

PUNISHING RACE AND SUSPENDING FUTURES

The Effects of Suspension on Young Adult Involvement in the Criminal Justice System

A thesis presented by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Previous research has identified that a racial discipline gap exists in school punishments and that suspensions hinder academic achievement and foster delinquent behavior. However, researchers have given little attention to discovering the connection between the racial discipline gap in the education system and the disproportionate representation of minorities in the criminal justice system. Therefore, my research adds to the existing body of work by exploring how school discipline strategies affect young adult involvement in the criminal justice system. Specifically, I will examine three questions. How do factors such as race, class, and delinquency influence suspension risk for students? How do suspensions influence arrest risk for young adults over time? Finally, how do students' shape their own risk of incarceration by adopting certain attitudes?

I address these questions by conducting an empirical analysis of young adults nationally using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1997 (NLSY97). I begin with a breakdown of the race and gender patterns in delinquency, suspensions, arrest, and attitudes. Then I conduct two survival analyses to identify how race and gender impact time to suspension and time to arrest for all respondents in the NLSY97. Finally, I run a series of Cox regression models to identify how factors such as race, socio-economic status, educational attainment, and attitude impact students' risk of suspension and incarceration.

My findings build upon much of the previous scholarship on the effects of school discipline on students' risk of incarceration. First I provide more evidence that a racial discipline gap exists in school suspensions; almost twice as many black respondents as

white respondents reported that they were suspended at least once, despite the observation that students reported committing the same levels of delinquent acts across racial groups. Furthermore, even when controlling for delinquency, academic performance, and socio-economic status, black students faced a higher risk of suspension. Additionally, my analysis provides support for the hypothesis that there is something unique to the experience of suspension which increases students' risk of incarceration. Even when controlling for delinquency, race, socio-economic status, and academic achievement, students who were suspended increased their risk of incarceration compared to students who were never suspended. Finally, I identify that positive student attitudes are associated with lower arrest rates for boys and girls.

These findings provide evidence that the education system has become a school to prison pipeline for some minority children in this country; I also identify policy strategies and possible avenues for future research that offer opportunities to change this trajectory.

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# INTRODUCTION

*“He who opens a school door, closes a prison.” Victor Hugo (1802-1885)*

*“Every time you stop a school, you will have to build a jail. What you gain at one end you lose at the other.” Mark Twain (1835-1910)*

## **The School to Prison Pipeline**

Every year, countless black and Latino youth in the United States are captured in the School to Prison Pipeline, the process where failing schools funnel students into the criminal justice system. This situation stands in stark contrast to popular conceptions of the education system as the great equalizer which provides everyone with the opportunity to achieve success in life. Since education is regarded as a tool for advancement in society, attending school is supposed to place individuals on the right track for a productive future. This idea, that the school is the antithesis of the prison, is highlighted in the opening quotes by Victor Hugo and Mark Twain. Yet, this idea is not the reality facing young African-American and Latino youth attending school today. Instead, the education system and the criminal justice system have converged to create criminalized school environments that severely disadvantage minority students and increase their risk of ending up in prison.

## **Criminalized School Environments**

In an effort to control violence, schools have adopted measures such as security personnel, surveillance monitoring, zero-tolerance policies and punitive discipline measures. By 1998, about 94% of public schools had adopted zero tolerance policies, which outline punishments ranging from in-school detention to expulsion for violating school rules (Krezmien et al. 2010). With almost 70% of students aged 12 to 18,

reporting that that their schools had security guards or police officers, there is more opportunity for students who get into trouble in school to come to the attention of law enforcement personnel (Robert, Zhang, and Truman 2010). Moreover, black and Latino students are more likely to attend schools resembling penal institutions where the harshest security measures are employed. Although minority-majority student bodies represent only 14% of middle schools and high schools nationwide, they represent 75% of schools that have daily metal detector scans (Guerino et al. 2006). Now, schools operate under a crime control paradigm; students are viewed as populations of potential victims and perpetrators, and student misbehavior takes on new meanings that might have more deleterious effects (Simon 2006).

### The Racial Discipline Gap

One of the most problematic aspects of the new crime control paradigm governing schools is that minority students face the highest rates of suspension of and expulsion. Although minority students only account for 17% of national public school enrollment, they make up 32% of suspended students (Civil Rights Project 2000). African-American boys are also 3.3 times more likely than white boys to be suspended or expelled (Wallace et. al. 2008). By 2000, 43 states already required schools to report students directly to law enforcement agencies for certain violations (Civil Rights Project 2000). Black and Latino students attending schools in this context are more likely to be punished and more likely to be referred to law enforcement agencies. Therefore, attending school under these new conditions may actually make minority children more vulnerable to ending up on the path to prison.

## Race and The Mass Incarceration Crisis

With more than 2.3 million adults behind bars in 2010, the United States currently faces a mass incarceration crisis that disproportionately impacts African-Americans and Latinos (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2011). About 3.1 percent of all black males were in state or federal prison, while the rate was less than 0.5 percent for white males and 1.3 percent for Hispanic males (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2011). Additionally, almost 7.3 percent of all black males between the ages of 30 and 34 were incarcerated and serving a sentence of more than 1 year in 2010 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2011). The crisis is exacerbated by exceptionally high rates of recidivism for incarcerated individuals. Once released, almost half of all formerly incarcerated individuals find themselves back in the system within three years, either through technical parole violations or through the commission of new crimes (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2002). Many individuals, particularly minorities, become trapped in the revolving door that is the criminal justice system; stuck in a cycle of arrest, release, and re-arrest.

The mass incarceration crisis has drawn considerable attention from scholars and recently state budget challenges have forced policymakers to take a closer look at the problem as well. However, despite the racial disparities in school discipline measures and the racial disparities in the incarcerated population, not enough research has explored the link between the education system and the criminal justice system. Therefore, a critical component of addressing the current mass incarceration crisis and preventing more individuals from ending up in the system is to understand how the school to prison pipeline operates, who it affects, and why.

## **The Research Outline**

To understand how schools can disadvantage students, this research will focus on school discipline strategies to analyze how punitive school environments affect young adult involvement in the criminal justice system. I will explore this question in three parts. First, I will examine the predictors of suspension to identify how factors such as race, class, and gender influence how schools respond to student delinquency. Then I will explore how suspensions affect young adults' risk of arrest over time. Finally, I will analyze how students' attitudes about their futures and the legitimacy of school discipline impact their risk of arrest over time. I will explore these questions on the school to prison pipeline through a quantitative analysis of national high school students, using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1997.

## Literature Review

I will begin my analysis with a discussion of previous research on the relationship between the education system and the criminal justice system in the Literature Review. Past scholarship on this topic has identified that low educational attainment increases the risk of incarceration by reducing employment opportunities for workers in a skilled economy (Wilson 1980; Petit and Western 2004; Western 2006). Since educational attainment is an important means of reducing the hazard of arrest; I examine past studies on how schools as socializing institutions shape young adults and influence their arrest risk (Durkheim 1973; Arum and Beattie 1999; Arum 2003). Scholars have identified suspensions as one schooling experience which greatly impacts risk of arrest; focusing on suspensions, I explore how suspensions affect students unequally based on race and class in a process known as the racial discipline gap (Gregory, Skiba and Noguera 2010).



Finally, I overview the scholarly debate on the causes of the racial discipline gap and identify three potential mechanisms which explain why suspensions might increase the risk of arrest for students (Bowditch 1993; Ferguson 2001; Felson 2008; Hirschfield 2008; Wallace et al 2008).

### Historical Analysis

In the historical analysis chapter I will outline how the criminalized school environment is a relatively new phenomenon. I will review how school discipline in the United States has changed from the 1970s until the present and situate the development of punitive school environments within the context of increasing societal fears over school violence events like the Columbine shooting. Through an overview of the major judicial interventions in schools, such as *Goss v. Lopez 1975*, as well as the major legislative interventions in schools, including the 1968 Safe Streets Act and the 1994 Safe Schools Act, I will discuss how the emphasis on school-police partnerships has emerged. Finally, I will closely examine the elements of the criminalized school environment to understand the structures of control and surveillance that students must confront in order to receive an education today.

### Methods

I will use the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) to analyze how school suspensions affect high school students nationally. I will begin with a breakdown of the race and gender patterns in delinquency, suspensions, arrest, and attitudes. Then I will conduct two survival analyses to identify how race and gender impact time to suspension and time to arrest for all respondents in the NLSY97. Finally I will run a series of Cox regression models to identify how factors such as race, socio-

economic status, educational attainment, and attitude impact students' risk of suspension and incarceration.

### **Findings and Implications**

This research builds upon much of the previous scholarship on the effects of school discipline on students' risk of incarceration. First I provide more evidence that a racial discipline gap exists in school suspensions; almost twice as many black respondents as white respondents reported that they were suspended at least once, despite the observation that students reported committing the same levels of delinquent acts across racial groups. Furthermore, even when controlling for delinquency, academic performance, and socio-economic status, black students faced a higher risk of suspension. Additionally, my analysis provides support for the hypothesis that there is something unique to the experience of suspensions which increases students' risk of incarceration. Even when controlling for delinquency, race, socio-economic status, and academic achievement, students who were suspended increased their risk of incarceration compared to students who were never suspended. Finally, I identify that positive student attitudes are associated with lower arrest rates for boys and girls.

As I will outline in greater detail throughout the rest of my thesis, these findings provide evidence which casts doubt on the popular belief that the education system provides everyone with the opportunity to achieve better futures.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## **Educational Attainment, Race, and Incarceration Risk**

Individuals with lower levels of education and minorities are disproportionately represented in the prison population. On average, state prisoners have just a tenth grade education and almost two-thirds of state prisoners never earned a high school diploma (Pettit and Western 2004). Furthermore, racial differences exist in the lifetime risks of incarceration among individuals with lower levels of education. Among black men born between 1965 and 1969, almost 30 percent of individuals without a college education and almost 60 percent of high school dropouts went to prison (Pettit and Western 2004). Economic changes that increased U.S. income inequality in the 1970s left African-Americans with low levels of education largely idle in urban centers and more vulnerable to incarceration (Western 2006).

Structural shifts in the American economy from goods-producing industries, like manufacturing, to service-producing industries, like finance, increased job opportunities for highly-educated workers while reducing job opportunities for low-skilled workers (Wilson 1980). The structural shifts in the economy were particularly detrimental to African-Americans in inner city communities, as racial differences in unemployment indicate. Since 1954 blacks have experienced on average a 2 to 1 unemployment rate compared to whites and unemployment rates are even higher among black teenagers (Wilson 1980; Western 2006). Since lower levels of education and race are associated with higher rates of incarceration, a critical part of addressing the current mass incarceration crisis involves understanding the roles that the education system and race play in shaping adolescent behavior and contact with the criminal justice system.

## **Schools as Socializing Institutions**

Schools play an influential role in preparing youths for the transition from childhood to adulthood. Youths spend significant amounts of time away from their families when in school; therefore, schools are the first social institution outside of the family which molds and shapes youths for roles in society (Durkheim 1973; Arum 2003). Moreover, the school's socialization function is important because past scholars have indicated that it is used to maintain class and power distinctions in society. Specifically, students' school experiences vary based on their race, class, and gender, but the meritocratic nature of schools masks existing social inequalities. Instead, race and class differences in school appear to be the result of competition and differences in natural ability (Apple 1979; Gee 1996; Kupchik 2009).

Previous attempts to analyze the relationship between the education system and the criminal justice system have focused largely on involvement in the criminal justice system as a risk factor, which increases school dropouts and reduces academic achievement. Research on academic achievement has indicated that disproportionate numbers of black and Hispanic students fail to complete school and are more likely to be at risk of dropping out (Borus and Carpenter 1983; Ekstrom et al. 1987; Peng 1983; Rumberger 1983; Bowditch 1993). Researchers exploring the reasons behind the racial differences in school dropout rates have analyzed how youths attending minority-dominated schools and living in minority neighborhoods in major cities, are affected by arrests. A Chicago study of 4,844 inner-city students using multi-level multivariate logistic models, found that young minority offenders who get arrested participate less in

school and that schools are less able to help youths after they get arrested (Hirschfield 2009).

Furthermore, other studies analyzing involvement in the criminal justice system as a risk factor for lower academic achievement indicate the importance of a youth's degree of involvement in the criminal justice system. One study, using the NLSY97 to assess the effect of first-time arrest and court involvement during high school on educational attainment, found that students who were arrested for the first time during high school and appeared in court had worse educational outcomes than students who were arrested for the first time but never appeared in court during high school (Sweeten 2006). Interestingly, the study also found that the effect of court involvement did not vary by residence, income level or minority status. However, those studies have explored the premise that youth delinquency and involvement in the criminal justice system disrupt academic achievement in the education system, particularly for minority students. Researchers have given less attention to the inverse relationship, how schools as socializing institutions can affect student behavior and influence students' risk of involvement in the criminal justice system.

### High School as a Defining Moment

According to the life course theory, high school experiences in particular, serve as a "*defining moment* in an individual's life trajectory" (Laub and Sampson 1993; Arum and Beattie 1999:532). Researchers conducting an event history analysis using data from the NLSY79 examined how high school level environments influence student incarceration risk (Arum and Beattie 1999). The study found that occupational course work, smaller class size, and positive peer climates all help to facilitate student

attachments to school. The findings support existing control theories; individual level attachments to school activities lower adult risk of incarceration.

The findings are especially important because they highlight that, in addition to the effects of a school's decision to offer vocational classes or have smaller student-teacher ratios, a school's decision to discipline students also has important effects on students' incarceration risk. The study found that students who were suspended from school were 2.2 times more likely than students who were never suspended to become incarcerated (Arum and Beattie 1999:531). The increased risk of incarceration that suspended students faced compared to students who were never suspended raises questions about whether or not there is something unique to the experience of suspension which makes students more susceptible to entering the criminal justice system.

Furthermore, the findings have implications for delving more deeply into how suspension may act as a defining experience for minority students. Arum and Beattie (1999) posit that African-American and white differences in incarceration rates stem from African-American and white students' exposure to varied high school environments; specifically differences in the areas of occupational course work, smaller class sizes, and positive peer climates. This raises questions about whether or not differences in incarceration rates may also stem from differences in how schools decide to discipline African-American and white students. Moreover, since Arum and Beattie's study only examined incarceration risk factors for males, the study also raises questions about what factors influence incarceration risk for girls. A gender distinction in school discipline practices may offer insights on gender patterns in incarceration if school discipline has different effects for boys and girls. Therefore, understanding how a

school's decision to suspend students alters school experiences for youths may offer insights on how schools affect youth incarceration risk.

