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Punishment & Society 2009 11: 291

DOI: 10.1177/1462474509334552

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Things are tough all over

Race, ethnicity, class and school discipline

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Abstract

Across the USA, schools have dramatically altered how they respond to school crime in recent decades, with a growing police presence and increased levels of punishments. Based on a cultural reproduction approach to understanding how students are socialized within schools, one would expect that these increasingly law-and-order-centered shifts would be disproportionately focused in schools with mostly racial and ethnic minorities and low-income youth, relative to schools with mostly white middle-class youth. To address this issue, I consider data from observations and interviews at four high schools with varying student demographics in two states. I find that although there certainly are discrepancies between schools that a cultural reproduction approach would lead one to predict, there are also substantial similarities. Students at all four schools are exposed to punitive, rule-based policies, though the effects of these similar policies are unequally distributed. Practices that were once reserved primarily for schools hosting poor students and students of color are now implemented in mostly white middle-class schools as well.

Key Words

class • cultural reproduction • race • school discipline • school security

Schools across the USA have dramatically altered how they perceive and respond to school crime in recent decades, with increasing police presence in schools and more punitive responses to student misbehaviors (see Casella, 2001; Skiba and Noam, 2002; Noguera, 2003a; Reyes, 2006; Simon, 2007; Hirschfield, 2008). It is now common in public high schools to find police officers, armed security guards, surveillance cameras, zero-tolerance policies and random searches with drug-sniffing dogs. For example, this last strategy, drug-sniffing dogs, was used in 58.6 percent of public high schools in the 2003–4 school year (Dinkes et al., 2006).

The introduction of police officers (often called School Resource Officers, or SROs) to schools has been widespread. The number of SROs nationwide seems to have grown dramatically in recent years, fueled by federal funding such as a Bill Clinton sponsored

program known as COPS: Community Oriented Policing. Indeed, as of 2007 the National Association of School Resource Officers boasts over 9000 members (though this is likely a conservative estimate since it represents dues-paying members rather than an actual count of SROs).¹ Additionally, a recent national survey found that 60 percent of high school teachers reported having armed police in their schools (Public Agenda, 2004). Though a few evaluations find that students and school staff members within schools served by SROs claim to feel safer because a SRO is present daily (Finn and McDevitt, 2000; Schuiteman, 2001), others are more critical of SRO programs. These critics argue that a police presence in school can lead to increased arrests for behaviors like fighting that, in years past, would have led to only in-school punishment, and they discuss how police in schools facilitate a 'school-to-prison pipeline' (Skiba et al., 2000; Casella, 2001; Noguera, 2003b; Wald and Losen, 2003; Simon, 2007; Hirschfield, 2008).

A second particularly important and controversial trend is the introduction of zero-tolerance policies. These policies were spurred by the 1994 Safe Schools Act, which mandates that in order for a school to receive federal money, it must have written policies detailing: 'a) its internal procedures, b) clear conditions under which exclusion will be imposed, and c) close cooperation with police and juvenile justice agencies' (Simon, 2007: 218). In response, many schools have created rules under the zero-tolerance umbrella, whereby students who commit certain categorical acts, such as possessing weapons, alcohol or drugs, are suspended or expelled, regardless of the severity of the act (Skiba, 2000; Reyes, 2006; Simon, 2007). By limiting school administrators' discretion to divert some students from punishment and by highlighting certain behaviors as being qualitatively beyond a threshold of what schools will allow, these policies have led to increased punishments for students (Rimer, 2004; Reyes, 2006). Indeed, national data from the Federal Department of Education show a clear increase in suspension rates from 1974 to 1998 (Schiraldi and Ziedenberg, 2001).

In this article I use data from participant observation and interviews in public high schools to explore how contemporary school discipline takes shape across schools with varying demographics: across schools attended by mostly middle-class white students and schools attended by mostly lower-income racial/ethnic minority students. As I discuss below, much prior work on the sociology of education would lead us to expect that these school safety policies would operate very differently across the two types of schools, in ways likely to exacerbate the status and life opportunity gaps between the two student bodies. Though I find some support for this thesis, the data also show that in some ways, both groups of students have a similar, negative experience. Practices that were once reserved primarily for schools hosting poor students and students of color (Devine, 1996; Ferguson, 2000) are now implemented in mostly white middle-class schools as well. As a result, the contemporary focus on policing and punishment subjects both white middle-class students and lower-income students of color to more similar modes of control than one would expect. The similarities across schools suggest that a status reproduction approach to understanding differences across schools fails to capture how the contemporary focus on discipline in US public schools affects *all* students.

CULTURAL REPRODUCTION

Scholars have often and consistently noted the important socialization function of schools, and how this function maintains class and power distinctions. The historian David Tyack (1974), for example, illustrates how 19th-century and early 20th-century schools were a mechanism for Americanizing immigrant and rural children, and teaching them the skills necessary for factory labor (see also Rothstein, 1984). Others have applied and further developed this idea by considering how contemporary schools perpetuate social inequalities, particularly economic stratification, through training into class-divided labor market roles (Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977; Apple, 1979; see also Illich, 1971; Rist, 1973; Oakes, 1985).

In *Reproduction in education*, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) extend this line of thought to consider cultural reproduction more broadly. They argue that schools reinforce an arbitrary distribution of cultural capital, both through the content of what students learn and through the dissemination of titles and degrees; but since school achievement is viewed as a legitimate marker of ability, this uneven distribution of capital is legitimized by educational systems. In this way, schools maintain existing social inequalities while making these inequalities appear to be a matter of competition and ability (see also Apple, 1979; Gee, 1996).

This literature shows how students' experiences and training are distributed unequally according to their class, race, gender or other status characteristics. Empirical research on school discipline clearly supports this view. In particular, several studies demonstrate that the consequences of school punishments fall disproportionately on racial/ethnic minority youth and lower-income youth, as each group is far more likely to be suspended or expelled than white or middle-class youth, respectively (e.g. Wu et al., 1982; Skiba et al., 2000; Raffaele Mendez and Knoff, 2003; Eitle and Eitle, 2004). With regard to race and ethnicity, the few studies to investigate why minorities are disproportionately punished have focused on perceptions of threat; they find that teachers and administrators tend to perceive African American and Latino/a youth as louder (Morris, 2007), more disruptive or disrespectful (McCarthy and Hoge, 1987; Ferguson, 2000; Morris, 2005), or more challenging of teachers' authority than white students (Vavrus and Cole, 2002), and therefore they may be quicker to punish these students or refer them to administrators for punishment (see also Eckert, 1989). With regard to social class, prior research suggests that educators' biases lead them to assume worse school performance and greater misbehavior among lower-income youth (Chambliss, 1973; Rist, 1973). Moreover, lower-income youth are more likely to violate the middle-class behavioral norms that educators expect to see (Cohen, 1955; Ferguson, 2000), and they are less likely than middle-class youth to manipulate learning environments to their advantage (Lareau, 2003), each of which makes them more vulnerable to being singled out for school punishment than middle-class youth.²

Thus, social class and race have distinct and complex effects on school environments, and each has repeatedly been found to have an independent effect on the likelihood of punishment for any individual student. One would therefore predict substantial variation among different schools' approaches to discipline in ways that correspond to schools' student demographics. Based on cultural reproduction theory, one might also predict that these differences in approaches to discipline across schools would mirror, legitimate and exacerbate students' status and power inequalities, thereby socializing

students into very different future roles. When considering the independent effect of both race and social class in shaping adults' experiences with the carceral state, and particularly the overwhelmingly disproportionate rate at which lower-class African Americans are sentenced to prison (e.g. Western, 2006), it makes sense to predict that schools' disciplinary practices mirror these experiences with state punishment. One would predict that schools with mostly lower-income youth and youth of color prepare students to live under close watch by the State by subjecting them to frequent police surveillance and harsh punishments for misbehaviors; in contrast, one would expect that schools with mostly wealthier, white students teach skills that empower them to avoid, manage and control such risks, or to use these elements of control to their social, professional and economic advantage. This hypothesis is captured by Lyons and Drew (2006: 5; see also Hirschfield, 2008) in their study of school punishments: 'Zero tolerance approaches to conflict and ongoing struggles over identity teach us to reproduce the social stratifications in school culture that are predicated on race, class, and gender subordination.'

