of court referrals
In 2010, Jindal signed a bill that requires school districts to provide teachers with training in classroom management (aimed at prevention of behavior problems)

In 2011, Jindal vetoed a bill that would require school districts to define “willful disobedience” along with rules & guidelines for consequences issued for this offense

In 2013 Education Week’s Quality Counts report on school discipline practices,

- 3 out of 20 schools with highest suspension rates nationwide
- 1 out of 20 schools with highest expulsion rates nationwide
Study Merits And Limitations

**Merits:**
- Rich data resources: longitudinal state-level data including different gender & race groups
- Examination of 4 offender outcomes
- School-level risk factors for criminality
- Identification of expelled students as high risk population for offending and costs in Louisiana

**Limitations:**
- Secondary data
- School measured variables only
- Absence of possible salient variables
Conclusion

**Practice:** Importance of psychosocial and behavioral interventions to minimize children’s exposure to school discipline practices

**Policy:** Impact of school discipline practices on juvenile and adult offending. Importance to district- and state-level school discipline policies. Implications for alternative school settings rather than out-of-school expulsion.

**Research:** More research about alternative schools settings, also by gender & ethnicity. Expand to examine behavioral and mental health interventions (SPED, RtI)

**Education:** School social work specialization, macro & policy, shows institutional connections of child’s school history (school and justice system)
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Thank you!

Questions?