### The Racial Discipline Gap

Previous research has found that non-whites and males are disproportionately suspended in schools, which results in a discipline gap (Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera 2010). Researchers utilizing the Monitoring the Future study, which gathers nationally representative samples of 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders from the 48 contiguous states, found that Blacks, Hispanics, and American-Indian youth were two to five times more likely than white and Asian-American students to experience school discipline (Wallace et. al. 2008). The racial differences are most extreme in the more punitive discipline measures, such as suspensions, where black boys are 3.3 times more likely than white boys to be suspended or expelled (Wallace et. al. 2008).

Researchers exploring school discipline have found that neither racial differences in delinquent behavior nor racial differences in socio-economic status sufficiently explain the racial discipline gap. Studies have found that at most there are only minor racial differences in reported student disruptive behavior (Skiba et. al. 2000; Wallace et. al. 2008). Moreover, even after controlling for key socio-economic factors, including parental education level, non-white students were more likely to be disciplined (Wallace et. al. 2008). Analysis of middle school students in a large urban school district found that there are patterns of differential treatment at the classroom level, where African-American students are disciplined more often for subjective infractions (Skiba et. al. 2000).

Researchers have also developed alternative theoretical explanations for the racial discipline gap, which argue that social structures subjectively influence the behavior of school actors. Specifically, Hirschfield posits that the ways in which school actors respond to disruptive students are conditioned by how school actors perceive individual students' future prospects (2008). Black students may be disciplined at higher rates because structural factors, mainly the high rates of mass incarceration and unemployment for minorities, condition teachers and school administrators to believe that minority students face increasingly bleak future prospects and are on criminal justice tracks (Hirschfield 2008; Ferguson 2001).

Ferguson observes this process, which she refers to as "adultification," in her study of Rosa Parks middle school. According to Ferguson, the teachers and school administrators of Rosa Parks middle school perceived black students' transgressions to "take on a sinister, intentional, fully conscious tone that [was] stripped of any element of childish naïveté" (2001:83). In the context of Hirschfield and Ferguson's work, misbehavior among minority youth is treated more harshly by school actors because it is redefined to take on the purposeful undertones of adults on criminal justice tracks. However more research must be dedicated to discovering the reasons behind the racial discipline gap. Additionally, the excessive racial and gender imbalances in suspensions requires further academic attention to identify if there are any links between the racial discipline gap and the disproportionate minority representation among the incarcerated population.



## Suspension as a Defining Experience

Schools are confronted with the issue of how to deal with disruptive and underperforming students. Schools have the option of employing inclusionary strategies, which offer additional services and attention to help students perform well in school, or they can employ exclusionary approaches, which push students out of school to conserve resources for already performing students (Hirschfield 2010). An ethnographic analysis of four high schools with varied student demographics, located in two states, provided evidence that administrators, across schools, prioritize harsh exclusionary discipline practices, which emphasize punishing misbehavior over other therapeutic, mentoring, or pedagogical goals (Kupchik 2009). However, an examination of national 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders to identify national trends in school discipline since the 1990s, indicates that racial differences exist in the degree to which schools rely on harsh disciplinary measures. Although suspensions and expulsions increased for most racial groups in the early 1990s and then began to decline by the mid 1990s; suspensions and expulsions have steadily increased for black students since the 1990s (Wallace et. al. 2008).

Suspension may act as a defining experience in students' lives by formally labeling them as troublemakers in the context of the school. Disruptive and underperforming students are formally labeled as troublemakers when schools apply exclusionary discipline methods like suspensions instead of inclusionary methods which aim to make them full members of the school. Two studies where researchers conducted interviews and observed school activities in a middle school and high school, located in large urban school districts with minority-majority student bodies, offered more specification into how school administrators may label students. Those studies examining

labeling in schools found that school administrators used indicators to define “types of students” who were labeled troublemakers based on students’ grades, disciplinary records, school year, ages, and future plans (Bowditch 1993; Ferguson 2001). The findings of those ethnographic studies imply that suspension may serve as a defining experience in students’ lives because by disciplining disruptive and underperforming students, the school formally labels them as troublemakers, which as I will outline below, influences their behavior by affecting how they interact with school personnel and their peers.

### **Effects of Suspension on Students**

#### **Academic Underachievement and Anti-Social Behavior of Suspended Students**

Students show further reductions in academic achievement after experiencing school suspensions. Researchers conducting longitudinal retrospective analyses of students in a large urban school district have found that prior to being suspended, suspended students substantially underperformed students who were never suspended (Arcia 2006). Furthermore, students who had high suspension rates continued to experience reduced academic achievement and higher rates of high school dropout after being suspended (Arcia 2006). Researchers have called for more academic attention to be given to these trends, which they argue imply that a relationship exists between the racial achievement gap and the racial discipline gap (Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera 2010).

Moreover, a cross-national analysis of 4,000 students aged 12 to 16; found that school suspensions may increase future antisocial behavior, which has important ramifications for the likelihood of future criminal behavior (Hemphill et. al. 2006). Researchers hypothesize that suspensions may increase antisocial behavior and reduce

academic achievement through three mechanisms; by separating students from positive school social environments, stigmatizing students within their communities, or by increasing opportunities for youth to interact with other delinquent youths (Hemphill et. al. 2006). These studies suggest that understanding the mechanisms through which suspensions influence student behavior may provide insights on how schools' affect youth involvement in the criminal justice system.

### Mechanisms through which Suspension Influences Delinquent Behavior

#### *Suspended Students Are Cut Off from School Resources*

Once disruptive and underperforming students are labeled as troublemakers and suspended, they are cut off from school resources. One ethnographic study found that school administrators work to push disruptive and underperforming students out of the school using exclusionary strategies, such as suspensions or transfers, in an effort to protect the school's reputation (Bowditch 1993). As mentioned earlier, this approach also allows schools to conserve resources for students who are already performing well, which may be a pressing concern in minority schools that already suffer from limited resources (Hirschfield 2010). Moreover, even when students are not literally pushed out of school, they are still confined to non-academic spaces in schools through the use of in-school suspensions. Ferguson found that students who received in-school suspensions were removed from their classrooms and condemned to spaces in the school, such as the "punishing room" and the "jailhouse," where their teachers rarely visited them and their learning was stunted (Ferguson 2001).

In the context of social control theory, schools create bonds between students and societal institutions. Furthermore, the more that students are disconnected from school

actors, such as teachers, administrators, and peers, the less likely that students will be affected by school responses to student misbehavior (Hirschi 1969; Gasper and Hirschfield 2010). Other studies exploring control theory provided evidence that both student emotional and behavioral engagement to school reduce the likelihood of student delinquency (Gasper and Hirschfield 2010). By suspending students, schools sever the ties that students, who are already struggling academically, have to the resources and support of school personnel; thereby diminishing the opportunities for disruptive and underperforming students to catch-up and fostering their academic decline.

### *Suspended Students Are Stigmatized in Their Schools*

As discussed earlier, schools formally label students as troublemakers by suspending them; additionally the negative label may stigmatize students in their schools and encourage delinquent behavior. Although Hemphill posited that suspensions may increase anti-social behavior by stigmatizing youths in their communities, ethnographic studies provide more clarification into the labeling process and indicate that stigma probably operates within the school context. Ferguson found in her ethnographic study of an urban middle school that students gain “school-wide reputations” as teachers, school administrators, and security personnel share stories of students’ exploits amongst themselves (2001:95). Additionally, Christine Bowditch’s ethnographic study of school discipline produced findings that were consistent with labeling theory; school discipline measures, like suspensions, served as official sanctions which stigmatized students and increased their likelihood of becoming high school dropouts (1993).

The study provided evidence that supported labeling theory’s arguments for the cause of secondary deviance. School discipline measures that label and push students out

of school may also encourage secondary deviance by emphasizing to students that the school has little interest in their success, which fosters students' commitment to troublemaker roles. Moreover, Bowditch's findings are interesting because she provides more specification into how high school may serve as a defining moment in a student's life because of school discipline practices. Although the life course theory contends that schools influence students through informal ties, Bowditch's research also adds that the school has the ability to influence students by applying formal sanctions in the form of school discipline measures.

However, Ferguson's findings also raise questions about how strongly the stigma of school labels really affects students. Interestingly, Ferguson finds that while students are aware of the label that the school imposes on them, they do not necessarily internalize the school's label to the point where they self-identify themselves in the same way that the school identifies them (2001). In other words, although suspended students may know that schools have labeled them troublemakers on criminal justice tracks, the youths may not actually agree with these labels and instead believe that they are good students with bright futures. Therefore, although labeling theory and past research imply that students who are formally given negative labels by the school may be more likely to engage in delinquent behavior; Ferguson's findings imply that variations in student attitudes might mediate the effects of negative labels and stigma in schools.

#### *Suspended Students Have More Opportunities for Delinquency*

Suspensions may increase delinquency in youths by increasing the opportunities for youths to commit delinquent behaviors and increasing interactions between suspended students and other delinquent youths. According to routine activity theory, three elements

must be present for the commission of a crime; there must be an offender who identifies a target or victim and finds a suitable place to commit the crime (Felson 2008). Figure 1 outlines all three necessary crime elements in John Eck's crime triangle, also referred to as the problem triangle. Moreover routine activity theory emphasizes the presence or absence of social actors; crimes occur when all supervisors are absent—the handler who watches the offender, the guardian who watches the target or victim, and the manager who watches the crime setting (Felson 2008). When youths are at home, their parents act as their handlers and when youth are in school, school personnel act as their handlers.

Figure 1: John Eck's Crime Triangle



Source: Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, 2012.

However, when schools decide to suspend students, they remove students from the watchful eyes of a handler. Suspended students are left at home unsupervised if their parents have to attend work and many students decide to hang-out in their neighborhoods (Ferguson 2001). Once students are unsupervised they have the opportunity to find other unsupervised targets and places to commit crimes. Suspended youth who are left unsupervised also have the opportunity to interact with other youths who are not in school, which increases the likelihood that suspended students will interact with other

delinquent youths. Schools leave students unmonitored by suspending them, which increases the opportunities for youth to become involved in delinquent behavior.

### **Implications for future Research**

Despite the well-documented racial discipline gap and the effects of suspension on academic achievement and delinquent behavior, researchers have given less attention to discovering the connection between the racial discipline gap in the education system and the disproportionate representation of minorities in the criminal justice system. Therefore, my research will add to the existing body of work on the relationship between the education system and the criminal justice system in three ways. First, I will examine if the racial discipline gap exists by analyzing the predictors of suspension. I will focus on suspensions because it is the school discipline practice where the most extreme racial differences have been found (Wallace et. al. 2008).

While previous studies have considered how race and socio-economic status affect incarceration risk, I will improve upon those studies by also considering how student delinquent behavior and academic achievement affect incarceration risk for males and females (Arum and Beattie 1999; Wallace et. al. 2008; Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera 2010). Secondly, I will explore the link between the racial discipline gap and the disproportionate incarceration of minorities by examining how suspension affects arrest risk. I will also consider the effects of race, socio-economic status, and academic attainment as potential predictors of arrest in addition to suspensions. Finally, considering the interesting implications of Ferguson's findings on identity formation, I will analyze how student attitudes and perceptions of self might influence incarceration risk.

# **HISTORICAL ANALYSIS**

## **The Evolution of School Discipline**

### The Criminalization of Schools

School experiences, especially in regards to school discipline, have changed along with societal shifts and increased concerns over school violence (Devine 1996). Since the 1990s, a trend of school criminalization has spread over urban and rural schools across the country (Simon 2006; Hirschfield 2008, Hirschfield 2010). Here school criminalization refers to the “shift toward a crime control paradigm in the definition and management of the problem of student deviance” (Hirschfield 2008). When fears of school violence make crime the lens which is used to evaluate schools, students are viewed as populations of potential victims, who must be protected, and potential perpetrators, who must be disciplined (Simon 2006). Therefore, the criminalization of schools has developed gradually over time as public pressure for solutions to control school violence and crime have been used to redefine the way that schools work through judicial and legislative actions on the national level.

### *Escalating Fears of School Violence*

The Departments of Education and Justice estimate that children have a “one in a million chance of suffering a school-associated violent death;” however high profile incidents of school violence have increased parental insecurities and turned national attention towards securing children’s safety in schools (Riley and Reno 1999). One of the most high-profile school violence incidents was the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, which captured widespread public attention and helped to define the school-



crime problem. The Littleton, Colorado shooting, where two student-gunmen killed 12 students and a teacher before shooting themselves, was the third most closely watched story of the 1990s according to the Pew Research Center. The Columbine High School shooting was the biggest news story of 1999, with 68% of Americans reporting that they watched the story very closely and 92% of Americans reporting that they followed the story very or fairly closely (Pew Research Center 1999).

Although violent school shootings, such as the Columbine and Virginia Tech (2007) incidents, receive disproportionate amounts of media coverage, crime has been and continues to be a legitimate concern for some schools across the country (Maguire, Mathers and Weatherby 2002). During the 2007 to 2008 academic year, 75% of public schools recorded one or more violent incidents of crime and 38% of public schools reported at least one violent incident to the police (Robers, Zhang, and Truman 2010). Most importantly for the criminalization of schools, school violence incidents trigger moral panic over the possibility that further violent episodes could occur in other schools across the country.

Parental fears about children's safety in schools create support for policies that promote the criminalization of schools (Simon 2006). Analysis of the bills that were introduced following the Columbine shooting during the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress (1999-2000) alone, show that 45% of the bills defined the school violence problem in terms of inadequate anti-violence programs and security measures in schools (Birkland and Lawrence 2004). The legislative session highlights how high profile violent events can act as catalysts and incite public support for legislative and judicial efforts to increase security in schools and anti-violence programs on the national level.

### *Judicial Interventions in Schools*

The courts have contributed to the criminalization of schools by influencing the rules that determine how schools have the ability to govern students. Richard Arum's study, which analyzed all 1,204 relevant state and federal appellate court cases defined as significant school discipline cases, examined the dramatic increase in education litigation from the late 1960s to the early 1970s, known as the "student rights contestation period" (2003:5). Civil Rights Movement successes in the judicial sphere provided evidence to children's rights advocates that the courts were a viable space to advance children's interests. Before 1965, most public interest law cases were brought forward by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund and focused on challenging racial discrimination. However with the introduction of the War on Poverty and the establishment of the Office of Economic Opportunity's (OEO) legal services program, the focus of public interest law shifted from addressing race to poverty (Arum 2003:50).