WIDESPREAD SHIFTS: GOVERNING THROUGH CRIME

Though the idea of cultural reproduction and the above evidence on who gets punished in schools are essential for understanding the persistence of structural inequality, it is important to keep in mind that changes in school discipline throughout the USA have mirrored broad shifts in how we define and respond to threat and insecurity, generally. These trends have occurred at the same time that we have observed a quadrupling of the US imprisonment rate, for example, without corresponding increases in crime. More importantly, we can think of both trends as part of a widespread shift in how western nations, and especially the USA, have responded to potential and actual crime. In explaining why prison populations have skyrocketed over the past 30 years in the USA and the UK, David Garland (2001) argues that changes in social organization and in widely shared sensibilities (which he calls the culture of control) have shaped crime control arrangements to rely more heavily than before on incarceration. These social shifts are broad and experienced by entire populations of the USA and the UK.

We can also see similarities between the increasing enforcement of school rules and zero-tolerance policing in communities, whereby police crack down on minor offenders who commit 'quality of life crimes' such as public urination or alcohol consumption (Greene, 1999). School discipline resembles this policing approach when schools respond to relatively minor offenses by excluding students from classrooms. For example, Reyes (2006: 35–7) notes that in Texas, the vast majority of students suspended (96%) or expelled (86%) under zero-tolerance laws are punished for a discretionary offense – one for which suspension or expulsion is not required under the policy – rather than for a mandatory offense.

In his recent book, *Governing through crime*, Jonathan Simon (2007) offers a framework for understanding these trends by illustrating how the war against crime has become central to American governance. Simon discusses how policy-makers now use crime discourse as a strategic issue to legitimate interventions and policies related to a wide range of institutions, including housing, public assistance and schools. That is, by drawing citizens' attention to their potential for victimization – either by crime or other

social ills – policy-makers have mobilized Americans’ insecurities and enacted restrictive, fear-based policies that have transformed American governance. Harsh punishments for racial and ethnic minorities, particularly poor African American men, are central to Simon’s analysis, since the fear of a black underclass helped to mobilize and legitimize mass incarceration; but he also illustrates that crime control policies have become so pervasive that all Americans now feel their weight. In a chapter devoted entirely to governing through crime in schools, Simon argues that school crime has become the focal point for managing student behaviors, such that social control technologies (police, suspensions, expulsions, surveillance and so on) now compete with pedagogical imperatives in shaping schools’ routines and rituals. Moreover, he argues that because of the pervasiveness of governing through crime, these shifts in school social control are occurring in schools across the USA, not only in schools with mostly poor students or students of color. He states: ‘the very real violence of a few schools concentrated in zones of hardened poverty and social disadvantage has provided a “truth” of school crime that circulates across whole school systems’ (Simon, 2007: 210).

Though the process of governing through crime affects all strata of society, one cannot ignore the fact that different strata feel the brunt of this process in different ways. As Bruce Western (2006) makes clear in his book, *Punishment and inequality in America*, racial and ethnic minorities – particularly those who are not well educated – are far more likely to go to prison than whites. Other scholars as well have shown how the current punitiveness in the criminal justice system affects minority communities and poor people far more than the middle-class or whites (e.g. Miller, 1996; Wacquant, 2001).

Yet to some extent, the widespread impact of governing through crime complicates what lessons we should expect contemporary high school students to learn. Although broader trends in punishment have vastly disproportionate effects on different sectors of society (Western, 2006), it is clear that all sectors of society experience the insecurities that correspond with and feed the mission of governing through crime. Furthermore, unlike adults, all children are at a relative power disadvantage within their schools. That is, wealthy, white students with powerful parents still have less immediate power than the adults who make, monitor and enforce the rules of their school; though they have social power, they are still legal minors and thus at the mercy of school employees. With this in mind, it is less clear how school discipline policies are enforced across schools with demographically contrasting student bodies. This puzzle is highlighted by Paul Hirschfield (2008), who considers ways that school discipline varies across school demographics and locations despite increasing punishments and security mechanisms across the USA. He argues that although suburban schools, like urban schools, now rely on security technologies, zero tolerance and police, they do so in different ways:

criminalization in middle class schools is less intense and more fluid than in the inner-city, where proximate or immediate crime threats are overriding concerns. . . . In short, the gated community may be a more apt metaphor to describe the security transformation of affluent schools, while the prison metaphor better suits that of inner-city schools. (Hirschfield, 2008: 84)

Hirschfield’s argument is consistent with both cultural reproduction theory and what we know of trends in punishment, generally (see Wacquant, 2001; Western, 2006), though there are few empirical efforts to test these ideas (but see Lyons and Drew, 2006).

Based on numerous prior studies, it is abundantly clear that both racial/ethnic minorities and lower-income youth are more likely than others to be punished *within* schools. Yet for the most part these studies rely on analyses using only individual-level data. As a result, though these within school disparities are clear, we know little about how contemporary school policies are enforced *across* schools, or whether schools with mostly lower-income and/or minority students enforce harsher or a different style of discipline than schools with mostly wealthier, white students. I address this void in the research by considering differences across schools, using empirical data to consider Simon's (2007) argument that schools in all social strata have adopted elements of governing through crime.

METHODS

To understand how contemporary discipline practices take shape in schools, I consider ethnographic data collected in four public high schools. The four schools include two in each of two separate states: one Mid-Atlantic state and one Southwestern state. The pair of schools within each state was chosen to provide a demographic contrast, with one school's student body composed of a majority white, middle-class students and the other a majority of non-white, lower-income students.³ Table 1 presents a contrast of key characteristics of each school, as well as each school's pseudonym: Adams High and Clinton High in the Mid-Atlantic state, and Johnson High and Taylor High in the Southwest. Due to variation in residential patterns and school policies (i.e. busing), there is a starker contrast between schools in the Southwestern state than in the Mid-Atlantic one. Nevertheless, each pair offers a comparison between schools with a large

TABLE 1 Comparison of sampled schools (2004–5)

	SOUTHWESTERN SCHOOLS		MID-ATLANTIC SCHOOLS	
	JOHNSON HIGH	TAYLOR HIGH	ADAMS HIGH	CLINTON HIGH
Total students	2227	2739	1506	2067
Student/teacher ratio	16.5	23.1 ^a	15.4	18.1
Race/ethnicity (%):				
White	3.5	82.5	36.3	73.5
Hispanic	91.7	11.1	10.9	3.0
Black	3.1	2.3	48.9	20.8
Asian	0.4	2.4	3.7	2.4
American Indian/Alaskan	1.2	1.7	0.2	0.2
Free or reduced lunch eligible (%)	93.8	18.1	41.2	9.1

^a If one calculates the student/teacher ratio using the populations listed on Taylor High's website rather than using the US Department of Education data, the ratio is 18.3, which is consistent with the other three schools.

