Restorative Justice in Schools: The Influence of Race on Restorative Discipline

Allison Ann Payne[1] and Kelly Welch[1]

Abstract

Schools today are more frequently using punitive discipline practices to control student behavior, despite the greater effectiveness of community-building techniques on compliance that are based on restorative justice principles found in the criminal justice system. Prior research testing the racial threat hypothesis has found that the racial composition of schools is associated with the use of more punitive and less reparative approaches to discipline, just as it has been associated with criminal justice harshness. However, no research to date has assessed the possibility that school-level racial composition may affect the likelihood that specific restorative justice techniques, which are the most commonly used alternative, will be implemented. This study is the first to test the racial threat perspective in relation to use of the restorative practices student conferences, peer mediation, restitution, and community service. Using a national random sample in logistic regression analyses, we find that schools with proportionally more Black students are less likely to use such techniques when responding to student behavior. This finding has several troubling implications for minority students in particular and for education as a whole.

Keywords

restorative justice, school discipline, racial threat

[1]Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, Villanova University, Villanova, PA, USA

Corresponding Author:
Allison Ann Payne, Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, Villanova University, 280 Saint Augustine Center, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, PA 19085, USA.
Email: allison.payne@villanova.edu

Restorative justice methods used to address student misbehavior in schools are similar to the approaches used in the criminal justice system that effectively focus on repairing the harm caused by crime by involving offenders, victims, and the community (Macready, 2009) through conferences that often sanction community service or restitution (Sherman, 2003) rather than with punishments that encourage recidivism (Braithwaite, Ahmed, Morrison, & Reinhart, 2001; Chmelynski, 2005; Morrison, 2005). Restorative programs in schools focus heavily on relationship building and repairing the harm caused by acts of misbehavior, delinquency, and crime (Ashworth et al., 2008; Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999, 2001; Chmelynski, 2005; Hendry, 2009; McCluskey et al., 2008; Morrison, 2003, 2005, 2007; Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005; Riestenberg, 2012; Shaw, 2007; Wearmouth, McKinney, & Glynn, 2007). Within the restorative justice model, student misbehavior is viewed as a violation of a relationship, either one between the offender and victim or one between the offender and the overall school community (Drewey, 2004; Morrison, 2003). In order to restore the harm caused, the offending student and those individuals whose trust was violated must reconcile, thereby mending this relationship. The importance of building and maintaining positive relationships among members of the school community is continually stressed in this type of disciplinary model, to encourage all members to adhere to school rules and norms so as to avoid violating these relationships (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001; Hendry, 2009; Morrison, 2007; Riestenberg, 2012).

Restorative justice conferences were first implemented within schools in Australia in 1994. Studies since then have illustrated their effectiveness as a response to student misbehavior, regardless of school composition (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Queensland Education Department, 1996; Youth Justice Board, 2005). Directly contrary to the disciplinary practice of student exclusion by means of suspension and expulsion, these approaches shift the focus from punishment and isolation to reconciliation and community (Morrison et al., 2005). Indeed, some proponents have even argued that restorative justice is *best* applied to the educational domain, rather than the criminal justice system, due to the close nature of the relationships within schools, where school community members see each other daily and even minor encounters can easily turn dangerous if not handled adequately (Morrison et al., 2005). Thus, a restorative justice paradigm offers a disciplinary model that can repair harm and create a whole-school communal environment, while reducing the frequency and severity of school violations (Bazemore & Schiff, 2010; Cremin, 2010; Morrison, 2010).

Restorative justice practices allow schools to create individualized solutions that are manageable for the offending students to fulfill, allow victims to receive closure, and repair the harm caused by the misbehavior (Watchel, 2001). These objectives provide a clear advantage over traditional school punishment, which is often associated with various negative academic outcomes and may actually increase the probability of student deviance and delinquency (Foney & Cunningham, 2002; Nichols, 2004; Schiraldi & Zeidenberg, 2001). Specific techniques that exemplify restorative goals include student conferences and peer mediation; these often lead to outcomes such as restitution, which requires the offending student to repay the school or a victim for damages or harm done, or community service (Fields, 2003; Wachtel & McCold, 2001). Restorative practices are generally preferred by students over the traditional sanctions of detention, suspension, and expulsion and have had high satisfaction rates among all school community members (Drewey, 2004; Fields, 2003; O'Dea & Loewen, 1998). Indeed, a restorative justice model of discipline holds much promise for reducing school disorder and violence (Drewey, 2004; Fields, 2003; O'Dea & Loewen, 1998).