Although few cases involving school discipline were brought to the courts before 1960, and between 1960 and 1978 the federal appellate court only heard 72 cases, between 1969 and 1975 an average of 76 cases involving school discipline were heard each year (Arum 2003:18). Suspensions and expulsions were the first and second most contested forms of school disciplinary actions brought before the courts; suspensions accounted for 65% of the cases brought before the court from 1969 to 1975 and 40% of the cases brought before the court from 1976 to 1992 (Arum 2003:55-56). Significantly, despite the racial differences in suspensions and expulsions among black students, as outlined in the literature review, only 10% of school discipline court challenges involved

minority students (Arum 2003:50). School system challenges at the appellate level required extensive resources and only the most serious cases involving African-American students were brought to the appellate level.

*Goss v. Lopez* was the defining case of the student rights contestation period and it created the precedent for the courts to intervene and determine the acceptability of school discipline practices. In Columbus, Ohio in 1971, 75 minority students were suspended from Central High school after protesting the lack of programming to commemorate Black History Week. The students were suspended for up to 10 days; however the school did not formally notify the students of the grounds for the suspensions or give the students an opportunity to contest the charges against them (Arum 2003:39). The local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter and the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) legal services represented the suspended Central High School students in the initial case *Lopez v. Williams* before the United States District Court in Ohio.

The district court ruled in favor of the students on the grounds that they were not given due process of law. The decision extended due process rights to students and limited schools' abilities to discipline students (Arum 2003:41). In 1975 the school appealed the decision in *Goss v. Lopez* and argued before the United States Supreme Court that students did not have the right to an uninterrupted education (Arum 2003:42). However, the Supreme Court affirmed the lower court decision and extended the right of "rudimentary' due process for public school students faced with short-term suspension and 'more formal procedures' for students facing more serious disciplinary sanctions" (Arum 2003:13). The *Goss v. Lopez* decision was significant because it conferred on

students facing disciplinary action the same due process rights given to citizens; the law recognized students as citizens. While Arum argues that these court incursions on the school's authority diminished the school's legitimacy and made school discipline less effective, subsequent court decisions reinforced the school's right to govern student behavior (2003:34).

The courts' pro-student decisions came to an end in the post-contestation period, most notably in the 1985 *New Jersey v. T.L.O.* decision. When a New Jersey high school student was found guilty of drug possession and selling drugs in school, the court found that school personnel are allowed to conduct searches of students as long as the search met a "reasonableness" standard (Arum 2003:73). The reasonableness standard that school personnel must meet to conduct student searches falls short of the probable cause standard, which law enforcement personnel must meet to conduct searches, and affirmed that students were not recognized as full citizens under the law. The *T.L.O.* decision marked an important shift in the courts ideological interpretation of students; whereas during the student rights contestation period courts were more likely to view students as citizens, in the post-contestation period the courts made it clear that students were not entitled to the same rights as citizens under the law.

Between 1976 and 1992, the supreme court determined that the "Eighth Amendment protections against cruel and unusual punishment, Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure, and First Amendment rights to freedom of speech did not apply to students in public schools as to adults outside of such settings" (Arum 2003:79). Although the pro-student decisions which characterized the student rights contestation period placed limitations on the school's ability to discipline

students, the post-contestation period reaffirmed the school's primary role in determining acceptable student discipline policies and reduced student rights more broadly. The reductions in the application of the first, fourth, and eighth amendment protections for students have important implications, as I will highlight, when considered along with subsequent legislative actions to reduce school crime.

### *Legislative Interventions in Schools*

On the legislative front, two major bills contributed to the criminalization of schools across the nation. The 1968 Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act (Safe Streets Act), which embodied President Johnson's efforts to address crime, laid the foundation for national efforts to tackle school crime (Simon 2001). The Safe Streets Act targeted crime by outlining several mandates regarding rules of evidence governing criminal trials, wire-tapping and eavesdropping, and gun control. However, Title I of the Act had the most salient effects on school crime control efforts. Title I of the 1968 Act authorized the federal government to distribute over \$400 million in funds to state and local law enforcement agencies for research and development (Simon 2001). State and local law enforcement agencies could use the funds for new equipment, training, and additional law enforcement officers. The Safe Streets Act propelled states to initiate programs to track crime and measure official responses.

In 1998, the legislature amended the 1968 Safe Streets Act to encourage schools to adopt the School Resource Officer (SRO) model, thereby placing more law enforcement officials directly in schools (Bracy and Kupchik 2010). SRO programs, which are based on a problem-oriented community policing model, extend the criminal justice system into schools through partnerships between police officers and school

administrators for the goal of working together to identify and prevent crime in schools (Bracy and Kupchik, 2010:22). The number of SROs has grown substantially; in 1999 54% of middle and high schools reported having security guards or assigned police officers, but by 2005 this number had increased to 68%. The Safe Streets Act, with its emphasis on monitoring and measuring efforts to reduce crime, provided the model for legislation to address crime in schools in 1994.

Federal education reform efforts cemented the criminalization of schools with the passage of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994 (Safe Schools Act). Only schools that demonstrate serious school crime, violent incidents, or problems with student discipline are eligible to apply for the funding allocated under the Safe Schools Act (Simon 2007:217). The Safe Schools Act requires schools to build methods of data collection to track school crime, to make school shareholders aware of crime problems, and to garner community support for efforts to address crime problems. The law's requirement that schools develop formal disciplinary codes by mandating that schools have "written policies detailing a) [the school's] internal procedures b) clear conditions under which exclusion will be imposed, and c) close cooperation with police and juvenile justice agencies," greatly impacted the criminalization of schools (Simon 2007:218). Schools are now mandated to adopt zero-tolerance policies and work closely with law enforcement.

Surveys of state laws show that states have moved quickly to adopt the school reforms mandated by the Safe Schools Act. In 2000, 41 states had laws establishing grounds for suspension, 49 states had laws establishing grounds for expulsion, and 43 states had laws requiring school officials to report students directly to law enforcement

agencies (Civil Rights Project 2000). The Safe Schools Act made school violence issues the responsibility of underperforming schools and all of their stakeholders—administrators, teachers, parents, and students; schools compete for federal funds by accepting accountability for crime and performance monitoring (Hirschfield 2008). Combined judicial and legislative actions have redefined schools to operate in a system where disciplinary violations are closely monitored and punitive measures applied, law enforcement influence has penetrated schools, and students are denied the full rights of citizens. What types of school environments must students navigate now that the education system has been reformed to confront crime?

### **Inside the Criminalized School Environment**

Schools have significant discretionary control over how to spend the federal funds that the government awards them and over how discipline policies are applied to students, which allows varied school environments to develop at the local level. However despite variations in the racial and economic composition of student bodies, geographic locations, and school board control systems; schools share common features that resemble penal environments (Devine 1996; Hirschfield 2008, Hirschfield 2010). Features of the criminalized school environment include the increased presence of school safety officers and police officers, surveillance cameras, metal detectors, zero-tolerance policies, and increased use of punitive discipline measures like suspensions and expulsions.

#### *Surveillance and Control Measures*

Schools today have adopted technological surveillance and control measures to identify and protect students from crime. Metal detectors, body scanners, card-swipe

machines, alarm systems, video surveillance, and other crime equipment are common features in the majority of American schools; educational space is reconfigured to accommodate the new security measures (Devine 1996). In the 1999-2000 school year only 19% of public school principals reported that their schools had one or more security cameras; by the 2007-2008 school year, 55% of public school principals reported that their schools had one or more security cameras. Furthermore, 10% of students reported attending schools that had metal detectors during the 2007 to 2008 school year (Robers, Zhang, and Truman 2010). School security practices vary greatly across social contexts, particularly between suburban and urban schools.

Suburban white-majority schools are more likely to adopt methods of surveillance which affirm and encourage the autonomy and independence of students, while increasing perceptions of safety and preparedness (Hirschfield 2010). From 2005 to 2006, 46% of suburban schools employed surveillance cameras, a less intrusive control method, compared to only 41% of urban and rural schools (Dinkes et. al. 2007). However, urban minority majority schools are more likely to adopt exclusive methods of surveillance which resemble penal institutions. While urban schools with minority-majority student bodies represented only 14% of middle schools and high schools nationwide, minority-majority schools represented 75% of schools that have daily metal detector scans (Guerino et al. 2006). During his ethnographic study of New York City high schools, John Devine examined how security practices affect even students' attempts to arrive at school.

A red light signals that this particular student must be scanned; a green light, that she or he may proceed directly to class. After that, students are searched for weapons with a magnetic scanner, and knapsacks and bookbags are run through an X-ray machine. "Archway" or airport-type detectors are also currently being



introduced. Guards permit students to enter only at specific times so they will not loiter in the lobby or in corridors before class (Devine 1996:80).

Though these measures are meant to improve safety, they also force students in urban minority-majority schools to undergo invasive security measures that could alienate students from school even before they enter the building.

### *Law Enforcement Presence in Schools*

Due to the passage of the Safe Streets Act, the 1998 Amendment to the 1968 Omnibus Act, and grants provided by the Office of Community Oriented Police Services (COPS), law enforcement officials have become a common presence in schools since the 1990s (Bracy and Kupchik 2010). In 2007, 69% of students aged 12-18 reported the presence of security guards or assigned police officers in their schools (Robers, Zhang, and Truman 2010). Law enforcement personnel, often referred to as school resource officers (SRO's), are responsible for watching the halls, conducting administrative police work, investigating minor incidents, mentoring, and assisting school staff with discipline (Bracy and Kupchik 2010). The majority of interactions between students and SROs occur in school hallways, the main domain of the SROs. Between classes, hallways are a "mass of moving bodies pushing, yelping, grabbing, shadow-boxing, embracing and perhaps even threatening, followed by guards shouting, 'OK, let's move it!' (Devine 1996:81).

The benefits for students of having police officers in schools appear mixed. While some SRO's do attempt to mentor and offer advice to students, others believe that their role discourages fraternizing with the students and that they do not receive the proper training to counsel students (Devine 1996; Bracy and Kupchik 2010). Also, since discipline becomes the responsibility of SRO's and is no longer handled by teachers;

behaviors that are not actually threatening to school safety are criminalized (Devine 1996; Bracy and Kupchik 2010). In 2000, 43 states required school officials to report students to law enforcement, and a longitudinal study of juvenile court referrals in five states showed evidence that the overall percentage of court referrals originating from schools have risen over a ten year period (Civil Rights Project 2000; Krezmien et al. 2010). Furthermore, increased police presence in schools actually reduces black and Latino youths' integration in schools because those minority communities have negative perceptions of the police (Hagan, Payne, and Shedd 2005). With the increased police presence in schools and administrators' reliance on juvenile court referrals, school environments are now places which facilitate direct contact between students and the criminal justice system overtime.

### *Punitive Disciplinary Actions*

By 1998, just four years after the passage of the Safe Schools Act, 94% of public schools across the country had adopted zero-tolerance policies governing school environments (Krezmien et al. 2010). Students must navigate criminalized school environments where any violation of school rules will lead to punitive measures, outlined in zero-tolerance codes, ranging from in-school detention to expulsion. Schools executed 767,900 "serious disciplinary actions" during the 2007-08 academic year; while 76% of those actions were suspensions for 5 days or more, over 40% of those serious disciplinary actions were for student crimes described as insubordination (Robers, Zhang and Truman 2010). Furthermore, students of color disproportionately feel the effects of zero-tolerance policies in schools (Hirschfield 2008; Kupchik 2009). A 2000 report by the Civil Rights

Project, found that although black children represented only 17% of school children nationally, they represented 32% of youths who received out-of-school suspensions.

Ferguson's ethnographic study of an urban elementary school gives insights into how students confront disciplinary apparatuses in school, focusing on how punishment is applied and how school areas are transformed into punitive spaces. Students were sent to the "punishing room," level one in Rosa Parks middle school's disciplinary process, for routine offenses, where student specialists determined the seriousness of offenses and defined punishments. For more punitive disciplinary actions, such as after-school detention and in-school suspension, students were sent to another room, an isolated space, which students called the "jailhouse" amongst themselves.

The timetable for the occupants of the [jailhouse], both children and adults, for the punished and their keeper, is different than for the rest of the school. Our segregation from those who are good citizens is total. We have a recess and a lunch break, but at a different time than everyone else and for a much shorter period. We sit in the stifling room looking out at the playground wistfully. After the regular lunchtime is over, the children help clean tables in the cafeteria. This work is part of their punishment. (Ferguson 2001:37)

Disciplinary spaces within schools, like the punishing room and the jailhouse, are separated from the educational spaces within the schools; they are the domains of the SROs and deans. Students who receive the most punitive sentences—suspensions and expulsions—are cut off from the school's academic resources and restricted to non-academic spaces within schools or left idle at home, where their learning is stunted (Ferguson 2001).

Every day in the criminalized school environment, students must confront structures of surveillance and control, law enforcement personnel, and harsh punishments

under zero tolerance policies that interfere with their ability to learn. How are students affected by their unequal exposure to these environments?

### **Hypotheses: School Suspensions and Arrest Risk**

Three hypotheses emerge from the discussions of previous research on suspensions, presented in the Literature Review and of school discipline trends over time, presented in the Historical Analysis. Previous studies have identified that a racial discipline gap exists in school discipline and I expect that my analysis of which students are suspended in school will also reveal that black students are suspended at disproportionate rates, despite racial differences in delinquency or socio-economic status. Based on Hirschfield's theoretical explanation of the racial discipline gap in the new criminalized school environment, I posit that school actors will suspend black students more because the structural realities of high minority unemployment and mass incarceration create perceptions that black students are on a criminal justice track. Secondly, I expect that suspension will increase student risk of arrest because it relegates students to non-learning spaces in schools and, as routine activity theory argues, creates opportunities for delinquency by separating students from the monitoring of school actors.

Finally, I expect that students who maintain positive attitudes about their futures and believe in the legitimacy of school discipline will reduce their risk of incarceration, compared to students who adopt negative attitudes. Ferguson's study found that student perceptions of self may differ from the formal labels that schools confer, which implies that positive student attitudes can potentially mitigate the stigma of formal labels conferred by school discipline. Additionally, Arum posited that a lack of legitimacy,

created by court incursions on school authority, made school discipline less effective, which implies that school discipline will be more effective if students believe in it. Therefore, I expect that students who maintain positive attitudes will be less likely than students who adopt negative self-identifications, to become involved in the criminal justice system when they experience exclusionary school discipline sanctions. I will explore these hypotheses in my empirical analysis of school discipline policies and risk of arrest nationally.