Source: Institute of Education Statistics, US Department of Education.

proportion of relatively advantaged students (who benefit from dominant social positions along both race and class lines) and a large proportion of relatively disadvantaged students.

Three of the four schools are located in suburban areas. The fourth, Johnson High, is located within a large city, though it is in a region marked more by sprawl than dense population. As a result, the neighborhoods in which all four schools are located share similarities: all four schools are immediately surrounded by single family houses and businesses, with the school occupying an enclosed territory consisting of buildings and athletic fields. The four schools also have a similar number of control-oriented staff members: each has one police officer, two to six security officers or 'interventionists' and one to four administrators handling discipline.

Another important difference among schools that is not represented in Table 1 is the architecture of each school. The two schools in each state are very similar to each other in this regard, but with great differences between the two pairs. The Southwestern schools are 'open campus' schools, with large, open layouts consisting of several buildings and courtyards, where students walk between the buildings during class breaks. In contrast, both Mid-Atlantic schools are enclosed buildings, and in both schools students are not allowed outside of these buildings.⁴ These architectural differences substantially shape how surveillance is carried out in the schools; for example, both Mid-Atlantic schools have well-developed surveillance camera systems that monitor their hallways, but neither Southwestern state does, since there is too much outside ground to cover easily with cameras. But the fact that the schools within each state are very similar to one another facilitates comparisons and helps isolate distinctions related to the schools' student bodies.

All data were collected by the author and graduate research assistants.⁵ We spent six to 12 months collecting data in each school. During this time, we collected data through both interviews and site observations. A total of 105 semi-structured interviews were conducted across the four sites (at least 26 at each), with each interview taking between 20 minutes and almost two hours; most interviews lasted about 45 minutes. We interviewed a variety of individuals, including school administrators and (non-police) security ($n = 31$), teachers ($n = 16$), police officers ($n = 4$; one in each school), students ($n = 43$) and parents ($n = 11$). School security and administration respondents were selected based on a purposive sample, whereby we interviewed the individuals most involved with discipline; for teachers, students, and parents, we used snowball sampling to collect a sampling frame, and then selectively invited participants so as to maintain a sample that included whites and racial/ethnic minorities as well as males and females. Interviews were digitally recorded and sent to a professional transcriber. The interview guide varied depending on the role of the respondent, though each sought to acquire an understanding of the respondent's views of the school rules and punishments, his/her experiences with school discipline and his/her perceptions of school violence and appropriate responses to it. Researchers began with this guide and probed to explore relevant themes as necessary.

We also logged at least 100 hours of observational time at each school, with visits lasting two to three hours on average. Field notes were written immediately upon leaving each research site, rather than in the field, so as to limit an observation/reaction bias (Bachman and Schutt, 2007). While visiting the schools, researchers would either trail

an administrator, police officer or security officer, observe a class or observe common areas in school (e.g. cafeterias, hallways). The principal at each school allowed us full access to the entire campus and to observe any interaction, as long as the participants did not object to our presence, which occurred on only one occasion (when a student's parents met with a principal to discuss the student's removal from school). We noted interactions between adults and students, particularly in response to perceived misbehavior among students. The majority of the interactions we observed were casual conversations in the hallways or classrooms, since this is the most common type of student-staff interaction. We also observed hundreds of meetings between students referred to an administrator (i.e. removed from class and sent 'to the office') and either their dean of discipline, interventionist or assistant principal (whoever handles referrals at each school), as well as arrests on campus and expulsion hearings (though these are far less common).

All data were coded and analyzed in Atlas ti 5.2 to search for patterns and themes that help us understand how school discipline policies take shape across schools. Analyses were guided by three goals: (1) developing a general understanding of common patterns in rule enforcement at each school (i.e. how each school punishes students); (2) carefully considering differences across schools in these patterns; and (3) a grounded theory approach whereby data were coded for any unexpected processes or themes that could further contextualize school discipline.

I focus my analyses here on between-school rather than within-school comparisons for two reasons. One is the difficulty and inappropriateness of making judgments about students. Our ability to judge a student's race/ethnicity or socio-economic status by sight is far from perfect and would be problematic in many cases, yet comparing how different students get treated within a school would require such evaluations (since the school's records are not available when observing students in the hallway). By focusing on between-school comparisons, I can consider how discipline initiatives take shape across student bodies with (relatively) known population characteristics. The other reason is that within school analyses are common in the existing literature, and their conclusions (that poor and minority youth disproportionately receive punishment in school) are very well established, as I discuss above, yet between-school comparisons are relatively unaddressed by the prior research.

RESULTS

As I discuss above, cultural reproduction theory would lead one to predict that school discipline practices reproduce and exacerbate existing social inequalities among students by socializing each group of students into different roles within the social structure: one as the wielders of social power, and the other as a marginalized, hyper-controlled group. I find that this is true, in that there are important differences in the frequency of school punishments and in how school discipline takes shape across schools. However, I also find far more consistency across schools than cultural reproduction theory would lead one to predict. Certain themes found in each of the four schools suggest that students' experiences of a marginalized, hyper-controlled status while in public high schools are widespread.

Distinctions across schools

To begin, I focus on the ways in which cultural reproduction theory aptly predicts differences across schools regarding the character and climate of school discipline. I discuss three differences across schools within each state pair: perceptions of threat; the power to appeal punishments; and actual suspension rates.

Perceptions of threat

In Johnson High, almost all students are Latino/a and come from a very poor neighborhood. Based on interviews and casual conversations with several school staff members, it is clear that their concern about violence centers on gangs, a social problem often associated with Latino/a youth. For example, when asked whether there are certain behaviors that he/she has particularly targeted for enforcement, the principal responded:

Gang bangers, we went after real hard the first two years because they were running the school, at least they thought they were running the school. They were very active, very violent, very – they would walk around campus in groups and try to intimidate people, and it's like anything [else]: you go after the leaders, you make examples of them, you break them up, and once they don't have that person to lead them, things quieted down.

School staff members here constantly watched for indicators of gang membership such as gang signs, colors and other markers of affiliation. The student dress code that was distributed to students at the beginning of the 2005–6 school year stated that '[Students] shall not wear shirts with numbers 13, 15, 24, 27, 28, 31, 35, 36 (subject to change).' When I asked an administrator about this, he/she said that these numbers are used as gang signs, though the prohibition often changes to keep pace with changing gang signs; I then asked how students know if the rules against certain numbers change, and he/she responded that 'they just know'. The facts that the school is willing to risk appearing arbitrary and inconsistent, and that it prohibits a set of numbers, illustrate the priority of the fear of gangs in governing the school.

In contrast, perceptions of threat in Taylor High, with a majority of middle-class white students, are not centered on any single phenomenon. Instead, staff members discuss the same potential safety threats that administrators and teachers discuss in each school we studied, and presumably in schools across the country: fighting, drugs/alcohol and the potential for a catastrophic 'Columbine-like incident'. These problems are stressed as potential problems of youth and schools in general, and not related to any characteristics of their students.