However, school-based restorative justice proponents caution that the implementation of a true restorative model of discipline requires a fundamental paradigm shift that addresses not just discipline but the entire school climate and community as well (Bazemore & Schiff, 2010; Cremin, 2010; Morrison, 2010). By acknowledging a focus not just on safety but also on teaching and learning (Cremin, 2010), this shift from "authoritarian and punitive to democratic and responsive" (Bazemore & Schiff, 2010, p. 8) must take into account the complicated nature of education as an institution. Schools will only be able to successfully implement restorative practices if they fully change their view of discipline, seeing it as an opportunity to build students' capacity to consider how their behavior is impacting the greater school community rather than a punitive reaction to students' inability to follow a set of rules (Morrison et al., 2005). This accords with Bazemore and Schiff's (2010) suggestion that the restorative justice philosophy could be combined with a focus on communal school organization (Gottfredson, 2001; Payne, Gottfredson, & Gottfredson, 2003) in order to create a whole-school environment of supportive relationships and accountability.

Further, schools and districts should recognize that restorative justice is not simply a set of behavior modification techniques or a way to reduce conflict, but rather a whole philosophy that would need to be adopted not just in schools, but at all levels of the educational system. Corroborating this contention, most research indicates that restorative policies will be sustained in schools and continually produce positive results only when restorative justice

ideas are adopted as a philosophy by the entire school population rather than implemented as one program in one classroom or at one level of administration (Braithwaite et al., 2001; Calhoun & Daniels, 2008; Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001; Chmelynski, 2005; Fields, 2003; Hopkins, 2002; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Morrison et al., 2005; Shaw, 2007; Watchel, 1999).

Current Trends in School Discipline

While there is great promise in the restorative approach to student discipline, the likelihood that these methods will be implemented may be substantially hampered by the current punitive trend in school discipline. Schools have been much more supportive of harsh approaches to preventing and identifying student misbehavior, as evidenced by the growing presence of surveillance cameras, metal detectors, drug-sniffing dogs, security-oriented School Resource Officers (SROs), and even armed police (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001; Simon, 2007). Further, schools have enthusiastically endorsed severe punishments for rule-breakers that include revoking certain privileges and sanctioning detentions, suspensions, and expulsions (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001; Welch & Ann Payne, 2012). Some schools are now even involving the juvenile and criminal justice systems in addressing serious violations, a harsh trend that can produce even harsher consequences for the offending students who are found responsible or guilty (Berger, 2002).

These preventive and punitive tactics have been quite popular in our post-Columbine society that enacted zero-tolerance policies to reduce the potential for violence in schools by requiring punishment for gun possession. Now, school-based zero-tolerance policies have broadened to include mandatory punishments for possession of any number of "contraband" items, such as knives, drugs, and even over-the-counter medication on school grounds. The result of this trend has been an even larger number of students receiving exclusionary discipline (Cameron, 2006; Fabelo et al., 2011; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008).

Nevertheless, statistics indicate that these policies have not manifested in a measurable impact on school violations or violence (Kupchik & Monahan, 2006). In fact, research shows that while schools intensified their approaches to student misbehavior, school crime and delinquency were already decreasing, and had been since even before the Columbine murders in 1999 (Berger, 2002; Devoe, Peter, Noonan, Snyder, & Baum, 2005; Dinkes, Cataldi, & Lin-Kelly, 2008). Despite the harsh policies and practices adopted by schools in an attempt to "get tough" on violations, schools are not necessarily any safer than they were before these measures were implemented.