## **ANALYZING THE NLSY97: DATA AND METHODS**

While considering the legislative and judicial changes, which increased convergence between schools and law enforcement agencies while also encouraging reliance on punitive discipline measures, as outlined in the Historical Analysis, I began to wonder how criminalized school environments would affect students over time. I wanted to understand how the school's actions, specifically its decision to suspend a student, affected that student's involvement in the criminal justice system. I thought that this could offer insights on what predicted a student's likelihood of suspension, if suspension increased incarceration risk, and if the attitudes of disciplined students influenced their outcomes.

I employed a quantitative approach to analyze these questions nationally. Since fears over school violence, *Goss v. Lopez* and other Supreme Court cases, and the Safe Schools Act had affected the education system nationally, it seemed best to focus my research on the national level. Furthermore, since individual school districts differ greatly under the United States' decentralized education system, focusing only on one or two school districts may have produced results that were too narrow to generalize.

### **Data: The National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1997**

I used data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) collected for the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) for my research. The NLSY97 documents the transition from adolescence to adulthood, following students as they move from school and enter the labor force. The NLSY97 is a nationally representative sample of youths living in the United States who were born between 1980 and 1984. The NLSY97

includes extensive information on youths' labor market experiences, family background, attitudes, and expectations. Most importantly, the NLSY97 captures information on both educational experiences and criminal histories for each respondent over time, which is critical to understanding any relationship between the education system and the criminal justice system. Additionally, the NLSY97 includes information on respondent experiences that occurred prior to the administration of the first survey in 1997.

#### *NLSY97 Sampling Method*

The NLSY97 sample was selected to represent the entire civilian, non-institutional population of the United States, between the ages of 12 and 16, as of December 31, 1996.<sup>1</sup> Youth who were in boarding school, college, or detention facilities were included in the sampling universe as long as their usual place of residence was located within the in-scope universe. The NLSY97 selected two independent area probability samples. The cross-sectional sample was designed to proportionally represent all segments of the population and the supplemental sample was designed to oversample black and Hispanic youths. The NLSY97 cohort is composed of 8,984 respondents from 6,819 unique households. The main NLSY97 questionnaire, which is the youth questionnaire, is administered to the 8,984 respondents annually using a computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) system.

#### *Limitations of the NLSY97 Dataset*

The main NLSY97 dataset that is publicly available does not include specific school level characteristics for each school that the respondents attended; such as staff

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<sup>1</sup> For more detailed information on the National Longitudinal Study of Youth Sample and Methods please see the National Longitudinal Study of Youth Technical Sample Report created by the National Opinion Research Center (2000).

composition, programs available to students, facilities available at the school, and student body composition. However, the NLSY97 main-file provides enough information on individual respondents' school experiences, such as type of school attended, grades, school discipline received, and absences, to address my research questions of interest. Although for some questions, respondents in the NLSY97 are missing information, the respondent retention rates for the study have remained above 85% for the majority of the survey rounds. Additionally, the NLSY97 does include information on respondent attitudes collected in round 1; however since those responses are not collected in subsequent rounds the survey may not incorporate change in respondent attitudes over time. The measure of respondent delinquency is also only available for rounds 1 through 4.

## **Data: Quantitative Analysis Procedures**

### **Key Variables**

I selected 104 variables from the publicly accessible NLSY97 main file to create my dataset. The variables represented five broad categories: demographic characteristics, socio-economic background, educational experiences, criminal justice system involvement, and attitudes. Since the NLSY97 is a longitudinal study, other information on respondents' educational histories, criminal justice system involvements and socio-economic statuses were collected in repeated rounds, which created multiple responses for some questions. To account for multiple responses I converted the dataset from wide format into long format and created respondent-level variables for delinquency, suspension, and arrest. I recoded the NLSY97 non-response values included in the dataset as missing.



Table 1: Sample Demographics

Gender		Race		Census Region	
Male	51%	Black	26%	North East	18%
Female	49%	Hispanic	21%	North Central	23%
Age		Other	1%	South	37%
12 to 16		White	52%	West	22%
<i>N</i>	116,792				

*Respondent Characteristics*

Of the 8,984 respondents in the sample, as Table 1 highlights, 51% are male and 49% are female. Respondents represented four main census regions—the northeast, north central, south, and west—with the largest number of respondents, 37%, residing in the south. Blacks and Hispanics are oversampled and represent 26% and 21% of the sample respectively, while whites represent 52% of the sample. Average household incomes and education level differed for respondents along racial lines. Black respondents reported the lowest average household incomes of \$38,693 and Hispanics reported higher incomes of \$50,547, however both groups still reported incomes that were lower than the \$63,821 average household income that whites reported.

Table 2: Key Respondent Characteristics by Race and Gender

Race Gender	Black		Hispanic		White		Other	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Income	\$40,048	\$37,468	\$53,012	\$48,092	\$65,205	\$62,357	\$74,154	\$54,833
Highest Education Level								
High School Degree or above	62%	76%	66%	74%	78%	82%	85%	67%
No High School Degree/GED	38%	23%	34%	26%	22%	18%	15%	33%
Schooling History								
GPA	2.51	2.79	2.69	2.89	2.88	3.10	2.80	2.80
<i>N</i>	15,197	15,158	12,701	12,012	31,369	29,276	520	559

More black respondents, at 56%, reported that a high school diploma was the highest degree that their mother had received. However, when comparing advanced degrees, twice as many white respondents as black respondents reported that their

mothers had received a bachelor's degree. As highlighted in Table 2, educational attainment differs along racial and gender lines for respondents. Women had higher educational attainment; 79% of female respondents obtained a high school degree or higher, compared to 72% of male respondents who earned the same. However, suspensions were associated with reduced educational attainment; almost 44% of suspended students never earned a high school diploma, while over 80% of students who were never suspended earned at least a high school diploma. Black males were the population with the highest percentage of respondents who did not earn at least a high school degree. 38% of black males earned no degree at all or a General Education Diploma (GED), compared to 34% of Hispanic males and 22% of white males.

### *Delinquency*

On average, boys and girls reported the same amounts of delinquency across racial groups. As Table 3 reports, about two-thirds of black, Hispanic, and white boys reported that they had committed at least one delinquent act. Among girls the numbers were slightly lower, about 60% of black and white girls reported committing delinquent acts. No racial group reported committing a disproportionate amount of delinquent acts. To measure disruptive behavior and delinquency in my analysis, I used a created variable, the delinquency index score variable, which is included in rounds 1 through 4 of the NLSY97. The created variable combines respondents' answers on ten questions that measure various forms of delinquency including whether a respondent has attacked someone, stolen something or committed property crime, and assigns each respondent a weighted score out of 10. Higher scores on the delinquency index score correspond to

higher acts of delinquency. To create the delinquency variable, all respondents who scored a 0 were coded 0 and all respondents who scored a 1 or higher were coded 1.

Table 3: Respondent Level Breakdown of Delinquent Respondents in Rounds 1-13

Gender	Male	<i>N</i>	Female	<i>N</i>
Race				
Black	78%	11,856	61%	9,308
Hispanic	74%	9,412	56%	6,773
White	77%	24,089	58%	17,043
Other	67%	351	74%	416

### *Suspension*

The data indicates that racial differences in school suspension rates exist. While only 25% of white male respondents reported that they were suspended, almost 45% of black male respondents reported that they were suspended. As seen in Table 4, the racial differences were even larger when examining trends among girls. Twice as many black girls as white girls reported that they had been suspended during the academic year. The suspension variable measures whether or not students were suspended and is available annually from 1997 to 2007. I coded respondents who answered that they were suspended at least once during the year as 1 and respondents who answered that they were not suspended during the year as 0.

Table 4: Respondent Level Breakdown of Suspended Respondents in Rounds 1-13

Gender	Male	<i>N</i>	Female	<i>N</i>
Race				
Black	44%	6,682	25%	3,848
Hispanic	30%	3,796	18%	2,106
White	25%	7,969	13%	3,744
Other	25%	130	33%	182

### *Arrests*

Similar to the pattern displayed in suspensions, higher numbers of black respondents reported that they were arrested. A stark disparity existed among boys, more than half of all black male respondents reported that they had experienced an arrest, compared to only 39% of white males who reported experiencing an arrest. Racial differences were less prominent among girls, which are highlighted in Table 5; a little over 20% of black girls and white girls reported that they had been arrested. The arrest variable measures whether or not respondents were arrested and was asked annually in rounds 1 to 13. Respondents who answered that they were arrested at least once during the year were coded 1.

Table 5: Respondent Level Breakdown of Arrested Respondents in Rounds 1-13

Gender	Male	<i>N</i>	Female	<i>N</i>
Race				
Black	54%	8,281	23%	3,471
Hispanic	47%	5,915	19%	2,223
White	39%	12,194	42%	234
Other	38%	195	20%	5,954

### *Attitudes*

Across racial groups and between genders, there was little variation in positive attitudes among respondents. About 80% of all respondents were optimistic about their futures. As Table 6 highlights, minority respondents were slightly more optimistic about their futures than white respondents; more than 80% of black male and female respondents were optimistic about their futures, compared to 77% of white male respondents and 81% of white female respondents. However, as Table 7 reports, black

respondents were the least likely to believe that discipline was fair. Only about 67% of black males and 63% of black females believed that discipline was fair; compared to about 77% of Hispanics and 73% of whites who believed that discipline was fair. The variables for attitude are meant to capture students' perceptions of their future prospects and their views on the legitimacy of school discipline. To measure the effect of positive student attitudes, I used two variables that were collected in round 1. The first dummy variable, Optimistic, is derived from a question where respondents were asked whether or not they agreed with the statement "I'm always optimistic about my future." The second dummy variable, Discipline is Fair, is derived from a question where respondents were asked whether or not they agreed that discipline was fair in their school. For each variable, respondents were coded 1 if they agreed with the statement.

Table 6: Breakdown of Optimistic Respondents

Gender	Male	<i>N</i>	Female	<i>N</i>
Race				
Black	81%	7,423	85%	7,410
Hispanic	82%	6,149	85%	6,292
White	77%	14,716	81%	14,066
Other	70%	208	86%	312

Table 7: Breakdown of Respondents who Believe Discipline is Fair

Gender	Male	<i>N</i>	Female	<i>N</i>
Race				
Black	67%	10,218	63%	9,516
Hispanic	78%	9,828	75%	9,009
White	73%	22,971	72%	20,943
Other	80%	416	57%	312

## Methods: Quantitative Analysis Procedures

I explored my research questions in two parts. First, I conducted survival analyses to identify any racial and gender patterns observed in the data. Then I ran a series of regressions to examine the effects of several predictor variables.

### Survival Analysis

To analyze my research questions and explore the racial trends present in the data I conducted two survival analyses. The survival analyses examined how the NLSY97 population fared over time in relation to two life events. The first survival analysis examined time to suspension for all respondents and the second survival analysis examined time to arrest for all respondents. All survivor functions and graphs are reported using the estimator of Kaplan and Meier (1958). The Kaplan-Meier estimator is a nonparametric estimator of the survivor function.<sup>2</sup> Nonparametric analyses make no assumptions about the functional form of the survivor function. The equation below represents the Kaplan-Meier estimator of the survival function at time  $t$ . In the equation,  $n_j$  is the number of respondents at risk at time  $t_j$  and  $d_j$  is the number of failures at time  $t_j$ . The product is over all observed failure times less than or equal to  $t$ . The survivor analyses will be outlined in more detail in the results chapters.

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### Cox Model Regressions

To determine the predictors of suspension and arrest, I ran a series of regressions using the Cox Proportional Hazard Model (1972). The basic Cox model makes no

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<sup>2</sup> For a more technical description of the Kaplan-Meier Estimator and the Cox Proportional Hazard Model see *An Introduction to Survival Analysis Using Stata* (Cleves et al. 2010).

assumptions about the shape of the hazard over time and is represented by the equation below, which states that the hazard rate is equal to the baseline hazard,  $h_0(t)$ , shifted by the covariate,  $\exp(\beta_I x_I)$ .

$$h(t|x_I) = h_0(t) \exp(\beta_I x_I)$$

I created three groups of regression models, which are explained in more detail in the results chapters.

## **RESULTS: THE RACIAL DISCIPLINE GAP**

The Literature Review indicates that schools treat African American students more harshly than white students. Studies have observed that black students are more likely than white students to receive the most punitive discipline measures, such as suspensions (Ferguson 2001; Wallace et. al. 2008; Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera 2010). Moreover, researchers attribute the racial difference in suspensions to racial bias on the part of teachers and school personnel which operates on the classroom level (Skiba et. al. 2000). On the other hand, if school suspensions are applied for breaking school rules, then higher rates of delinquency among African American students may explain racial differences in suspensions. However, it is also possible that the racial gap is not caused by racial differences in delinquency; instead other factors associated with students' backgrounds, such as socio-economic status, may account for the racial differences in suspension.

These possible explanations for the racial discipline gap raise two questions, which I will explore in this chapter. First, I will analyze the patterns in school suspensions to identify if, as previous studies suggest, a racial discipline gap exists in school practices. Secondly, I will examine two possible explanations for the racial discipline gap, racial differences in delinquency and socio-economic status, to provide more clarification for why the racial gap exists.

### **Racial Patterns in Delinquency and Suspension**

As Table 3 highlighted in the Methods chapter, different racial groups report committing about the same amounts of delinquent acts. Among males, 78% of African-



American boys reported committing at least one delinquent act, compared to 77% of white boys. Among girls, 61% of black girls reported committing at least one delinquent act, compared to 58% of white girls. However, despite similarities in reported delinquency, racial groups reported experiencing different rates of school suspension according to Table 4.