When considering the two Mid-Atlantic schools, I find similar results – that perceptions of threat differ across the two schools, and in a way that corresponds to racial stereotypes. In Adams High, which has a large proportion of black students, fears of school crime center on a small group of students who are reportedly anti-authority, defiant and generally insubordinate, due to (according to school staff members) a combination of parental neglect, poverty and low school performance. The most common complaint we heard from staff members at this school is that there are several of these problem students, and that they wish these students could be expelled, but that the school cannot get rid of these trouble-makers because the school district does not have a sufficient number of alternative placement spots:

If you're here threatening teachers, if you're here threatening other students, you're constantly disrupting class, you're constantly walking the halls, you're constantly leaving. You know, get on the bus, come here in the morning, get off the bus and go to Burger King and come back at two o'clock to catch the bus [to go home]. Why am I wasting my time doing paperwork on that kid who has no desire to change his behavior? And I'm spending, I would say I spend 90 percent of my time dealing with 10 percent of the students. (Administrator, Adams High)

These insubordinate students are repeatedly referred to as 'frequent flyers', due to their frequent visits to school disciplinarians. One teacher at this school suggested to me that, since these students have no interest in learning, the school should: 'Round up all the students who are failing, and just sit them in a big room and "make them color Ronald McDonald's nose all day"', this would keep them occupied and out of trouble.⁶

When we observed these youth who are seen as continually insubordinate being punished, they were almost always black students, many of whom lived in poor neighborhoods of the nearby city. The language we repeatedly heard used to describe these students – insubordinate, disrespectful of authority, threatening – closely resembles stereotypes of African Americans as aggressive and disorderly (Ferguson, 2000; see also Quillian, 2006). Moreover, this image of disorder among African American students closely resembles the 1960s segregationists' warnings of disorderly, violent schools if desegregation were to occur.⁷

Of course, these perceptions of danger stem from actual problems the schools face (see Hirschfield, 2008). Though we observed no gang violence at Johnson High, several individuals told us that the surrounding neighborhood does have a gang violence problem, and there are many gang signs and much gang-linked graffiti in it. Additionally, it is common to see students being disruptive and aggressive, either with each other or with teachers, at Adams High. Despite this, the fact that the concerns about violence and disorder in these two schools resemble stereotypes associated with the racial/ethnic groups that compose their student bodies is important, and coincides with prior research that illustrates how social class (Hollingsworth et al., 1984) and race/ethnicity (McCarthy and Hoge, 1987; Ferguson, 2000; Morris, 2005) shape teachers' and administrators' views of disorder within schools. These stereotypes can influence administrators' perceptions of the threat of violence beyond the actual problems they face (see Quillian and Pager, 2001), leading to overly severe punishments to students who display stereotypical behaviors. For example, as the Johnson High School principal's comments about gangs illustrate, students who are believed to be gang-involved are treated more harshly than other students caught doing similar things. These students' punishments are thus influenced by an assumption of gang involvement – an assumption that may be informed by stereotypes and that is extremely difficult to validate.

The power to appeal

A second difference across schools that mirrors what one would expect to find is that students in the schools with more middle-class white students have greater power to appeal their punishments. In each of the two mostly middle-class white schools, it is common for teachers, administrators or other school personnel to complain about students and their parents contesting the school's authority to punish. In Taylor High several respondents complained that when students are sent to an administrator for punishment, students often call their parents on the way down to the office, and a

parent might appear at the office even before the student arrives to contest any punishment. Here and at Clinton High we often heard complaints about wealthy parents whose children 'could do no wrong' and who blamed the school for their children's misbehaviors. For example:

What I have found is that [parents here] are not as supportive [as at other schools] because they don't think their kid ever does anything wrong. In special ed[ucation] I have learned that most of our students are risky, at-risk or they don't have a lot, they're not as affluent [of a] family and so you don't get a lot of garbage. . . . If I was gonna' be an administrator from, right off the bat, I would wanna' work at some place like [another high school in the district] . . . because [at the other school] you have just middle-class people, the parents know their kids aren't perfect and no kid is perfect and hopefully I won't be that way. But it does give you a lot of good practice in dealing with discipline and parents if you don't have these affluent parents coming in and saying my kid does no wrong and bla bla bla bla, so . . . And the thing is, is like with the whole cell phones, every kid in here, this kid has a lot of wealth, so every kid has a cell phone and when they get down to [in-school suspension] because they're tired, they just call mommy and daddy and they excuse their tard[iness] and they can come back to class. And you don't get that at, like, [the other school]. (Teacher, Taylor High)

Most parents of students in the two middle-class schools have more social capital than parents in the lower-income schools. Many of them hold white-collar or managerial jobs and/or are well educated, and we often heard about friendships between parents in these schools and either school administrators or teachers. This social capital empowers both parents and students to challenge the school and equips them with the political savvy of how to do so effectively (Lareau, 2000; Noguera, 2003a). In contrast, when we observed parents interact with school officials or when we heard school officials talk about parents in the two disadvantaged schools, we rarely observed or heard about parents appealing the school's punishments. Parents may either accept the school's authority (Kohn, 1969) or become hostile toward it, but this hostility is usually a general response to perceived unfairness rather than an organized appeal regarding a specific punishment.

The most pronounced effect of this differential opportunity to appeal punishments is the level of care given to following rules and documenting discipline procedures. Rather than students at the more advantaged schools receiving more lenient punishments, teachers and disciplinarians at these schools are more careful to apply the school rules appropriately (i.e. 'by the book') so that they can defend their actions if challenged. For example, at Adams High one of the primary disciplinarians rarely calls the parents of suspended students, despite the fact that this is a requirement of the school, because he claims to be too busy. We never observed violations of punishment procedures like this at either advantaged school. Though students at the advantaged schools likely would have been suspended as well, they (and their parents) might be treated in a way that recognizes their participation in the discipline process rather than as passive subjects of discipline.

Suspension rates

In Table 2, I list the rate of suspensions per 100 students at each of the four schools.⁸ There is substantial regional variation in punishment, as the suspension rates are far greater in the Mid-Atlantic state than the Southwestern state. More importantly,

TABLE 2 Suspension rates in sampled schools (2005–6)

	SUSPENSION RATE PER 100 STUDENTS
Southwestern state schools:	
1. Taylor High	6.1
2. Johnson High	18.9
Mid-Atlantic state schools:	
1. Clinton High	17.6
2. Adams High	95.5

Note: suspension rate is calculated as: (number of suspensions in the 2005–6 school year/student enrollment) * 100.

though, within each state, the school with more lower-income and minority students has a substantially higher suspension rate. Table 2 leaves no doubt that the schools with more disadvantaged youth hand out suspensions far more frequently, which is precisely what one would predict based on cultural reproduction theory.

This result is consistent with results of the prior research on racial disproportionality of school punishment (e.g. Wu et al., 1982; McCarthy and Hoge, 1987; Skiba et al., 2000) as well as on the disproportionate punishment of poor youth (e.g. Hollingsworth et al., 1984), by showing that schools with more lower-class youth and racial/ethnic minority youth use suspension more often than schools with middle-class white students. Yet, as I describe below, a comparison of punishment rates – to which the prior literature has largely been limited⁹ – does not tell the entire story, since it fails to capture the way in which similar policies have been adopted across disparate schools, and how these policies influence students' educational experiences and overall socialization.

Similarities across schools

Though there certainly are distinctions across schools that correspond to the racial/ethnic and socio-economic statuses of their student bodies, there are also important similarities across schools. That is, my results confirm Simon's (2007) argument by illustrating how the types of policies and practices that were once limited to urban schools (Devine, 1996) or schools serving low-income youth of color (e.g. Ferguson, 2000) are present in all four schools, even though the disciplinary results of these practices are unequally distributed. Additionally, both observations and interviews clearly show that the school discipline policies and practices of all four schools maintain students' powerlessness in the face of the school's authority, and ignore and often exacerbate students' problems. When considering how these policies take shape, it is apparent that school discipline policies at each school reproduce the culture of control.

