Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in School Discipline

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University of Oregon
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Handouts: http://www.pbis.org
http://kentmcintosh.wordpress.com

Information from this session comes from:

Thanks also to ongoing work of the National PBIS Center’s Disproportionality Workgroup

Session Goals

1. Describe the **problem** of disproportionality
2. Show a **model** of bias and decision making that explains why current efforts have not been effective
3. Share a proposed **multicomponent intervention** for reducing disproportionality
4. **Discuss** these ideas and what you are doing in this area

Handouts: http://pbis.org

Disproportionality in School Discipline (Losen & Skiba, 2010)
What do we know about disproportionality?

- Risk remains after controlling for poverty (Wallace et al., 2008)
- No evidence of different base rates of behavior (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Losen & Skiba, 2010)
- Patterns indicate that racial/ethnic bias plays a role (Skiba et al., 2002)
- Some discipline policies have been counterproductive (APA, 2008)

School Discipline Guidance

- Represents collaboration between Departments of Education and Justice
- Recognizes the importance of disproportionality in school discipline
- Notes how disproportionality leads to lost instructional time and contacts with juvenile justice
- Provides guiding principles for intervention

A Unidimensional View of Bias

![Diagram showing the relationship between Racial Bias and Disproportionate Discipline]
A Multidimensional View of Bias

Two Systems for Decision Making (Kahneman, 2011)

- **System 1: Fast Decisions**
  - Automatic, snap judgments
  - Intuitive, unconscious

- **System 2: Slow Decisions**
  - Deliberate decisions
  - Allows for conscious attention

Different Biases, Different Solutions

- **Explicit Bias** (System 2)
  - Ineffective: Cultural sensitivity training, explaining value of diversity, telling people to be less biased
  - Effective: Top-down policies with accountability

- **Implicit Bias** (System 1)
  - Ineffective: Top-down policies with accountability
  - Effective: Clear discipline systems, specific guidance in decision-making

(Girvan, 2013; Girvan et al., 2013; Lai et al., 2013; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006)
Multidimensional View of Bias

Racial Bias \[ \rightarrow \] Disproportionate Discipline

Vulnerable Decision Points

- Subjective Behavior
- Vague Discipline System
- Prior Incidents
- Unfamiliar with Student

Subjective Behavior \[ \rightarrow \] Hunger
Vague Discipline System \[ \rightarrow \] Fatigue
Prior Incidents \[ \rightarrow \] Unfamiliar with Student

Implicit Bias in Refereeing
(Carlson, 2014)

Foul Differential in the ACC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Home game differential</th>
<th>Away game differential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boston College</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clemson</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida State</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Tech</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>-11</td>
<td>-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>-11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.C. State</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notre Dame</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syracuse</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Tech</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wake Forest</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disproportionality Model: Your Ideas

- How does this model fit with your experiences?

School Discipline Guidance
1. **Climate and Prevention**
   - Engage in deliberate efforts to create positive school climates
   - Prioritize the use of evidence-based prevention strategies, such as tiered supports
   - Promote social and emotional learning
   - Provide regular training and supports to all school personnel
   - Collaborate with local agencies and other stakeholders
   - Ensure that any school-based law enforcement officers’ roles focus on improving school safety and reducing inappropriate referrals to law enforcement

2. **Clear, Appropriate, and Consistent Expectations and Consequences**
   - Set high expectations for behavior and adopt an instructional approach to discipline
   - Involve families, students, and school personnel, and communicate regularly and clearly
   - Ensure that clear, developmentally appropriate, and proportional consequences apply for misbehavior
   - Create policies that include appropriate procedures for students with disabilities and due process for all students
   - Remove students from the classroom only as a last resort, ensure that alternative settings provide academic instruction, and return students to class as soon as possible

3. **Equity and Continuous Improvement**
   - Train all school staff to apply school discipline policies and practices in a fair and equitable manner
   - Use proactive, data-driven, and continuous efforts, including gathering feedback from families, students, teachers, and school personnel to prevent, identify, reduce, and eliminate discriminatory discipline and unintended consequences

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**Points of Entry for Reducing Disproportionality**

- Setting event: Lack of positive interactions with student
- Antecedent: Fatigue
- Behavior: Loud complaints about work (subjective behavior)
- Consequence: Student leaves class (Escape social interaction)

**Use of Data**

- Implicit Bias
- Explicit Bias
Multicomponent Intervention to Address Disproportionality