#### Survival Analysis: Time to Suspension

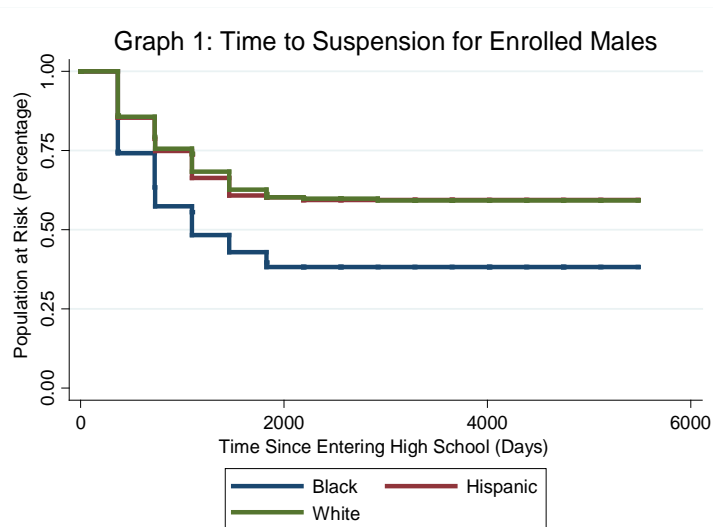
To provide more specification into how race affects suspension risk, I conducted a survival analysis which examined time to suspension for all youth in the NLSY97 sample. Respondents entered the analysis at the time that they began 9<sup>th</sup> grade, so that starting high school signaled the onset of risk and exited the risk pool when they were no longer enrolled in high school. Suspension was defined as the failure event and respondents were able to fail multiple times until they were no longer enrolled in high school. Out of the 8,984 respondents in the NLSY97 sample, 8,407 respondents entered the survival analysis and 2,352 failures were recorded in the data. The maximum number of suspensions experienced by a respondent was 4.

Table 8 shows the probability that a respondent survived past final analysis time  $t$ , which is the time when all respondents are no longer enrolled in high school and have exited the analysis. As the table shows, black students have the lowest probability of exiting high school without getting suspended, compared to any other race. Black males have a 38% probability of exiting high school without getting suspended, compared to white males who have a 59% probability of exiting high school without getting suspended.

Males:		Females:	
Black	0.3824	Black	0.5652
Hispanic	0.5935	Hispanic	0.7076
Other	0.5683	Other	0.6058
White	0.5925	White	0.8036
<i>N</i>	31,089		

Girls of all races have a higher probability of exiting high school without experiencing a suspension. However, black girls have the lowest probability, at 57%, of exiting high school without experiencing a suspension, which is far lower than the 80% probability of exiting high school without experiencing a suspension that white girls have.

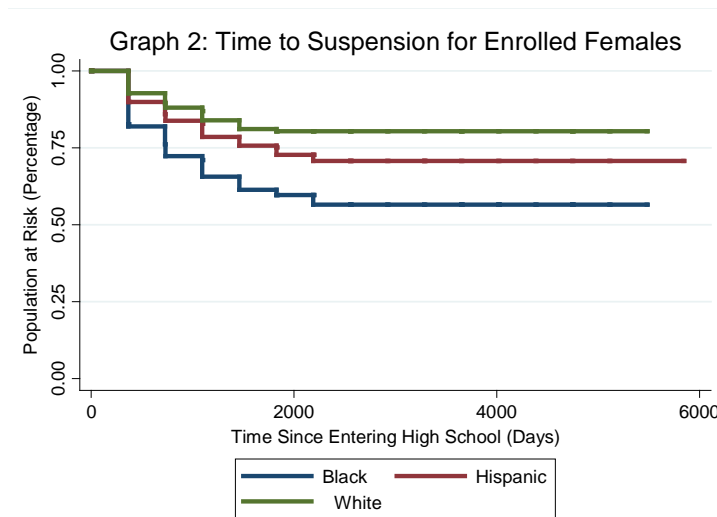
Graph 1 and Graph 2 display the Kaplan-Meier estimate of the survival function over time for males and females respectively. The graphs show the percent of the population that enters ninth grade, when analysis time is 0, and survives until they are no longer enrolled in high school, when analysis time ends. As Graph 1 shows, white and Hispanic males share roughly the same survival experience over time. Hispanic and white males experience about the same cumulative hazard of suspension over time from the



moment that they enter high school. However, the survival curve for black males shows

that black male students face a worse survival experience than both Hispanic and white male students. While about 40% of Hispanic and white males leave high school with a suspension, over 60% of black males are suspended before leaving high school.

Survival experience differs among all races even more for girls than for boys. As Graph 2 shows white girls have the best survival experience, only about 20% of white girls leave high school having experienced a suspension. However, black girls have the worst survival experience among enrolled females; a little over 40% of black girls leave high school having experienced a suspension.



The survival analysis shows that although delinquency does not differ along racial lines, student suspension experiences in high school differ greatly along racial lines. Black students, both male and female, have the worst probability of exiting high school without experiencing at least one suspension of any other racial group.

## Predictors of School Suspension

### Race and Delinquency

To provide more clarification on how race affects risk of suspension, I ran a series of Cox Regressions Models. Model 1 estimates the effect of race on suspension risk for respondents. As Table 9 shows, African-American males face a hazard of suspension that is almost 90% greater than the hazard white males face. In Model 2, I estimated the effect of race while also controlling for delinquency. The effect of race for males increases when controlling for delinquency. Black male students have a hazard rate of suspension that is almost double the hazard rate faced by white male students, even when black and white male students commit the same amounts of delinquent behavior. Although Hispanic boys face a hazard rate that is 11% greater than the hazard rate faced by white boys, it is much lower than the hazard rate faced by black boys and not statistically significant.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Delinquency		2.34 **	2.08 **	2.35 **	2.35 **	2.25 **
Race						
Black	1.80 **	1.92 **	1.61 **	1.69 **	1.92 **	1.44 **
Hispanic	1.05	1.11	1.09	0.85	1.10	0.93
Other	1.29	1.33	1.98 *	1.36	1.33	2.18
Socio-Economic Status						
Income			1.00 **			
Mother's Education				0.80 **		
School-Type						
Public School					0.95	
Academic Achievement						
GPA						0.99 **
N	13,879	13,317	6,045	10,947	13,284	8,304

Note: \*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.001

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Delinquency		2.85 **	2.62 **	2.76 **	2.87 **	2.74 **
<b>Race</b>						
Black	1.97 **	2.34 **	2.04 **	2.11 **	2.32 **	2.19 **
Hispanic	1.31	1.37 *	1.38	0.96	1.36 *	1.21
Other	1.82	2.37 *	2.11	2.18	2.40 *	2.93 *
<b>Socio-Economic Status</b>						
Income			1.00			
Mother's Education				0.79 **		
<b>School-Type</b>						
Public School					1.08	
<b>Academic Achievement</b>						
GPA						0.99 **
<i>N</i>	12,989	12,524	6,034	10,607	12,471	8,218

Note: \* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.001$

The effect of race is larger among females; as Table 10 shows, black female students face a hazard rate of suspension that is almost two times greater than the hazard rate faced by white female students. Moreover, the effect of race increases significantly when controlling for delinquent behavior; black girls face a risk of incarceration that is 2.3 times greater than the hazard rate that white female students face even when controlling for delinquent behavior. Hispanic female students face a hazard rate that is almost 40% greater than the hazard faced by white female students.

#### Race, Delinquency and Socio-Economic Status

Since some researchers posit that schools with lower resources may be more likely to employ exclusive disciplinary measures, like suspensions, I estimated the effect of socio-economic status on suspension risk (Hirschfield 2010). In Model 3 and Model 4 I estimated the effects of income and mother's education level respectively, while also controlling for race and delinquency. Among both boys and girls, a \$100 increase in income was associated with a 10% decrease in the hazard rate of suspension.

Furthermore, even when controlling for income and delinquency, black students faced a greater hazard of suspension than white students. Black males face a hazard of suspension that is 60% greater than white males, while black females face a hazard of suspension that is double that of white females. Mother's education had a sizeable effect on the risk of suspension. An increase in the respondent's mother's education level was associated with about a 20% decrease in the hazard of suspension for girls and boys.

### Race, Delinquency, and Academic Achievement

The students that schools are most likely to discipline are also the students that are already underperforming in schools and student underperformance continues following suspensions (Arcia 2006). Some researchers have posited a link between the racial achievement gap and the racial discipline gap (Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera 2010). In Model 6, I estimate the effect of student academic achievement on suspension risk, while also controlling for race and delinquency. For both boys and girls, a 1 unit increase in GPA was associated with a 0.6% and a 0.5% decrease in the hazard of suspension respectively.<sup>3</sup> However, even when students displayed the same levels of academic achievement and delinquency, black students faced higher hazards of suspension. Black boys faced a 44% greater hazard of suspension than white boys and black girls faced a hazard of suspension that was more than double that of white girls.

### **Impact of Race and Gender on Suspension**

My findings support the hypothesis that black students are suspended at disproportionate rates and provide more evidence for previous research which argues that

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<sup>3</sup> For the variable GPA, 100 corresponds to a 1.00 on the 4.00 scale. So a 1 unit increase in the GPA variable corresponds to a 0.01 increase in GPA on the 4.0 scale.

a racial discipline gap does indeed exist. Schools are supposed to suspend students for disruptive behavior; however even when students commit the same amounts of delinquent behavior, black and Hispanic students face a higher hazard of suspension. While Hispanic students face a hazard of suspension that is moderately greater than white students, black students face a hazard that is almost twice as great. Furthermore, my findings identify a gender bias in the discipline gap which has not received enough attention in previous research. Race has a greater effect for girls than it does for boys. Even when controlling for delinquency, socio-economic status, academic achievement, and school-type, black girls face a hazard rate that is about double the hazard faced by white girls.

The results also show that socio-economic status and academic achievement are associated with lower rates of suspension. Students that come from households with higher incomes and families where the mother has a higher level of education are less likely to receive a school suspension. Previous research has identified that school administrators take into consideration a number of factors when deciding which students to label troublemakers; including grades, disciplinary record, school year, age, and future plans (Bowditch 1993; Ferguson 2001). These findings also imply that school administrators may consider family background when considering which students to suspend for delinquent behavior and students coming from higher status households face a lower hazard of suspension.

Black students and students from lower socio-economic status households with reduced academic achievement are the most vulnerable to experiencing school suspensions.

## **RESULTS: EFFECTS OF SUSPENSION ON ARREST RISK**

African-American students are more harshly punished than white students and other minority students; therefore they will be disproportionately impacted by the effects of suspensions (Ferguson 2001; Wallace et. al. 2008; Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera 2010). As the literature review specified, suspensions uniquely disadvantage students by hindering academic achievement, stigmatizing students from the perspective of school actors, and increasing opportunities for delinquent behavior (Bowditch 1993; Ferguson 2001; Felson 2008). In this context, suspensions increase the risk of incarceration for youths because the experience of being suspended confers unique disadvantages on students.

However, it is also possible that delinquency and not the experience of suspension explains arrest risk amongst suspended students; perhaps suspended students face higher risks of incarceration because they exhibit higher rates of delinquent behavior than other students. Moreover, lower educational attainment amongst suspended students might account for differences in arrest risk between suspended students and students who were never suspended. Researchers examining suspensions in a large, urban school district identified that suspended students substantially underperformed students who were never suspended before the school disciplined them (Arcia 2006). Finally, other factors, such as the respondent's socio-economic background, might explain arrest risk amongst suspended students.

In this chapter I will analyze the effects of suspensions on arrest risk for respondents to provide more clarification into whether or not the experience of suspension makes youth more vulnerable to entering the criminal justice system.



Table 11: Mean Comparisons of Suspended Respondents vs. Non-Suspended Respondents

	Suspended Respondents	<i>N</i>	Non-Suspended Respondents	<i>N</i>
Delinquency	0.64	3,499	0.34	26,018
Arrests	0.19	3,958	0.05	33,286
<b>Race</b>				
Black	0.39	3,982	0.25	33,449
Hispanic	0.19	3,982	0.22	33,449
Other	0.01	3,982	0.01	33,449
<b>Socio-Economic Status</b>				
Income	35,675.49	1,634	49,817.60	13,065
Mother's Education	2.76	3,513	3.21	30,096
<b>School-Type</b>				
Public School	0.92	3,938	0.88	33,609
<b>Academic Achievement</b>				
GPA	2.41	1,512	2.92	14,703
<b>Educational Attainment</b>				
High School Graduate	0.54	3,969	0.81	33,358
Highest Education Level	1.44	3,969	2.31	33,358
<b>Attitudes</b>				
Optimistic	0.79	2,997	0.81	24,077
Discipline is Fair	0.64	3,972	0.75	33,323

### Profile of Suspended Respondents

Table 11 provides more specification into how the experience of suspension uniquely affects students by reporting how suspended youth differ from youth who were never suspended. According to Table 11, which compares variable means for both sets of youth, suspended students are worse off than students who were never suspended in key areas. First, delinquency is higher among suspended youth; average delinquency for suspended youth is almost twice that of students who were never suspended. In terms of socio-economic background, suspended youth had average household incomes that were about \$15,000 less than the average household income of youth who were not

disciplined. Suspended youth also came from families where the respondent's mother reported lower educational attainment. Moreover, suspended respondents reported lower educational attainment themselves. The average GPA for suspended students was almost 0.5 lower than the average GPA for students who were never suspended. The mean for high school graduates was only 0.54 for suspended students, compared to 0.81 for students who were never suspended. Furthermore, the arrest mean for suspended students was 0.19, almost four times the arrest mean for students who were never suspended.

#### Profile of Delinquent Suspended Respondents

In Table 12, I focus on delinquent youth specifically and compare the mean values for delinquent students who were suspended to delinquent youths who were never suspended. Delinquent youths who were not suspended may not be a perfect comparison for delinquent youths who were suspended; it is possible that the groups differ in the type and frequency of delinquent behaviors that they committed. However, both groups of respondents reported committing at least one delinquent behavior and the results in Table 12 highlight that even among delinquent youth, suspended respondents fared worse than respondents who were never suspended. Delinquent youth who were suspended had lower average household incomes and mother's education levels than delinquent youth who were not suspended.

Moreover, average academic achievement and educational attainment are lower among suspended delinquent youth. Finally, even among delinquent youth, the mean arrest for delinquent youth who were suspended was almost double that of delinquent youth who were not suspended. Table 11 and Table 12 indicate that on average, suspended respondents come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, have lower

academic achievement, and report higher involvement in the criminal justice system than respondents who were never suspended.