Similar policies across schools

At the national level, surveillance and policing in schools is pervasive. Though practices such as implementing police and using metal detectors at school entrances might have gained initial popularity only in urban schools (Devine, 1996), similar policies are now used throughout the USA. In fact, it might be the case that wealthier school districts

are more likely to implement more costly surveillance tools such as cameras, simply because they are more likely to be able to afford them.

A recent national survey of schools conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a branch of the federal Department of Education, illustrates the pervasiveness of school security policies across social strata. Results from the NCES' 2006 survey are displayed in Table 3 (Dinkes et al., 2006), illustrating different security practices across two important dimensions of schools: the proportion of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, and the proportion of racial/ethnic minorities enrolled. Table 3 shows that although there are differences in some of the types of security practices used, overall each group of schools employs some of the practices that embody governing through crime. Schools with larger populations of minorities or low-income students (as measured by free/reduced lunch eligibility) are more likely to have metal detectors and to require students to wear ID badges, even if these practices are still not used very frequently (in their peak groups, 11.8 percent of students report schools with ID badge requirements and 11.9 percent report random metal detector scans). Yet schools with few low-income students are somewhat more likely than others to use security cameras, and much more likely to use drug-sniffing dogs. Though, as some prior scholars have argued, surveillance cameras may be used in middle-class schools because they are a fluid technology that expands disciplinary power while promoting self-discipline and protection of students (in contrast to the rigid criminalizing nature of metal detectors – see Hirschfield, 2008), it would be difficult to claim this of random searches using drug-sniffing dogs as well. Despite clear distinctions in how security is practiced across schools, it is not the case that only schools serving low-income or minority youth have imported invasive surveillance and security practices.

The data support the idea that policies and practices meant to police and punish student misbehavior are pervasive, rather than located primarily in schools serving lower-class students or racial/ethnic minorities. Though none of the four schools we studied uses either drug-sniffing dogs or metal detectors, all have full-time SROs on campus and all use some form of a zero-tolerance policy. Each school responds fairly similarly to student misbehavior, in that they are quick to suspend students caught breaking rules. For example, each school within the Mid-Atlantic state publishes a code of conduct that prescribes punishments for a range of infractions, and these stated punishments are relatively similar across the two schools – the distinctions that are evident show harsher punishments at the more advantaged school. Consider a relatively common offense, leaving school without permission: its prescribed punishment (published in the code of conduct) in Clinton High is a detention or suspension for the first offense, and a three to five day suspension for subsequent offenses; in Adams High the code of conduct calls for one to three days of in-school suspension, in sequential order.

One difference that is particularly noticeable is that in one of our four schools, students are routinely arrested if they are involved in a fight – regardless of the severity of the fight or who the instigator was. This policy is based on an explicit agreement between the SRO and the principal, and designed to show students that the school will not tolerate violence. As a result, a student who responds to bullying by striking back, or a student who defends himself/herself is arrested along with the aggressor in the incident. According to administrators and the SRO, this is fair because students have

TABLE 3 Percentage of public high schools that used selected safety and security measures, by school characteristics: 2003-4

	LIMITED ACCESS DURING SCHOOL HOURS		VISITOR REQUIREMENTS		REQUIRED TO WEAR BADGES OR PICTURE IDs		METAL DETECTOR CHECKS ON STUDENTS		SWEEPS AND TECHNOLOGY		CLEAR SECURITY OR NO BOOK BAGS	
	To BUILDINGS	To GROUND	SIGN-IN/ CHECK-IN	METAL DETECTOR	STUDENTS FACULTY/ STAFF	RANDOM CHECKS ^a	DAILY USE	RANDOM DRUG-SNIFFING DOGS ^a	RANDOM CONTRABAND SWEEPS ^{ab}	SECURITY CAMERAS ^a	RANDOM SWEEPS	OR NO BOOK BAGS
Total	83.0	36.2	98.3	0.9	6.4	48.0	5.6	1.1	21.3	12.8	36.0	6.2
Percent minority enrollment ^c												
< 5%	81.6	22.4	96.1	‡	1.0	35.7	1.5	‡	28.5	11.3	36.0	4.2
5-20%	84.6	30.2	98.5	‡	4.1	50.4	1.9	‡	23.6	9.8	36.9	4.7
20-50%	83.1	39.3	98.4	‡	6.8	53.8	4.8	0.2	22.2	13.8	35.3	7.2
> 50%	82.2	48.9	99.6	2.7	11.8	48.8	11.9	2.7	13.5	14.7	33.8	6.9
Percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch												
0-20%	88.6	30.9	97.2	‡	4.0	54.1	1.8	‡	18.7	8.0	39.3	4.1
21-50%	81.8	29.3	98.1	0.3	4.9	46.1	3.7	0.7	28.7	13.8	35.3	5.1
> 50%	80.7	45.2	99.1	1.9	9.0	46.1	9.3	1.8	16.3	14.8	34.8	8.3

‡ Reporting standards not met.

^a One or more.

^b For example, drugs or weapons. Does not include dog sniffs.

^c These estimates exclude data from Tennessee because schools in this state did not report estimates of students by race/ethnicity.

Note: Either school principals or the person most knowledgeable about discipline issues at school completed the SSOCS questionnaire. Respondents were instructed to respond only for those times that were during normal school hours or when school activities or events were in session, unless the survey specified otherwise. Population size is 80,500 public schools.

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) (2004), published in Dinkes et al. (2006: Table 19.1).

an opportunity to avoid fighting; they can talk to a teacher, administrator or the SRO in advance to alert them of the problem, or they can simply walk away from the incident. Thus, according to this school, even a student who chooses to defend himself/herself physically against an aggressor deserves to be arrested. Based on cultural reproduction theory, one would expect to see a policy like this enforced only in the school with a plurality of racial/ethnic minority students, since they are being socialized to expect a police presence in their lives, harsh punishments for expected or relatively normal behaviors and the likelihood of developing a criminal record. Instead, we found this policy at the more advantaged Clinton High (and observed it being applied to both white and racial/ethnic minority students), illustrating how widespread harsh school discipline is.

Rules are more important than substantive problems

Perhaps the most salient and consistent result from my analyses of observations and interviews is how school discipline trumps other issues. The mission of detecting and punishing misbehavior is prioritized over therapeutic, mentoring and even pedagogical goals. As Lyons and Drew (2006) find as well, harsh reactive punishments now take priority over more effective proactive strategies such as counseling or conflict resolution. We observed this in each of the four schools included in our study.

Given this emphasis on school discipline, looking for student misbehavior can take priority over other school functions, such as helping students with their actual problems – including problems which may be prompting their misbehaviors, but that go un-addressed. The following field note illustrates this. In this excerpt, an African American female student, Heather,¹⁰ enters the office of an administrator to ask for a tissue. It is clear that she has been crying, but instead of discussing her problem, the administrator lectures her on the dress code:

Heather entered Mr Morris' office and asked if he had a tissue. He said, 'Sure, come on in. Here you are, help yourself' (and held out a box of tissues that was on his desk). Heather took a tissue, said thank you, and turned to walk out. As she did, Mr Morris said, 'Hold on there, what are you wearing? That shirt is a bit too short.' Heather was wearing a tight shirt that revealed her navel and the small of her back. She pulled it down and said, 'No, it's OK.' She turned to leave again, and when Mr Morris saw that the back of the shirt was still about three inches over her waist, he said, 'No, it's not. Do you want me to take a picture of it with my camera phone to show you? You can't wear that to school.' Heather mumbled something and slowly turned, again, toward the door. As she did she sniffed, and put the tissue to her eye, as if she had been crying. She left, and Mr Morris said to me, 'I hate to have to do that, getting on students for how they dress.'