In addition, there is a good chance that these punitive techniques are having a profoundly negative effect on students. Students who are subjected to harsh discipline are at increased risk of future delinquency, both in school and in the community (Foney & Cunningham, 2002; Nichols, 2004; Schiraldi & Zeidenberg, 2001). Further, research on the "school to prison pipeline" indicates that these students are also more likely to eventually be punished in the criminal justice system (Fabelo et al., 2011). Therefore, in order to reduce student delinquency and youth crime, thereby possibly reducing the size of the population under corrective control in the justice system, implementing a more restorative approach to addressing student—one that has been shown to reduce recidivism and boost the number of students who complete their educations—would be a paramount priority.

Student Racial Composition and Intensification of Punishment

Although a number of school traits influence whether schools employ punitive disciplinary approaches, research indicates that racial characteristics are among those that are especially consequential. In particular, a higher proportion of Black students in schools is related to the use of general types of harsh disciplinary policies (Welch & Payne, 2010) as well as the implementation of specific exclusionary practices. Further, the use of harsh policies in schools with disproportionately more minority students is associated with the use of a wide variety of other punitive techniques as well (Payne & Welch, 2011). However, no study to date has assessed whether high minority composition is similarly associated with the odds that schools will be less likely to implement specific restorative practices to address student violations. Just as schools with more Black students use harsher preventive and punishment tactics in response to student misbehavior, schools with more Black students may be less likely to use restorative justice techniques, such as student conferences and restitution.

One theoretical orientation explaining the influence of racial composition on discipline in prior research is the racial threat perspective (Welch & Payne, 2010). Racial threat is a critical macro level explanation for greater social control, which predicts that the spatial presence of a high ratio of Blacks will intensify public punitiveness because of the perceived political, economic, or criminal threat that a relatively large minority population presents to the White majority (Blalock, 1967; Crawford, Chiricos, & Kleck, 1998; Liska, 1992). Racial threat is typically operationalized by the racial composition of place, such as the proportion of Blacks in communities (Smith & Holmes, 2003),

cities (Mosher, 2001), counties (Demuth & Steffensmeier, 2004), and states (Behrens, Uggen, & Manza, 2003). Racial composition has been related to a variety of criminal justice outcomes, including resources allocated to law enforcement, (Chamlin, 1989), rates of arrest (Mosher, 2001) and of incarceration (Jacobs & Kleban, 2003), resources and size of corrections (Jacobs & Helms, 1999), and executions (Baumer, Messner, & Rosenfeld, 2003). Racial threat could also be related to reduced use of nonpunitive approaches.

There is strong support for the hypothesis that racial threat is associated with myriad forms of punitive social control in both the criminal justice system and schools. By contrast, very limited research has assessed whether this perspective may manifest itself in a disinclination to adopt more reparative approaches to punishment or discipline. Previous research testing the influence of racial threat in schools has shown that schools with a greater percentage of Black students are less apt to implement mild discipline in favor of harsher sanctions (Welch & Payne, 2010). However, no studies have examined the application of the racial threat hypothesis to the likelihood that schools will use specific restorative approaches to address student behavior.

The Current Study

The current research posits that racial threat structures the use of restorative justice approaches in schools. Given the findings of previous research on racial threat and school discipline, schools with a greater percentage of Black students are expected to be less likely to respond to student misbehavior with specific restorative justice discipline practices (Braithwaite, Ahmed, Morrison, & Reinhart, 2001; Fields, 2003; Hendry, 2009; Morrison, 2007; Riestenberg, 2012; Wachtel & McCold, 2001). Thus, this study tests the following five hypotheses in a series of quantitative analyses: A greater composition of Black students in schools is negatively related to the use of (1) student conferences, (2) peer mediation, (3) restitution, (4) community service, and (5) a comprehensive restorative justice discipline model reflecting use of all of the previous four responses to misbehavior.