Table 12: Mean Comparisons of Delinquent Suspended Respondents vs Delinquent Non-Suspended Respondents

	Delinquent Suspended Respondents	<i>N</i>	Delinquent Non-Suspended Respondents	<i>N</i>
Arrests	0.29	2,222	0.14	9,003
<b>Race</b>				
Black	0.35	2,222	0.24	9,013
Hispanic	0.19	2,222	0.20	9,013
Other	0.02	2,222	0.01	9,013
<b>Socio-Economic Status</b>				
Income	36,341.98	840	47,938.54	4,006
Mother's Education	2.83	1,974	3.20	8,065
<b>School-Type</b>				
Public School	0.93	2,201	0.90	8,939
<b>Academic Achievement</b>				
GPA	2.38	884	2.80	4,320
<b>Educational Attainment</b>				
High School Graduate	0.52	2,218	0.75	8,988
Highest Education Level	1.41	2,218	2.09	8,988
<b>Attitudes</b>				
Optimistic	0.78	1,595	0.78	5,593
Discipline is Fair	0.60	2,219	0.67	8,977

### Race, Gender and Suspension Patterns in Arrest

Although, as Table 3 indicated, there were no significant racial differences in reported delinquent behavior; trends in arrest followed the gender and racial patterns in suspensions. While only 21% of female respondents were ever arrested, 44% of male respondents reported that they had been arrested. As Table 8 highlighted, black males, the population with the highest suspension rate, had the highest percentage of respondents who had been arrested. Almost 55% of black males reported that they had been arrested,

compared to only 47% of Hispanic males and 39% of white males. Among respondents who had been suspended, about 17% of males were arrested, while about 5% of males who never experienced a suspension were arrested. For female respondents, 8% of women who were suspended were also arrested, but only 2% of women who were never suspended experienced an arrest.

#### Survival Analysis: Time to Arrest

Suspended students differed from students who were never suspended on important socio-economic, educational, and delinquency characteristics and they experienced higher rates of arrest. To understand how suspension impacts arrest risk, I conducted a second survival analysis which examined time to first arrest for all youth in the NLSY97 sample. Once again, respondents entered the analysis at the time that they began 9<sup>th</sup> grade, so that starting high school signaled the onset of risk and they exited the risk pool when they experienced their first arrest or when they no longer had any data. Arrest was defined as the failure event and respondents were able to fail only once. Out of the 8,984 respondents in the NLSY97 sample, 8,163 respondents entered the survival analysis and 2,338 failures were recorded in the data.

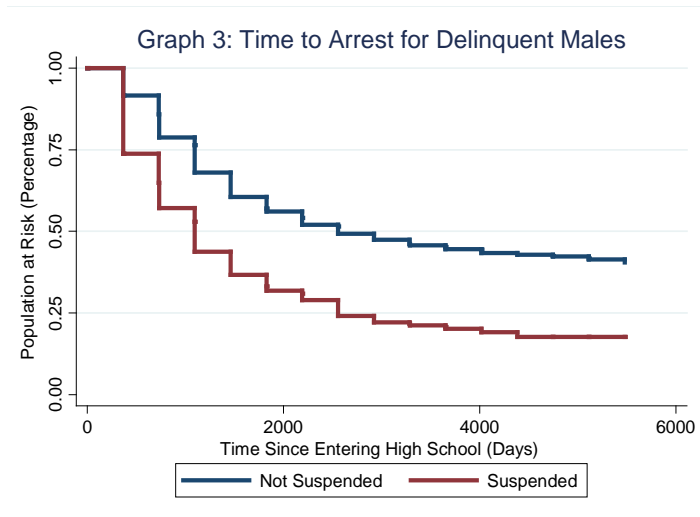
Table 13 shows the probability that a respondent survived past final analysis time  $t$ , which is 2008, the year when the last wave of publicly available survey data was collected and all respondents have exited the analysis. Black respondents had the lowest probability of reaching final analysis time without experiencing an arrest. Among males, 48% of black male respondents had experienced their first arrest by 2008, compared to 41% of Hispanic males and 35% of white males. While females overall had a higher probability of not experiencing an arrest by 2008; among women, black females

experienced the most arrests. Almost 80% of black females had not experienced an arrest by 2008, compared to 83% of Hispanic females and 82% of white females.

Males:		Females:	
Black	0.5216	Black	0.7988
Hispanic	0.5898	Hispanic	0.8316
Other	0.5882	Other	0.6798
White	0.6450	White	0.8234
<i>N</i>	80,818		

*Arrest Patterns among Delinquent Students*

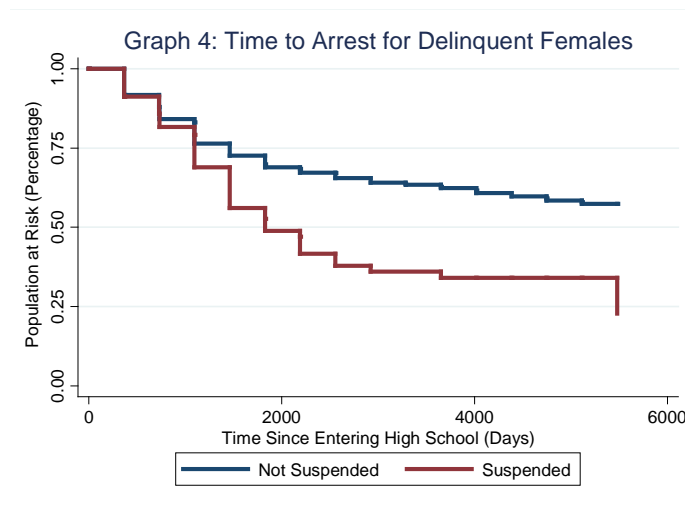
Graph 3 and Graph 4 focus specifically on delinquent respondents to provide more information on arrest patterns and they indicate that delinquent students had worse experiences than the average male and female respondents. Graph 3 shows how delinquent males fared over time since entering high school. Overall, suspended males had the worst arrest experiences compared to other delinquent males who never



experienced suspensions. While about 60% of delinquent males who were not suspended experienced an arrest by 2008, almost 85% of delinquent males who were suspended

were arrested by 2008. Therefore, more than two-thirds of delinquent males who entered high school and experienced a suspension were arrested by 2008.

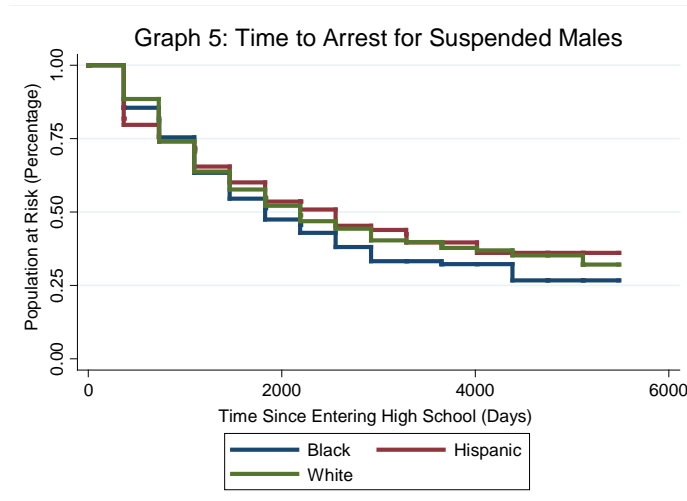
Among females, as Graph 4 reports, delinquent females who were suspended also fared worse over time than delinquent females who never experienced a suspension. Unlike males, delinquent females who were suspended had similar experiences to delinquent females who were never suspended early on. However, as time since entering high school increased, delinquent girls who experienced suspension began to fare worse than delinquent girls who were never suspended. By 2008, almost 80% of delinquent females who were suspended had experienced an arrest, while only about 40% of delinquent females who never experienced a suspension were arrested.



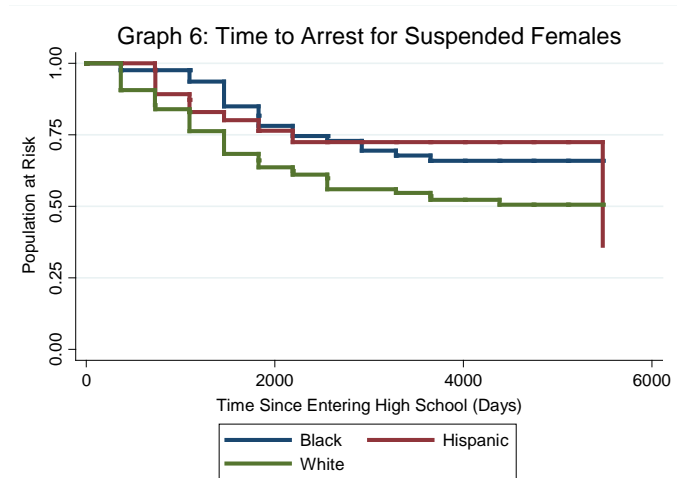
#### *Arrest Patterns among Suspended Students*

Graph 5 and Graph 6 provide more detail on the experiences of suspended students by highlighting the arrest patterns among suspended males and females respectively. Overall, suspended females had better experiences than suspended males. Across racial groups, males who were suspended had similar experiences over time. By

2008, about 65% of all suspended white and Hispanic males had been arrested and almost 75% of all suspended black males had been arrested.



There was more variation in the experiences of suspended females across races. Suspended black females had better experiences than suspended Hispanic and white women; about 66% of suspended black females had never been arrested by 2008. However, about half of all suspended white women and about 36% of suspended Hispanic women had never been arrested by 2008.



## Predictors of Arrest

### Race, Delinquency and Suspension

To gain a deeper understanding of the trends highlighted in the survival analyses, I conducted several Cox Model regressions that are represented in Table 14 and Table 15 for males and females respectively. Model 1 shows the effect of race without controlling for any other factors. Black males faced a hazard of suspension that is 50% greater than the hazard of arrest white males faced and Hispanic males faced a hazard of arrest that is about 20% greater than the hazard of arrest white males faced. Among women, black females had a hazard of arrest that was about 11% greater than the hazard of arrest for white females, but this was not statistically significant.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Suspension		2.61 **	2.08 **	1.77 **	2.05 **	1.78 **	1.82 **
Race							
Black	1.50 **	1.41 **	1.60 **	1.48 **	1.44 **	1.46 **	1.41 **
Hispanic	1.21 *	1.19	1.25 *	1.26 *	1.07	1.13	1.09
Other	1.16	1.16	1.23	1.23	1.24	1.19	1.25
Delinquency			3.44 **	2.96 **	3.38 **	3.29 **	3.25 **
Socio-Economic Status							
Income				1.00 **			
Mother's					0.87 **		
Educational Attainment							
High School Graduate						0.47 **	
Highest Education Level							0.76 **
<i>N</i>	34,728	34,609	33,761	26,719	29,431	33,661	33,661

Note: \* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.001$



	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Suspension		3.31 **	2.37 **	2.74 **	2.38 **	2.15 **	2.04 **
Race							
Black	1.11	1.046	1.10 **	0.98	0.98	1.09	1.00
Hispanic	0.76	0.764	0.81	0.79	0.71 *	0.77	0.71 *
Other	1.95	2.01	2.11	1.90	1.99	1.95	1.95
Delinquency			5.64 **	4.65 **	5.89 **	5.42 **	5.23 **
Socio-Economic Status							
Income				1.00 **			
Mother's					0.85 **		
Educational Attainment							
High School Graduate						0.46 **	
Highest Education Level							0.73 **
N	41,869	41,738	41,004	34,141	36,792	40,911	40,911

Note: \*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.001

Model 2 shows the effect of suspension while controlling for race. For both males and females, suspensions increased arrest risk even when controlling for race. Suspended males faced a hazard of arrest that was about 2.6 times greater than the hazard of arrest faced by males who were never suspended. The effect of suspension was even greater among females; suspended women faced a hazard of arrest that was over 3 times greater than the hazard of arrest faced by women who never experienced a suspension. Furthermore, the effect of suspension was statistically significant for both males and females.

To distinguish between the effect of suspension and delinquency, in Model 3, I estimated the effect of suspension on arrest risk while also controlling for race and delinquency. Although, the effect of suspensions declines slightly when controlling for delinquency, suspensions still significantly increase the hazard of suspension for males and females. Male respondents who were suspended faced a hazard of arrest that was a little over double the hazard of arrest faced by respondents who were never suspended, even when controlling for race and delinquency. Again, the effect of suspension was even

greater for females. Women who were suspended faced a hazard of arrest that was about 2.4 times the hazard faced by women who were never suspended. Race had a greater impact for males than for females. Black males faced a hazard of arrest that was 60% greater and Hispanic males faced a hazard that was 25% greater than the hazard faced by white males, even when controlling for the level of delinquency and suspension.

#### Race, Delinquency, Suspension and Socio-Economic Status

I attempted to discover how socio-economic status impacted the risk of arrest and in Model 4 and Model 5 I estimated the effect of income and mother's education respectively. Income is negatively correlated with arrest risk, for each \$100 increase in income the risk of arrest decreases by 10% for males and females. When controlling for income level as well as race and delinquency, the effect of suspension decreases for males and increases for females. Males who were suspended faced a hazard of arrest that was almost 80% greater than the hazard of arrest faced by males who were never suspended. However, women who were suspended faced a hazard of arrest that was higher, almost 2.75 times the hazard of women who were never suspended.

Mother's education was also negatively correlated with risk of arrest. An increase in a respondent's mother's education level was associated with an almost 15% decrease in the hazard of arrest for both males and females. When controlling for mother's education level, race and delinquency, suspended males and females still faced a hazard that was more than twice as great as the hazard faced by students who were never suspended.

## Race, Delinquency, Suspension and Educational Attainment

I also incorporated measures of educational attainment into the regression analysis. In Model 6 I measured the effect of attaining at least a high school diploma and Model 7 I measure the effect of achieving advanced degrees. Both high school degrees and higher education levels were negatively correlated with risk of arrest for males and females. High school graduates faced a hazard of arrest that was over 50% less than the hazard faced by individuals who did not earn a high school degree. Each increase in education level was associated with about a 25% decrease in the hazard of arrest for males and females. However, even when controlling for race, the level of education and the level of delinquent behavior, respondents who were suspended faced a substantial increase in the hazard of arrest over respondents who were never suspended. Suspended males faced about an 80% increase in the hazard of arrest compared to males who had never been suspended. Among females the impacts of suspension were even greater; females that were suspended faced a hazard of arrest that was more than twice the hazard of females who had never been suspended.