It is important to note that this administrator perceives himself to be a mentor to students, especially the school's African American students, and often encourages students to come talk to him if they are having any problems. Yet when this student approached him, she was reprimanded for how she was dressed. Even when it was obvious that the student had been crying, Mr Morris did not address the reason why.

This prioritization of rule following over addressing students' underlying problems is also clear in the following description of a mediation hearing. This hearing was conducted by two of the school's security guards, each of whom is trained in mediation

hearings, and was in response to a minor fight between two students (Jack and Sam, both Latinos) in which nobody was hurt:

Jack and Sam sit opposite one another, and are asked to describe what happened by the two security officers running the mediation.

The officers turn to Jack. He has nothing to say and tells them repeatedly that nothing happened. For about 10 minutes, the officers try to elicit information from him, but he resists. They try two tactics: (1) explaining that this is his chance to tell his side of the story, and (2) that if he doesn't follow through with this mediation, then he gets the full punishment for fighting and might be expelled if he has prior referrals. He finally relents and tells them that somebody (he didn't know who) told him that Sam was going to jump him. When Sam gets his turn, his story is almost identical . . . This continues for a long time before any new information comes out. Both state that they have no prior relationship, don't even know each other well and never received threats directly from each other, only from third parties. . . . Finally, we learn that they do have a prior history. Jack says that their [disagreement] began last spring, after a softball game. We then learn that he was upset because Sam called Jack's sister "a bitch". Sam says that she kept calling for his little brother and wouldn't leave him alone, so Sam told her to stop calling. As soon as this information comes out the officers stop digging for information and wrap up the hearing. Their approach to solving the conflict is a lecture on how one can't react to gossip. One of the guards, Robert, also spoke, directly at Jack, on how one can't react to disrespect by fighting:

Robert: 'Trust me, I know about disrespect. I grew up in the 'hood, I know how important respect is. But you can't fight whenever you're disrespected. If you do, you're wrong. You need to come to authorities – to me, to another security, to a teacher.'

Jack: 'That's "bitch shit". I can't do that.'

Robert: 'It may be bitch shit, but it's what you got to do. . . .'

After a long time of this lecturing on not reacting to disrespect or listening to gossip, and on the importance of reporting trouble rather than fighting (because this is the rule), the two students sign a statement of mediation, shake hands and leave.

In this mediation hearing, the reason for the conflict between the two students surfaces after a good deal of dialogue. But rather than teaching strategies for dealing with interpersonal conflict, discussing how each student felt about the incident or considering behavioral solutions to this and future conflicts, the security guards only discuss the school rules and how one must conform to them (see also Hayward, 2000). This is the only solution or resolution presented – students must follow the rules, or they are wrong. When Jack presents a normative reason for disobeying the instructions of telling an authority when a conflict is brewing, he is told that he has no other option.

It is clear in each school that students' behavioral abnormalities are viewed with an eye toward rule enforcement, not behavioral or emotional counseling. Despite the fact that staff members in each of the four schools told us that students often misbehave due to personal or emotional problems, and most staff members expressed both empathy for students and a desire to help, none of the four schools routinely couples discipline with any counseling or behavioral therapy. We never observed a student referred to a school counselor or psychologist for misbehavior, even when the administrator or other staff member handing out the student's discipline notes to the student that he/she

understands the student is experiencing difficulties at home or at school that may be contributing to the problem. Similarly, despite the fact that several teachers we interviewed told us that academic deficits are a common cause of students' classroom misbehavior (they act up to avoid embarrassment at not knowing the course material), the response of many of these teachers to the misbehavior is to remove the student from class. This aggravates the problem, since the punishment is not coupled with any tutoring or other instructional activity – instead the student only falls further behind the class. As evidenced through their words and their deeds, school staff seem to want to help students, but the nearly universal method of helping students we observed at each school is to rely strictly on a rule-orientation rather than responding to students' problems, where advice centers on how to follow rules rather than how to fix underlying problems.

This narrowly focused orientation to problem solving is noticed by students as well as school staff. Consider this statement from Gerald, a white male student at Taylor High:

Interviewer: If you could change anything about how your school prevents crime and punishes students, what would it be?

Gerald: Um, let me think about this one . . . I would say instead of just having, like you know, how kids get in trouble for something real bad and will get suspended for a period of time and then come back to school and it'll just be all over with. I think they should do something that'll make the kids think of more of what they've done and actually have them have to interact in some way to make up for what they've actually done and the problem they've caused. Because when they're going away from school and just sitting at home all day and not having to deal with it and not hearing from anyone, they're just sort of forgetting about it and it'll probably happen again.

Interviewer: Okay. So you're not, you feel that that's, they're not really dealing with . . .

Gerald: They're not really, no they're not really dealing with the problem, they're just, well at school the immediate problem, they're getting the kid out of there that caused the problem, but when that student returns, the student probably won't have any change of mind or the way they think about what they've done . . .

In the following transcript, a white assistant principal at Johnson High, Mr Engle, offers a similar sentiment, but explains how time constraints forbid a deeper probe into students' reasons for misbehavior:

Interviewer: What's the most common offense that you see at this school?

Mr Engle: Um, the most common offense (pause) disrespectful behavior. Maybe dress code, but disrespectful behavior.

Interviewer: And what would you like to see happen with that? . . . In response to the lack of that, in response to the disrespectful behavior, [if] a kid mouths off in class, what would you want a teacher to do?

Mr Engle: I would love to be able to take that kid and set him down with a counselor and talk it through and figure out about what is the hurt that's making this disrespect. I would love that, but unfortunately, you don't do that, you got a detention, bam. Here you go, whack! . . . I have seven counselors, and they have to hand schedule 2000 kids, you know.

As another example, consider a note that the SRO at Clinton High showed me, which was written by a student and taped to a classroom door. This note, which was given to the SRO to respond to, was as follows (with all errors intact):

“The puppies would love this. It was a 3rd of the left nut when blue and red elephants swung from trees like man eating oders ate away at the flesh of an unborn baby like a regular old pork chop And then we put puppies in a bag and threw them in a river to marinate them and the rocks would brutally pound on their flesh like salt and pepper on a fuckin grilled chees with bacon.”

The SRO used student informants to find out the identity of the note's author. He told me that it was a skateboarder (he did not mention the student's race), and that these students are 'a little off'. He had decided that the student was weird, but not violent or a threat. However, the SRO noted that now that he knew about this student, he would keep a close eye on him. Though the note is certainly odd, it does not mention any interpersonal violence or threat to any individual or the school. Perhaps it is a sign of mental instability, but if so, the fact that it is referred to the SRO rather than a counselor or psychologist is important. In this example, and many others we observed in all four schools, the school police officer is the primary contact for a wide range of misbehaviors, rather than non-police professionals who may be able to discuss with a student his/her problems and help the student in ways unrelated to enforcing laws or school rules. Again, this practice is not used only for black or Latino/a students in lower-income schools, but in each school – here we see an intrusive police presence directed at a student attending a mostly white, middle-class school.