Method

Data

This study's data come from the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools (Gottfredson et al., 2000). Using the most comprehensive list of schools available (a mailing list maintained by Market Data Retrieval, a

commercial mailing list vendor), the original researchers selected a nationally representative probability sample of 1,287 public, private, and Catholic schools and administered a survey to school principals in 1997; 848 schools (66.3%) responded. A second survey, containing different questions from those asked in the first survey, was administered to these principals in1998; 635 schools (74.9% of the 848) responded. Also administered in 1998 were student and teacher questionnaires, although only in the secondary schools; 310 schools (55.6% of the 558 secondary schools involved in Phase 2) participated in the student survey and 403 schools (72.2%) participated in the teacher survey. These surveys were administered in person and contained primarily binary and likert-type scale questions. Schools located in areas with more female-headed households with children, a greater proportion of urban population, and more households receiving public assistance were less likely to participate, while those in small towns or rural areas were significantly more likely to participate. The implications of response rates and nonrandom attrition are addressed in the Discussion section.

Certain categories of schools are excluded from analyses. Private and religious schools are not included because disciplinary policies and norms in public schools vary widely from these schools; thus assessing private and religious schools would require separate analyses. In addition, past discipline research focuses almost solely on public schools, leading this study to fit better within established empirical frameworks. Alternative schools for disruptive students include a large number of outliers on several of variables of interest and are thus excluded. Finally, because the student and teacher surveys were only administered in secondary schools, only middle and high schools are examined. The final sample includes 294 public, nonalternative secondary schools.

Measures

Items and scales used in this study are described below and descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1 (Gottfredson et al., 2000).

Restorative justice. Four specific restorative justice practices, highlighted by previous research (Fields, 2003; Hendry, 2009; Morrison, 2007; Morrison et al., 2005; Riestenberg, 2012; Wachtel & McCold, 2001), are operationalized with questions from the second principal survey regarding the use of *student conference, peer mediation, restitution*, and *community service*. Each question asks principals whether their schools use the particular practice, beginning with the following introduction: "Different schools make use of different responses to student misconduct. Following is a list of possible

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Measure	Mean	SD	Range	Alpha	N
Restorative justice					
Student conference	.72	.45	.00-1.00	.69[a]	261
Peer mediation	.61	.49	.00-1.00	.66[a]	215
Restitution	.95	.22	.00-1.00	.66[a]	241
Community service	.58	.50	.00-1.00	.67[a]	245
Restorative justice discipline	.00	1.00	−2.79-3.03	.61	258
Racial threat					
Black student composition	13.52	22.45	.00-99.69	—	294
Control variables					
Percent students free/reduced lunch	33.26	26.08	.00-100.00	—	222
Percent Hispanic students	10.29	18.73	.00-98.11	—	263
Percent male students	39.11	7.08	25.00-96.80	—	243
Principal supervision	3.15	.37	2.11-4.00	.91	285
Perceptions of administration	.93	.16	.47-1.25	.84	287
Discipline training	1.63	.35	1.00-2.00	.90	238
Student delinquency and drug use	.00	1.00	−1.84-7.24	.86	243
Perceived school risk	.85	.36	.00-4.00	.94	287
Teacher victimization	.16	.07	.00-1.00	.61	287
Concentrated disadvantage	−.15	.65	−1.20-3.00	—	281
Urbanicity	−.20	.95	−2.32-2.39	—	281

Note: [a]This value represents the individual variable loading on the *Restorative Justice Discipline* factor score. SD = standard deviation.

responses to student misconduct school administrators might use. Please indicate if your school uses these responses." Possible answers to the questions are "not used," "used," and "used often." After an examination of frequency distributions, these variables were collapsed into binary measures (Bernard, 2000). Based on the distributions, *peer mediation, restitution*, and *community service* were collapsed according to whether they were "used (= 1; which includes the responses "used often" and "used") or "not used" (= 0). Because the frequency distribution indicated that all schools used *student conference*, this variable was collapsed according to whether it was "used often" (= 1) or "not used often" (= 0). A *restorative justice discipline* scale, based on a factor score from these four variables (Payne & Welch, 2010), was used to test Hypothesis 5.

Racial threat. The percent of Black students in each school is used to operationalize racial threat (*Black student composition*), as is common in prior threat research. This variable is taken from the Common Core of Data, a program of the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education that gathers data on public education (Gottfredson et al., 2000).