### **Impact of Suspensions on Arrest Risk**

The survival analyses highlighted that on average individuals who were suspended tend to experience arrests at higher proportions than individuals who were never suspended. Even among other delinquent respondents, individuals who were suspended had worse outcomes than individuals who were never suspended. These trends are also more extreme along gender lines for males and along racial lines for black respondents. The results provided more evidence in support of previous research which linked low educational attainment to involvement in the criminal justice system.

Moreover, even when controlling for respondents' race, the level of delinquent behavior, socio-economic status, and education level; respondents who were suspended faced a greater hazard of arrest. Furthermore the effect of suspension was greater among females than among males. The findings support the hypothesis that the experience of suspension increases the risk of arrest and as result, student involvement in the criminal justice system.

## **RESULTS: EFFECTS OF ATTITUDES ON ARREST RISK**

As indicated in the Literature Review and the Historical Analysis, most scholarly work on school discipline and criminalized school environments has focused on how the school's actions affect students. Less research has explored these issues from the students' perspectives and considered how students respond when confronted by structures of surveillance, control, and punitive discipline. However past research does open up two possible avenues for studying how students' attitudes might mediate their responses to suspensions and criminalized school environments.

Although schools influence student behavior by formally labeling troublemakers through suspensions, students do not always agree with those labels (Bowditch 1993; Ferguson 2001). As Ferguson (2001) found in her analysis of students at Rosa Parks Middle School, despite administrators views that some students were on the track to prison, those same students held decidedly optimistic, if unrealistic, dreams of their own futures as professional sports players and Supreme Court justices. From this perspective, students who are optimistic about their futures may adopt behaviors which reduce their likelihood of entering the criminal justice system. For example, Ferguson (2001) observed that youth who were optimistic about becoming professional sports players were heavily involved in sports activities; perhaps involvement in those organizations would reduce their risk of arrest by decreasing their opportunities to engage in delinquent behavior. This situation raises questions about how optimistic student attitudes affect the risk of incarceration. Are suspended students with optimistic attitudes about their futures less susceptible to arrest?

Secondly, as indicated in the Historical Analysis, school discipline is supposed to serve deterrence and moral authority purposes. According to Durkheim, school discipline has a “moral character and moral value only if the penalty is regarded as just by those subjected to it, which implies that the authority which punishes is itself recognized as legitimate” (1973:152-154). As Arum argues, the deterrence approach to discipline must also recognize the role that student perceptions of schools and discipline play in the success or failure of school actions (2003). In this context student views about the legitimacy of school discipline should reduce the hazard of arrest because students will agree with the fairness of the penalty and be deterred from committing more delinquent behaviors in the future. Therefore, this raises questions about whether or not suspended students who believe in the legitimacy of school discipline will be more or less susceptible to becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

In this chapter, I will explore the questions raised by previous studies and analyze how positive student attitudes about future opportunities and the legitimacy of school discipline influence arrest risk.

### **Positive Respondent Attitudes and Arrest Risk**

As Table 6 and Table 7 reported in the Methods Chapter, overall about 80% of respondents are optimistic about their future prospects and minority students are actually slightly more optimistic than white respondents. However minority students are less likely than white or Hispanic students to believe that discipline is fair; only about 67% of black males and 63% of black females believe that discipline is fair. In addition to racial patterns in attitudes, Table 16 provides more clarification into attitude patterns among suspended students. According to Table 16, suspended respondents are as optimistic as

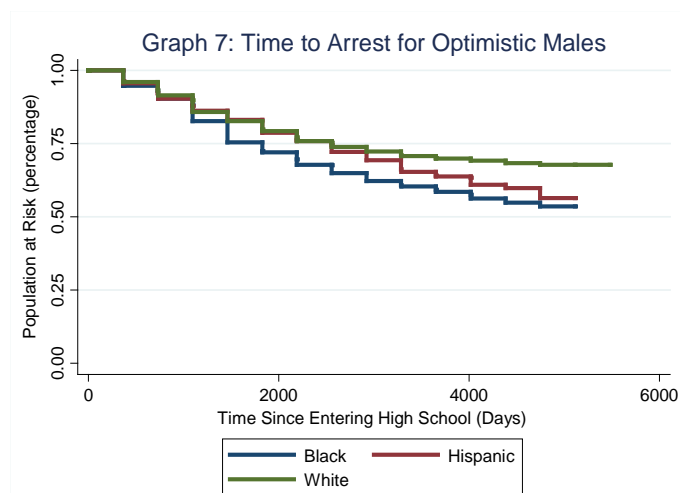
respondents on average, about 80% of suspended respondents were optimistic about their futures. However, less suspended respondents believed that discipline was fair; only about 66% of suspended males and 59% of suspended females believed that discipline was fair.

Table 16: Breakdown of Positive Attitudes Among Suspended Students

Gender		Male <i>N</i>	Female <i>N</i>
Attitude			
	Optimistic	80% 2,126	82% 1,161
	Discipline is Fair	66% 2,541	59% 1,240

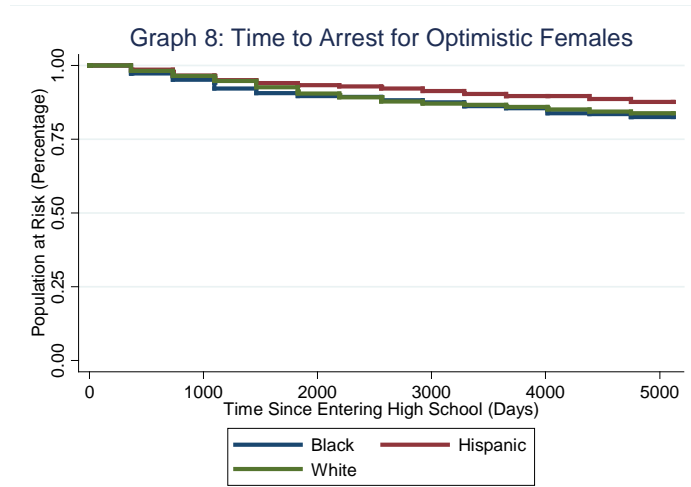
#### Survival Analysis: Time to Arrest for Students with Positive Attitudes

To provide more clarification into how positive attitudes impact students over time, I elaborated on the time to arrest survival analysis discussed in Chapter 6 and focused on the experiences of students with positive attitudes over time. Graph 7 and Graph 8 highlight how males and females respectively, who were optimistic about their



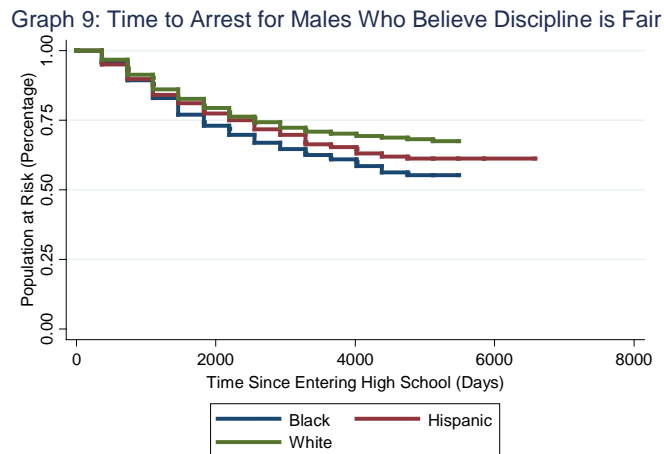
future prospects, fared over time. Early on, males who were optimistic about their futures had similar experiences across racial groups. However, over time optimistic black and Hispanic males' experiences began to worsen slightly more than those of whites. By

2008, a little over 40% of optimistic black and Hispanic males had experienced their first arrest, compared to about 30% of optimistic white males.



As Graph 8 shows, optimistic female respondents had similar experiences across racial groups over time and had better experiences than male optimistic male respondents.

Across racial groups, less than 20% of females had experienced their first arrest by 2008.

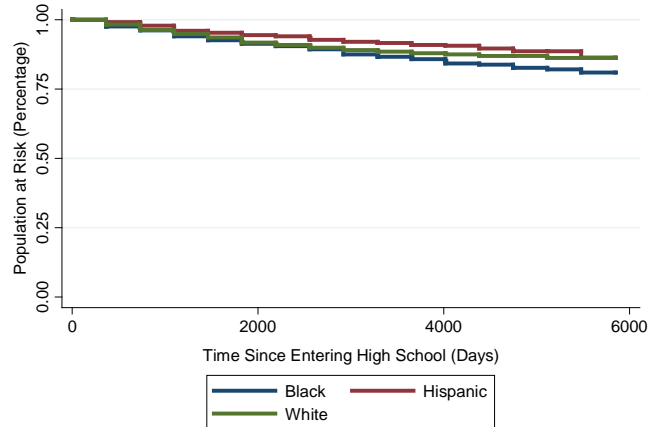


Graph 9 and Graph 10 report the experiences over time of males and females who believe that discipline is fair. According to Graph 9, male respondents who believe that discipline is fair have similar experiences in the beginning but as time passes, black males begin to have more negative experiences. About 30% of white males who believed



that discipline was fair had been suspended by 2008, compared to black males; about 45% of black males who believed that discipline was fair had been arrested. Girls who believed that discipline was fair had similar experiences across racial groups. Less than 20% of women who believed that discipline was fair had been arrested by 2008.

Graph 10: Time to Arrest for Females Who Believe Discipline is Fair



### The Effects of Positive Attitudes

To examine how student attitudes impacted the risk of arrest I ran a series of Cox model regressions for males and females, which are highlighted in Table 17 and Table 18. I added a variable for attitude to each of the seven models that I previously discussed. As outlined in the Methods Chapter, the first dummy variable, Optimistic, measured whether or not respondents were optimistic about their future. The second dummy variable, Discipline is fair, asked respondents whether or not they believed that discipline in their school was applied in a reasonable and just manner. Model 1 reports the effect of attitudes on respondent arrest risk while only controlling for race and Model 2 adds a control for suspension. In Model 3, I measured the effect of attitudes while also controlling for race, delinquency, and suspension. In Model 4 and Model 5, I added

socio-economic indicators to the controls; while in Model 6 and Model 7, I added controls for education level.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Optimistic	0.99	0.81	0.83	0.90	0.78	0.83	0.84
<i>N</i>	20,690	9,407	9,100	3,963	8,306	9,073	9,073
Discipline is Fair	0.73 **	0.77 **	0.88	0.89	0.88	0.87	0.90
<i>N</i>	34,615	13,400	13,077	7,273	11,771	13,036	13,036

Note: \* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.001$

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Optimistic	0.79	0.81	0.91	1.13	0.94	0.96	0.93
<i>N</i>	24,242	10,033	9,780	4,659	9,121	9,761	9,761
Discipline is Fair	0.53 **	0.46 **	0.58	0.59 **	0.57 **	0.58 **	0.60 **
<i>N</i>	41,693	14,434	14,172	8,415	13,006	14,140	14,140

Note: \* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.001$

#### Student Attitudes: Optimism about the Future

For both males and females, positive attitudes correlated negatively to risk of arrest. Between genders, having an optimistic attitude had a greater effect on arrest risk for males and believing that discipline was fair had a greater effect on arrest risk for females. In model 1, optimistic attitudes about the future reduced incarceration risk for males only slightly and the effect increases when controlling for the level of suspension. Even when controlling for race, the level of delinquent behavior, and suspensions, male respondents who maintained optimistic attitudes faced a hazard of arrest that was 17.09% less than the hazard faced by male respondents who were not optimistic about the future. However, the effect of optimistic attitudes about the future was not statistically significant for males. Women who were optimistic about the future faced a hazard that

was 9.29% less than the hazard faced by women who were not optimistic, when controlling for race, delinquency and suspension. Although similar to male respondents, optimistic attitudes about the future did not have a statistically significant effect on arrest risk.

#### Student Attitudes: Fairness of Discipline

As Table 17 and Table 18 highlight, positive student attitudes on the legitimacy of school discipline reduced the hazard of arrest for men and women. Male respondents who believed that school discipline was fair faced a hazard of arrest that was 12.34% less than the hazard faced by male respondents who believed that school discipline was unfair when controlling for suspension and the level of delinquency. Among female respondents, the effect of positive attitudes on arrest risk was greater and statistically significant. When controlling for race, delinquency, and suspension, female respondents who believed that school discipline was fair had a hazard of arrest that was about 40% less than the hazard faced by female respondents who believed that school discipline was unfair. Moreover, even when controlling for socio-economic status and respondent education level, female respondents who believed that discipline was fair still reduced their hazard of arrest by about 40% compared to women who believed that discipline was unfair.

It is also possible that arrest could induce feelings of unfairness about school discipline in students. However in the context of this analysis, respondents were asked in 1997 about their feelings on the fairness of school discipline and at that point in time only 9% of respondents who answered the question had ever been arrested. One of the limitations of the NLSY97 in this analysis is that it does not provide information on how

student views of fairness changed over time after 1997, in other words after more students in the sample had been arrested.

### **Impact of Positive Attitudes on Arrest Risk**

The regression analyses showed that positive student attitudes are associated with lower rates of arrest. For males and females, students who believed in the legitimacy of school discipline reduced their hazard of arrest compared to students who disagreed with their school's discipline methods. The findings supported the hypothesis that positive student attitudes may reduce the hazard of arrest for respondents and potentially mitigate the negative effects of suspensions. However, they provided more support for Arum's argument that student perceptions of school legitimacy may make discipline more effective than for the argument that students who are optimistic about their futures may act in ways which reduce their hazard of arrest.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### The Racial Discipline Gap

#### Misbehavior, Race, and Discipline

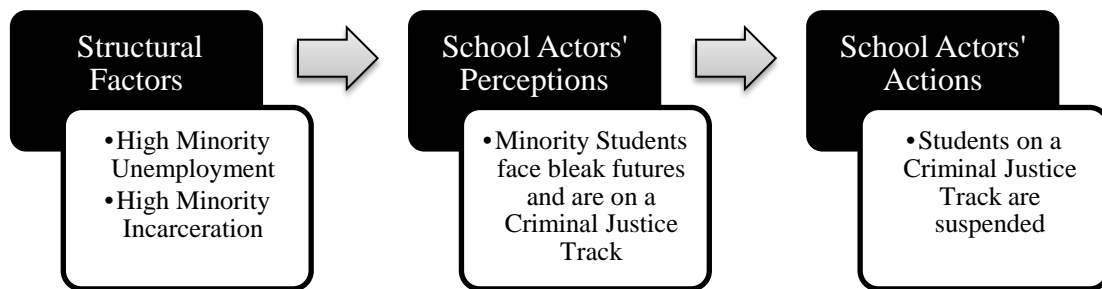
This analysis of school discipline practices does not tell the story of what happens to kids who misbehave in school. Instead, what has emerged is the story of what happens to minority children who misbehave in school. Black and Hispanic children are not any more disruptive than white children in school. As discussed in the Data and Methods Chapter, although boys report committing more delinquent acts than girls, children report committing the same amounts of delinquency across racial groups. About 80% of boys across racial groups report that they committed at least one delinquent act, while about 60% of girls across racial groups report that they committed at least one delinquent act.