The narrow focus on rules and punishments rather than on other issues is clear when students are punished, as well. Rather than treating disciplinary interactions as a teaching opportunity in which students are involved and from which they learn, school staff members tend to treat these interactions as the occasions where punishment is applied without reflection or discussion. Students rarely have a genuine opportunity to discuss their behaviors and present their side to a disagreement, or to have a voice in deciding on their punishment. In fact, we observed several cases in which disciplinarians actually filled out a punishment form – meaning that they had already decided on a punishment – before ever talking to the student involved. This is important because it illustrates the clear lack of a student role in the punishment process, and the lack of any opportunity to present an alternative view of the incident or reasons why it happened. When it leads to suspension such a response is even illegal, given the Supreme Court's decision that schools must hold a hearing to discuss any suspension or expulsion either before or soon after the discipline occurs (*Goss v. Lopez*, 419 US 565, 1975).

In all four schools, punishments often appear to have the goal of asserting the school's authority rather than correcting behavioral problems. For example, one day in Clinton High we observed as John, a white male student, received a suspension for an incident that began when a counselor asked John for his ID badge as she passed John in the hallway. Though the school rules state that all students must have ID badges displayed at all times, we observed this enforced very rarely, and the near universal response is a brief lecture on wearing it next time rather than a detention (the punishment prescribed in the school code of conduct). John did not have his ID, and he gave a false name to the counselor and walked away. According to John (as he explained later), he was only

teasing her by giving the false name, and he left her to fetch his ID. The counselor became angry, searched for John, found him and took him to an Assistant Principal. There he received a three-day suspension (his offense had escalated to insubordination, since he gave false information and avoided the counselor). He became angry, and in response to his raising his voice to an administrator, the punishment was raised to a four-day suspension. John left the office visibly angry, and the SRO stopped him and sat down with him. John complained that the administrator was 'on a power trip' and that it was unfair to be suspended for four days for not having an ID badge, when normally one receives no punishment or a detention at most. The SRO was empathetic and kind in his response, telling John that a suspension is not a big deal, and that he cannot react the way he did. The SRO seemed to want to help John, and to do so he reinforced the school's authority and John's lack of power by repeatedly telling John to take his punishment and be quiet:

SRO: If you did nothing when she stopped you for your ID, what's the worst that could have happened?

John: Detention.

SRO: Right. And now it's a four-day suspension, just because you got angry. Don't get angry, just accept it, even if you don't agree.

In addition to being unfair, punishments that maintain authority without addressing students' needs or allowing them a voice in the punishment process can have practical consequences. If it teaches students that the school's authority is unfair or unfairly exercised, this can lower students' perceptions of legitimate authority and in turn reduce their willingness to abide by the school rules (see, for example, Gottfredson, 2001; Gottfredson et al., 2005). Recent evidence also suggests that this brand of reactive punishment is less effective at shaping students' behaviors than proactive positive reinforcement (DeJong, 1999; Mayer, 1999). Moreover, these interactions have an important role in socializing students into their roles in society; the students are taught to be passive recipients of discipline and control. Contrary to what one would expect based on cultural reproduction theory, these lessons are equally likely to occur at each of the four schools we observed.

DISCUSSION

The data thus illustrate how contemporary school discipline and security practices have effects that are more complex than one might assume based on cultural reproduction theory, and that are consistent with Simon's (2007) argument about the ubiquity of governing through crime in schools. Yet there are clear differences between schools that are consistent with cultural reproduction theory as well; most importantly, schools with more lower-income youth and youth of color have substantially higher suspension rates than their more advantaged counterparts. Additionally, the racial/ethnic and social class composition of schools' student bodies can shape perceptions of threat, and distinctions in social capital can influence the discipline process.

When one quantitatively compares the imposition of punishment across or within schools, as the prior research has done, clear distinctions emerge that are consistent with cultural reproduction theory. But when one qualitatively compares how these

punishments take shape, the schools seem far more similar than one might expect. Thus the four schools studied here have qualitatively similar discipline policies and approaches but disparate disciplinary results. Each of the schools displays a willingness to intervene punitively by suspending students or referring them to police without inquiring into students' substantive problems, even if suspension rates vary considerably across the schools. By making within-school comparisons that focus almost entirely on what punishments are given and to whom, rather than how they are given out or what policies are in place, the prior research has largely missed this point.

These similarities across schools are even more striking given that the schools are located in very different regions of the USA, situated within disparate political environments. For example, the perceived 'threat' of immigration is politically important in the Southwestern state, but less so in the Mid-Atlantic state. This is important, since 91.7 percent of Johnson High students are Hispanic, and on our first visit to the school the principal volunteered his estimate that about 70 percent of the students there are undocumented immigrants. But despite the unique situation presented by the ethnic composition of this school within the Southwestern political climate, I find that discipline and security at Johnson High follow the same logics and organizing principles as at the other three schools. Additionally, though both are part of the nationwide movement of governing through crime in schools (Simon, 2007), the two states have responded to this movement in somewhat different ways by creating different rules and using different procedures.¹¹ Despite these variations, I find a strikingly consistent character of school discipline across schools.

Importantly, these results do not suggest that the well-documented class or race divide in school punishment (e.g. Wu et al., 1982) has been leveled. Rather, I argue that one needs to understand class and racial/ethnic inequalities within a contemporary context of school punishment, whereby schools rely on a punitive regime. With harsher punishments in place, students attending schools with mostly lower-income and minority student bodies are more likely to receive them. But also, as a result of these contemporary discipline and security policies, *all* public school students are at a high absolute risk of receiving severe punishment and having their real problems overlooked for the sake of reactive rule enforcement. Thus these data supplement rather than contradict prior research showing that youth of color and lower-income youth face greater risks of being singled out for punishment than white and middle-income youth.

Perhaps the reason for the disjuncture between similar policies and disparate disciplinary results across schools is that more advantaged students are better skilled at navigating disciplinary regimes than less advantaged students. Thus, apparent neutrality of discipline is offset by social skills that correspond to social power and cultural capital. Such an explanation is consistent with the work of Lareau (2002, 2003), who demonstrates how middle-class families engage in 'concerted cultivation', a practice that teaches middle-class children how to force institutions, such as school, to adapt to their preferences. In contrast, working-class and lower-class children are not taught these skills (see also Kohn, 1969). Future research should consider whether disciplinary results vary across schools, despite similar policies, because of the social class-based skills of the students within these schools.

In this article I analyze cross-sectional data to understand the form discipline and security take in contemporary schools, rather than longitudinal data. I therefore draw

no conclusions about whether the qualitative characteristics of school discipline represent a break from the past, beyond accepting the well-documented policy trends of increasing levels of suspension, the introduction of zero-tolerance policies and growth in numbers of police in schools (see Casella, 2001; Schiraldi and Ziedenberg, 2001; Skiba and Noam, 2002; Noguera, 2003a; Reyes, 2006). With regard to how these policies and practices came about, Simon's (2007) thoughts on the spread of school discipline policies seem likely. Simon argues that contemporary discipline and security practices initially arose in response to perceptions of violence in inner-city schools, attended mostly by lower-income youth of color, but have (along with the logics of governing through crime in other spheres as well) since spread to suburban schools, as the logic of governing through crime makes these punitive policies seem worthwhile for all student populations, somewhat regardless of the actual risk of crime at different schools.

By finding surprising similarities across schools, the data suggest a form of social reproduction in addition to racial/ethnic or class divisions: schools reproduce existing logics of state power by preparing all students to accept and internalize contemporary mechanisms of state control. All students are socialized into the carceral state, in which policy-makers govern through crime (Simon, 2007), punishments for perceived wrongdoing are severe and the logics of crime control pervade and are prioritized over other institutional goals, such as behavioral counseling or pedagogy (Lyons and Drew, 2006). This is a disturbing finding, for it suggests that the historically exceptional policies that have spread throughout schools, including SROs and zero-tolerance policies, are or will soon be presumed to be unexceptional among students (Casella, 2001). Future research should consider whether these contemporary policies and practices subsequently shape students' views of governing, of the balance between liberties and security or of crime control.