Other predictors of school discipline. Also included in this study are various predictors of student punishment or school discipline management to control for potential effects on the use of disciplinary practices. Student socioeconomic status has been shown to predict student discipline (Skiba, Michael, & Nardo, 2002) and, thus, is represented in this study by a principal question about the percent of students receiving free or reduced price lunches (p*ercent students free/reduced lunch*). *Percent Hispanic students* is also included, aggregated from responses to the student questionnaire, as research has shown that the relative size of the Hispanic population affects the severity of criminal justice practices (Holmes et al., 1996; Jacobs & Carmichael, 2002). In addition, the percent of male students in schools is related to student discipline (Casella, 2001; Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003) and is therefore included (*percent male students*) as an aggregation from student questionnaire responses.

Because principal leadership has been shown to predict discipline management (Gottfredson et al., 2000; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982), this study includes two measures of effective administration. *Principal supervision* is a scale from the first principal survey that asked about a variety of leadership activities, such as presence and visibility, consideration, planning, and supervision. Possible responses were "top," "high," "some," and "little;" the mean of the principal's responses to each item forms a school's score. *Perceptions of administration* is a scale from the teacher questionnaire that includes true/false items measuring teachers' perceptions of leadership, such as "teachers feel free to communicate with the principal." A school's score on this scale is the mean across teachers of the proportion of items endorsed.

In addition, the quality and quantity of discipline training received by school personnel has been related to a school's response to misbehavior (Gottfredson et al., 2000; Wu et al., 1982); therefore, a measure of this is operationalized by a scale from the second principal questionnaire (*discipline training*). This scale includes questions like "how much initial in-service training in school discipline procedures was completed?" along with various yes/no statement items, including "participants practiced applying the principles." A school's score was obtained by collapsing all nonbinary items into dichotomous variables, then averaging all items to form a proportion of items endorsed.

Because the level of school crime and disorder is presumably associated with school disciplinary practices (Skiba et al., 2002), it is important that the effects of student delinquency are controlled here with a scale taken from the student survey (*student delinquency and drug use*), which asks about crimes committed and drugs used by the respondent during the 12 months prior to the survey; possible responses were "yes" and "no." A school's score on this scale is the mean across students of the proportion of affirmative responses. Two measures of crime salience, both from the teacher questionnaire, are also included, as previous research has supported this as an influence on punitive school discipline (Hilarski, 2004; Skiba et al., 2002). *Perceived school risk* represents how safe teachers feel in various places in the school, with the possible responses of "very unsafe," "fairly unsafe," "average," "fairly safe," and "very safe." This scale is coded so that higher values indicate higher levels of perceived risk and a school's score is the mean across each school's teachers of responses to each item. *Teacher victimization* measures the type and amount of victimization experienced by teachers during the 12 months prior to the survey. A school's score on this scale is the mean across respondents of the proportion of binary items to which teachers responded "yes."

Finally, characteristics of the surrounding community using Census data and school districting information are included (Brantlinger, 1991; DeVoe et al., 2005). Because characteristics of communities in which schools are located have more impact on school crime and disorder than characteristics of the communities in which the schools' students live (Welsh, Stokes, & Greene, 2000), the effects of poverty and urbanicity of the census tract in which each school is located is controlled with two scales (Simonsen, 1998). *Concentrated Disadvantage* is a factor scale including median income (proportion of households with income below $27,499), poverty (ratio of persons below the 1.24 poverty level to persons above), welfare (average household public assistance income), divorce rate (ratio of adults who are married to those who are separated, divorced, or have a spouse absent), unemployment (proportion of unemployed males/females in the labor force), and female-headed households (ratio of single females with children under 18 to married couples with children under 18). *Urbanicity* is a factor score that includes urban level (city level type), urbanicity (the proportion of people living within an urban area), and population size (total population).