Yet, despite the observation that respondents reported no significant racial differences in delinquency, almost half of all black boys and a quarter of black girls report that they were suspended. This is significantly higher than the rate of suspension for white children; only a quarter of white boys and about 13% of white girls report that they were ever suspended. Furthermore, the racial difference in suspension cannot be adequately explained by delinquency. When controlling for the level of delinquent behavior, the effect of race actually increases. Black males face a hazard of arrest that is almost 2 times that of white males and black females face a hazard of arrest that is more than 2.3 times that of white females. The disproportionate suspension of black children, which differences in delinquency do not account for, provides more evidence that a racial discipline gap exists in the education system.

## Black Kids and Perceptions of Bleak Futures

However, neither racial differences in academic achievement nor socio-economic status account for the existence of the racial discipline gap. Even when controlling for household income, parental education level, school-type, and GPA; black males face a risk of suspension that is 1.5 to 2 times the risk that white males face. Therefore, if a black male student and a white male student who are both performing on the same level academically and come from the same background misbehave, the school is still more likely to suspend the black male student. The effect of race is stronger for girls; black female students face a hazard of suspension that is 2 to 2.3 times greater than the hazard of suspension that white female students face. Since these findings show that neither racial differences in delinquency, academic achievement, nor socio-economic background adequately explain the racial discipline gap; they provide more evidence for Paul Hirschfield's theoretical explanation of the racial discipline gap that was discussed in the Literature Review.

Figure 2: Paul Hirschfield's Structural Theory of School Criminalization



Hirschfield's (2008) structural theory may explain the processes taking place on the classroom level which produce the racial discipline gap. Schools socialize students for roles in society and individual school actors are influenced by the structural factors

which exist in society. Therefore, school actors' perceptions of the roles that black students will take in society are mediated by the structural factors of high minority unemployment and incarceration. As outlined in Figure 2, these structural factors create perceptions that minority students face bleak futures and are on criminal justice tracks, which may lead school actors to suspend black and Hispanic students at higher rates.

### *Bad Girls Worse Off than Bad Boys*

One of the most interesting findings of this research was that among girls race and suspension had a greater negative effect than among boys. While a black boy who got in trouble in class was about two times more likely to be suspended than a white boy; a black girl who got in trouble in class was 2.3 times more likely than a white girl to be suspended. Furthermore, suspended girls were more than 3 times more likely to be arrested than girls who were never suspended. Even when controlling for delinquency, suspended girls were still more than 2 times more likely to be arrested than girls who never experienced suspension. I believe that this phenomenon can be explained within the context of Hirschi's model.

On one hand, school actors may perceive misbehavior as natural for boys and unnatural for girls. School actors may view boys' delinquent behavior as "something-they-can't-help, a natural expression of masculinity" (Ferguson 2001:85). Therefore, some misbehavior among boys is seen as a natural development. However, girls are expected to be more agreeable and so misbehavior among girls is seen as unnatural. School actors and institutional actors in general, may respond more harshly to girls who misbehave because they are violating popular perceptions that girls are not supposed to get into trouble in the same way that boys do. So girls who do get into trouble may be

perceived to be on the track to a bleak future, more so than average girls, and are treated accordingly by social actors, with more punitive responses.

In the case of the harsher racial effect among girls, I posit that black girls are treated more harshly because school actors perceive that African-American boys are on bleak tracks and expect black girls to compensate for it. More specifically, when considering the actions of black girls, school actors not only take into consideration the structures of high minority unemployment and incarceration but they also consider that black boys will be disproportionately impacted by those structures. Therefore, when school actors observe black girls misbehaving they might conceptualize the situation as black girls in danger of becoming as lost as black boys already are, and respond swiftly and punitively to correct the situation and save black girls. Ferguson provides an example of how these perceptions of the structural realities facing black girls may operate among school actors when she quotes one teacher at Rosa Parks Middle School. Miss Benton, a teacher at Rosa Parks, expressed these ideas when lecturing a black female student.

You should be leading the class, not fooling around jumping around in the hallway. Someone has to give pride to the community. All the black men are on drugs, or in jail, or killing each other. Someone has got to hold it together. And the women have to do it. And you're jumping up and down in the hallway (Ferguson 2001:85).

In this way, it is possible that black girls are more harshly treated than white girls because their misbehavior is redefined not simply as girls getting into trouble in school, but as girls failing the entire African-American community with their transgressions.

### **Suspended Students with Suspended Futures**

For suspended students, school actors' perceptions of the bleak futures that they face can all too easily become a reality. Suspension substantially increases the hazard of



arrest for students. Boys that have been suspended face a hazard of arrest that is about 2 times the hazard of arrest that boys who have never been suspended face. The effect of suspension is even greater for girls; girls that have been suspended face a hazard of arrest that is 2 to 2.7 times greater than the hazard faced by girls who were never suspended. Even when controlling for race, delinquency, socio-economic status, and academic achievement; suspensions still substantially increase the hazard of arrest for students. This means that once a school suspends a student, the risk that that student will get caught up in the criminal justice system increases and since minority students are suspended at higher rates, they are disproportionately impacted by the suspension effect. There are three reasons which might explain why suspended students experience a higher risk of arrest.

#### Suspensions Reduce Educational Achievement

As the literature review highlighted, suspended students are cut off from school resources and placed in non-learning spaces; which fosters academic decline. The findings show that suspended students do experience reduced academic achievement compared to their peers who were never suspended. Almost 44% of students who received a suspension never earned a high school diploma. Academic underachievement was also highest among black boys, the group that experienced the highest rate of suspension; almost 40% of black boys did not achieve a high school diploma. Suspensions may increase arrest risk by encouraging low educational attainment.

#### Suspensions Highlight Students to Police

Suspensions label students as troublemakers and shape school actors' perceptions that suspended students are on a criminal justice track (Ferguson 2001; Hirschfield 2008).

However, these labels take on new meanings in the criminalized school environment, which is defined by increased school-police partnerships. In the wake of legislation, like the Safe Schools Act, students are not only perceived as troublemakers by teachers and school administrators but also by the law enforcement personnel stationed inside of schools. Furthermore, by 2000, 43 states required schools to report students to law enforcement agencies for certain infractions (Civil Rights Project 2000). This also increases the likelihood that the negative reputations which students gain in schools will be adopted by law enforcement agencies. Suspensions may increase the risk of arrest for students by bringing them to the attention of law enforcement personnel.

#### Suspensions Remove Students from Positive Supervision

Finally, suspensions may increase arrest risk by creating more opportunities for students to engage in delinquent behavior. Suspensions remove students from the supervision of school actors. According to Felson's (2008) routine activity theory, discussed in the Literature Review, problems arise when an offender identifies a target and finds a suitable place to commit the crime. However, problems can occur only in the absence of social actors to supervise the offender, target, and the place. By suspending students, schools leave children unmonitored in their communities, which gives them more chances to commit delinquent behavior or to interact with other delinquent actors.

#### Implications

Out of these potential explanations, I posit that labeling in schools is probably responsible for the suspension effect. Suspensions label students as troublemakers in eyes of their peers and teachers. The negative labels might foster feelings of alienation between suspended students and their peers and teachers. Within that context, suspended

students are likely to feel disconnected from the classroom, which would hinder their learning. Furthermore, suspended students might receive increased monitoring from law enforcement personnel stationed inside of schools. These combined results of labeling could weaken student attachments to school and encourage low educational attainment, which is associated with higher arrest rates. Since these labeling effects are likely occurring on the classroom level, future studies might employ an ethnographic approach to study how students interact with their peers and other school actors before and after suspensions. This approach might identify if processes on the classroom level between students are generating feelings of alienation and detachment.

### **Attitudes, Actions, and Students' Futures**

Although suspensions disadvantage students, students do have some control over how they decide to behave in response to the school's actions. A student's attitude plays a role in determining how they might respond after they are suspended. The findings show that students who maintain positive attitudes are able to reduce their hazard of arrest. Students who believe that school discipline is fair reduce their hazard of arrest compared to students who do believe that school discipline is unfair, even when controlling for suspension, the level of delinquency, and race.

These findings imply that students who agree with the legitimacy of school discipline may be more likely to escape a criminal justice track. Perhaps students who believe in the legitimacy of school discipline may be more likely to reject the negative behaviors that got them into trouble after experiencing suspension, in other words the deterrence role of suspensions will be more effective. While the exact mechanisms are

unclear, the role that students' perceptions of their own futures and the legitimacy of school discipline play in understanding arrest risk should not be overlooked.

### **Limitations of the Current Study**

In this study I have attempted to understand how suspensions affect students nationally and impact their risk of arrest. Although approaching these questions on the national level allows me to generalize my findings, it might also obscure some of the regional differences in school discipline or the variation in school discipline practices at the individual school district level. Furthermore, data on suspensions and delinquency in the NLSY97 is obtained from respondent self-report data. While the data is obtained using the CAPI system, which is designed to increase respondent honesty on sensitive questions, it still faces the issues associated with self-report data. Perhaps future studies on school discipline practices may be able to access school disciplinary records directly. This would also have the benefit of providing more nuanced information than is currently available through the NLSY97. For instance, school disciplinary records may include information on the types of misbehaviors that students are suspended for, which would highlight potential racial or gender patterns in behavior among students. .

### **Implications for School Discipline**

#### Future Research

This study raises a number of questions that should be explored in future research on school discipline. I have posited that Hirschfield's structural model may explain the processes taking place with school actors, which produces the racial discipline gap. Further research should attempt to analyze how school discipline develops on the classroom level. A closer analysis of classroom practices might identify if school actors

are subjectively deciding to discipline minority children because of perceptions that they are on a criminal justice track.

Secondly, this study has indicated that certain student attitudes are associated with lower rates of involvement in the criminal justice system. One avenue that future research might explore is how suspensions impact student attitudes over time; especially in the case of students who are repeatedly suspended. How do multiple suspensions impact student attitudes and subsequently their risk of incarceration over time? Another possible avenue to explore would be the relationship between deterrence and student views on school legitimacy. Are students more deterred by punishments when they believe in the legitimacy of school discipline? Moreover, it would be interesting to explore how features of the criminalized school environment influence student perceptions of school legitimacy. How does the presence of metal detectors, surveillance cameras, and police officers in schools, influence student perceptions of school legitimacy?

Finally, the most pressing avenue for future research is to understand why girls are more severely impacted by the effects of race and suspension. Past research, scholarly debates, and societal outrage has focused almost exclusively on the plight of young African-American boys. Since black males are suspended at the highest rates and disproportionately represented in the prison population, this attention is understandable. However, more scholarly attention needs to turn to understanding why black girls face a hazard of suspension that is more than 2 times greater than the hazard of suspension for white girls and why suspended girls face a hazard of arrest that is 2 to 3 times greater than the hazard of arrest for girls who were never suspended. An ethnographic approach that analyzes Hirschfield's model might offer more specification into how school actors

develop their perceptions of individual students. This might also allow researchers to explore the explanation that I have posited for why the racial effect is harsher for girls.

## Policy

As the Historical Analysis discussed, through judicial and legislative changes, the education system has evolved into a crime control model that encourages collaboration between schools and law enforcement agencies. Fears over school violence have created criminalized school environments where students are exposed to surveillance measures, law enforcement personnel, zero-tolerance policies, and punitive discipline measures. Education administrators should give more attention to how students are being socialized in this environment. Specifically, administrators should measure how well these policies actually improve school safety and weigh this against the pedagogical disadvantages that these policies impose on student learning.

Furthermore, in light of the evidence that suspensions hinder students over time, schools should consider employing alternative strategies to deal with disruptive and underperforming students that emphasize inclusion in schools. It would also be interesting to explore how struggling students who are placed in alternative programs that foster attachments to schools, compare to struggling students who are suspended over time, in terms of their respective outcomes and arrest risk. One valid criticism of developing more inclusive approaches in schools is that these approaches would be more expensive for individual schools and school districts. Although expending resources on struggling students may be a hardship for many schools in the current fiscal environment, the costs of allowing youth to end up in the criminal justice system would be much higher. The decision facing state administrators is not whether or not to allocate money

on youth, but when; states can either allocate tax dollars on individuals when they are students or when they are prisoners.

### **Final Thoughts**

I began my thesis with the quotes by Victor Hugo and Mark Twain which expressed the idea that the education system provides children with the means to become productive citizens. Moreover, they expressed the idea that individuals who enter schools as children will never need to enter prisons as adults. However, for some children in this country the education system is falling far short of this ideal. Today, the education system in this country is one that pushes some students on the path to prison instead of providing them with the means for advancement. The students most vulnerable to ending up in the criminal justice system are the students most likely to be punished in school, young minority children. Despite the problems associated with the education system today, schools still hold the promise to open doors of opportunity, but only if society works to repair the education system's failures. As the situation stands now, schools serve as a pathway to prison for some young minority children; how can we expect them to end up anywhere else?

Appendix 1: Descriptive Statistics for Predictor Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation	<i>N</i>	Range	
				Min	Max
Suspensions	0.11	0.31	37,431	0	1
Arrests	0.06	0.23	101,402	0	1
Delinquency	0.36	0.48	33,487	0	1
Race					
Black	0.26	0.44	116,792	0	1
Hispanic	0.21	0.41	116,792	0	1
Other	0.01	0.10	116,792	0	1
Socio-Economic Status					
Income	54547.75	57557.05	68,211	0	425586
Mother's Education	3.15	1.40	102,232	1	8
School-Type					
Public School	0.88	0.32	37,134	0	1
Academic Achievement					
GPA	2.95	0.68	16,536	0	421
Educational Attainment					
High School Graduate	0.75	0.43	116,493	0	1
Highest Education Level	2.16	1.36	116,493	0	7
Attitudes					
Optimistic	0.81	0.39	69,940	0	1
Discipline is Fair	0.72	0.45	116,259	0	1



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