- Prevent situations that can lead to disproportionate discipline
- Reduce effects of **explicit bias** through effective policies
- Reduce effects of **implicit bias** through specific training
- Use data for decision making

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**Prevent** Situations Leading to Disproportionate Discipline

- Use **Effective Instruction**
  - Reduce achievement gap
- Use **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**
  - Enhance relevance of the curriculum
- Implement **SWPBIS**
  - Improve school climate
  - Increase positive student-teacher interactions
  - Provide instructional alternatives to ODRs and suspensions

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**Effects of Effective Instruction on the Achievement Gap**


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**Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

- Tigard-Tualatin School District (Chaparro, Helton, & Sadler, in press)
1. Proactive, instructional approach *may* prevent problem behavior and exposure to biased responses to problem behavior
2. Increasing positive student-teacher interactions *may* enhance relationships to prevent challenges
3. More objective referral and discipline procedures *may* reduce subjectivity and influence of cultural bias
4. Professional development *may* provide teachers with more instructional responses

**How SWPBIS *May* Reduce Disproportionate Discipline**

*SWPBIS and Discipline Disproportionality* (Vincent, Swain-Bradway, Tobin & May, 2011)

**Culturally Responsive SWPBIS Implementation**

- Develop and revise school-wide systems with active involvement of families, students, and the community
- Use regular student and family surveys to assess acceptability and fit
- Consider using counter-stereotypical acknowledgment

**Counter-stereotypical Examples**

- Images that break negative stereotypical associations
- Keeping these in one’s mind reduces effects of implicit bias on decision making (Lai et al., 2013)
- Asking educators to look for and acknowledge positive behavior by students of color may decrease the effects of implicit bias (Moniz, 2013)
Reduce Effects of Explicit Bias through Effective Policies

- Use disaggregated discipline data to identify and monitor levels of disproportionality
- Implement specific policies with accountability

Use of Data to Reduce Effects of Explicit Bias

- Disaggregate discipline (ODR and suspension) data
- Calculate common metrics: risk indices/ratios

Specific Policies for Explicit Bias: Equitable Mission Statements

The teachers, administrators and staff of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) believe in the equal worth and dignity of all students and are committed to educate all students to their maximum potential.

Policy Recommendations for Reducing Explicit Bias

- Specific Commitment to Equity
  - Mission statements
  - Hiring preferences
  - Ongoing professional development
  - Removal of discriminatory practices
How are “race-neutral” policies discriminatory?

- Regardless of intent...
  - Policies such as zero tolerance and three-strikes policies are disproportionately applied to students of color (Losen & Skiba, 2010)
  - Suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary practices have been shown to cause harm (Am. Academy of Pediatrics, 2013)
  - This disproportionate harm is what makes the policy discriminatory

Policy Recommendations for Reducing Explicit Bias

- Specific Commitment to Equity
  - Mission statements
  - Hiring preferences
  - Ongoing professional development
  - Removal of discriminatory practices
- Accountability for Efforts
  - Professional development attendance
  - Share disproportionality data regularly
  - Build equity outcomes into evaluations

Reduce Effects of Implicit Bias through Specific Training

- Reduce ambiguity in ODR definitions and processes
  - Clear guidelines for classroom vs. office-managed behaviors
  - Avoid rules that result in disproportionate exclusion
- Identify specific vulnerable decision points
  - General
  - Local

Multidimensional View of Bias

- Racial Bias
- Disproportionate Discipline
- Situation

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</table>
Data Drill Drown

Use the information from the SWIS Dashboard to drill down and analyze data.

Change the graph type to change the analysis.

Use of Data to Reduce Effects of Implicit Bias

- Use school discipline data to identify specific vulnerable decision points for your school or district

Neutralizing Routines for Reducing Effects of Implicit Bias

- Use vulnerable decision points in training to reduce disproportionality
- Self-instruction using implementation intentions
  - Clear
  - Brief
  - "If-then" statements
    - "If defiance, keep in class"
    - "If I am tired, delay decision until I can think clearly"

The “shoot no-shoot” task
Neutralizing Routines for Reducing Effects of Implicit Bias

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<td>Loud complaints about (subjective behavior)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>Self-instruction “See me after class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequence</td>
<td>Student leaves class (Escape social interaction)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What do you think?
1. Is it feasible?
2. Would it work?
3. What are we doing wrong?

What are you doing to address disproportionality?
- What is working?
- What is not working?

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References


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