In addition to being socialized to expect or accept contemporary crime control strategies, it is also the case that harsh school discipline has the potential to diminish youths' educational prospects and/or entangle greater numbers of youth in the criminal justice system. Students who are repeatedly suspended without receiving help for their actual problems are more likely to drop out or fail out of school (Bowditch, 1993; Skiba et al., 2006), which will handicap their future career trajectories. Moreover, the tight coupling between schools and the criminal justice system suggests that more youth will be arrested for behaviors that in years past would have led only to in-school punishments (Wald and Losen, 2003; Rimer, 2004; Reyes, 2006; Hirschfield, 2008). As a result, youth who are arrested for school misbehavior will face greater future difficulties with employment prospects and other life opportunities (e.g. Pager, 2007). It is important for future research to consider the long-term implications of contemporary school discipline for students, and whether the known consequences of school punishment for youth of color (e.g. Bowditch, 1993) apply equally to middle-class white students who now receive a brand of discipline formerly reserved for youth of color and low-income youth.

There are broader potential implications to contemporary school discipline and security as well. Given that a wide array of students is being exposed to the experience of marginalization in the face of governance, it is possible that future civic participation will decline. Our experiences in the schools we studied certainly suggest that students view themselves as powerless to shape the rules they face, and that they respond by

either accepting or avoiding authority structures. If this carries over into the realm of civic governance once these students reach the age of majority, it is possible that voting rates will decline from their already low levels.

Increased levels of student misbehavior are another potential consequence of contemporary school discipline and security. Prior research clearly shows relatively low levels of misconduct in schools that establish fair, clear and consistently enforced rules, that provide rewards for rule compliance and punishment for rule infractions and in which caring adults interact regularly with students in ways that teach prosocial norms and expectations (e.g. Bryk and Driscoll, 1988; Mayer and Leone, 1999; Gottfredson, 2001; Arum, 2003; Gottfredson et al., 2005). This research is consistent with procedural justice theory, which predicts that whether an individual complies with laws is largely a result of one's perception that the law is just and is enforced fairly (Tyler, 1990; Tyler and Sunshine, 2003). It seems likely that denying students a voice in discipline will negatively affect their perceptions of procedural justice.

Though these results are important for better understanding how school discipline and security take shape in contemporary schools, it is important to note a few potential limitations. One is generalizability; with only four schools being studied, there is no way to know whether what I describe here is true of other schools across the USA as well. This does seem likely, since the study includes schools in two states that are very distant from one another, yet the processes we observed in each of the four schools are very similar to one another and these schools have adopted strategies and logics that are also being adopted across the country (e.g. SROs, zero-tolerance policies, etc.). But as a qualitative study, the purpose here is to understand how these policies take shape in schools and whether cultural reproduction is valid in this case, not to generalize to schools across the USA. The second limitation is that two important groups are not considered here: private schools and students who have dropped out of school. It seems likely that discipline and security are very different in private schools than in public high schools; it is also possible that the discipline climate in the schools we studied has been changed as a result of the most troubled students leaving school, either by their own volition or by force. A third limitation is that although both race/ethnicity and social class have been shown in prior research to have independent effects on the likelihood of school punishment (see earlier), I am unable to deal with these two statuses separately. Rather, I compare what happens across schools with large numbers of lower-class youth of color and schools with mostly middle-class white youth. As I discuss earlier, making across-school comparisons adds to the literature by contributing a unique and important perspective to the large number of existing studies that makes within-school comparisons. Yet this comes with a cost: by relying on qualitative data, in which students' individual socio-economic status is not available through observations, I am unable to determine how social class and race/ethnicity operate in different ways to shape school discipline and security.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Nicole Bracy and Olivia Salcido for their help with data collection and analysis, as well as Ben Fleury-Steiner for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this manuscript. This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. SES-550208. Any opinions, findings

and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation. A prior version of this article was presented at Ohio State University, Criminal Justice Research Center, September 2007.

Notes

- 1 This figure was listed on the association's website, www.nasro.org, as of September 2007.
- 2 Other studies consider gender as well, and particularly the intersection of race and gender in shaping school discipline (e.g. Ferguson, 2000). Though this topic is important, since I perform comparisons between rather than within schools, each of which have similar male/female ratios, I do not address it here.
- 3 Selection of school sites proceeded in three stages. First, I chose four appropriate districts and schools based on student demographics within each state: two districts/schools housing mostly middle-class white youth and two with mostly lower-income youth of color. Second, I leveraged professional contacts in an attempt to gain access to one of each of the selected districts and schools. Third, since I was denied access to research in one selected district in each state, I then proceeded to the second (equally appropriate, demographically) choice; in both cases access was then granted.
- 4 One exception to this is that in Clinton High a lack of space necessitated the use of a few trailers, located immediately outside of a side entrance to the school building. A fence surrounding part of the trailer area helped prevent students from leaving campus through this area.
- 5 One research assistant worked in each state, each of whom had prior training and experience in qualitative data collection. Before entering each research site, I taught each research assistant about the theoretical issues being considered (e.g. governing through crime, cultural reproduction) and the particular technologies in which we were most concerned (e.g. student-disciplinarian interactions, the manner in which rules are enforced, etc.). Additionally, to help reliability, I accompanied each research assistant on the first several site visits, and shared field notes with the assistant. I also read each field note carefully and met regularly with each research assistant to discuss the process of data collection. Perhaps the larger threat to the quality of our data is the fact that the social distance between the researchers and students may lower the validity of the data. Though one researcher was Latina, the other two were white; moreover, one researcher was in her late 20s and the other two in their 30s, thus sufficiently older than the high school students we observed. Interpersonal interviews were particularly helpful at mitigating this social distance, and we used these interviews as opportunities for students to explain to us what happened at school and how they felt about it.
- 6 In this and other excerpts from field notes, I use single quotes to show that the reported dialogue is based on field notes and thus not a direct quotation. I use double-quotes in this excerpt to show confidence that the particular phrase is an exact reporting of what was said.
- 7 Consider, for example, George Wallace's (1963) inaugural address as Governor of Alabama, known as the 'segregation now, segregation forever' speech, in which

Wallace links desegregation to general violence in Washington, DC, blurring the line between school violence and violence in surrounding communities (Alabama Department of Archives & History, 2007).

- 8 Since this table measures number of suspensions rather than individuals suspended, it includes multiple suspensions given to the same individuals. This is why Adams High has a rate of 96 suspensions per 100 students. During that year, 43 percent of enrolled students received at least one suspension, with many students receiving multiple suspensions.
- 9 Certainly a number of studies go beyond comparing rates of punishment and explain how these rates are produced (e.g. McCarthy and Hoge, 1987; Ferguson, 2000). Yet few studies consider how school punishments are enacted, how they shape the school social climate and how this process compares across demographically diverse schools (for exceptions see Hayward, 2000; Lyons and Drew, 2006).
- 10 All names of research subjects used in this article are pseudonyms.
- 11 The basic strategies in all four schools are very similar, as I describe above. Yet there are subtle differences across them. For example, there is a much larger role of security guards in the Southwestern schools than in the Mid-Atlantic schools, in which administrators handle more of the security patrolling and discipline, and the two states have different arrays of violence prevention programs (e.g. conflict resolution, peer mediation, etc.). A detailed comparison of these subtle differences, and variations in local approaches to governing through crime in schools, is beyond the scope of this article.

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