Analytical Strategy

The distributional characteristics of measures were examined first. *Urbanicity* and *Concentrated Disadvantage* were trimmed to address three extreme

outliers and resulting skewness (Wilcox, 2004). Due to the dichotomous nature of the first four dependent variables, four sets of binary logistic regression models were estimated to test the first four hypotheses. Each binary restorative justice outcome was regressed first on all control variables; *Black student composition* was then added to each model. In all models, the Hosmer and Lemeshow χ^2 test examines the overall fit of the model; well-fitting models result in nonsignficant χ^2, indicating that the estimated model does not differ significantly from the observed values. Additionally, the Wald χ^2 test determines the significance of individual parameter estimates. Finally, a pair of ordinary least squares regression models was estimated to test the fifth hypothesis. For this model, the *restorative justice discipline* factor score was first regressed on all control variables; *Black student composition* was then added. For all equations, tolerance values and Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) were examined in ordinary least squares to test for multicollinearity. No tolerance values were smaller than 0.1, and only 4 of 40 VIFs were larger than 2.5, with the largest of these being 2.905. Thus, multicollinearity is not an apparent problem (Freund & Little, 2000). Tests also indicate there is no presence of heteroskedasticity.

Results

The results of the binary logistic regression estimates for the first four restorative justice outcomes can be seen in Table 2. As predicted in Hypothesis 1, *Black student composition* is significantly and negatively related to *student conference* ($b = -.05$, $p<.01$), illustrating that for each 1% increase in the percentage of Black students, the log odds of a school using student conferences often as a response to misbehavior decreases by .05. Examining the odds-ratio of this parameter estimate shows that for each 1% increase in the percentage of Black students, the odds of a school using student conferences often (versus not using student conferences often) decreases by a factor of .95. Notably, when *Black student composition* is not included (Model 1), *percent free/reduced lunch* is a significant predictor of *student conference*, such that schools with a greater percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch are less likely to respond to misbehavior with student conferences. However, once *Black student composition* is included (Model 2), the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch no longer predicts the use of student conferences. The only significant predictor of *student conference* in both models is *principal supervision*, such that more emphasis by principals on various forms of supervision is related to increased odds of a school using student conferences often. Also notable in both models is the

Table 2. Binary Logistic Regression Results for Use of Student Conference, Peer Mediation, Restitution, and Community Service[a].

Coefficients	Student conference				Peer mediation				Restitution				Community service			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)
Constant	1.76* (.71)	—	2.24* (.90)	—	6.41** (.86)	—	5.10*** (.94)	—	1.19 (.79)	—	1.90* (.66)	—	1.20* (.61)	—	2.32* (.41)	—
Black student comp	—	—	-.05** (.02)	.95	—	—	-.03* (.01)	.97	—	—	-.03* (.01)	.98	—	—	-.04* (.02)	.96
% Free/red lunch	-.03* (.01)	.97	-.02 (.01)	.98	-.03* (.01)	.97	-.00 (.02)	1.00	.04 (.03)	1.04	.04 (.04)	1.05	-.02 (.01)	.98	-.01 (.01)	.99
% Hispanic students	.01 (.01)	1.01	-.01 (.02)	.99	.03 (.02)	1.03	.04 (.02)	1.04	-.05 (.03)	.95	-.06 (.04)	.94	.01 (.01)	1.01	.01 (.02)	1.00
% Male students	-.01 (.03)	1.00	-.01 (.03)	.99	.03 (.04)	1.03	.02 (.04)	1.02	.13 (.08)	1.14	.11 (.08)	1.11	-.04 (.03)	.96	-.03 (.03)	.97
Principal supervision	.94* (.60)	2.56	1.52* (.67)	4.57	.95 (.66)	2.57	1.10 (.64)	3.02	-1.46 (1.45)	.23	-.77 (1.49)	.46	.07 (.56)	1.07	.52 (.58)	1.69
Perception of administration	-1.35 (1.73)	.26	-2.50 (1.85)	.08	-1.37 (1.70)	.25	-.79 (1.66)	.45	2.76 (3.22)	15.86	.80 (3.52)	2.22	2.96 (1.55)	19.25	2.32 (1.55)	10.19
Discipline training	-.26 (.69)	.77	.15 (.72)	1.16	2.64** (.75)	14.00	2.45** (.72)	11.62	2.74 (1.71)	15.55	2.33 (1.55)	10.27	-.09 (.62)	.92	.30 (.62)	1.35
Student delinquency/ drug	.71 (.93)	2.02	.53 (.84)	1.69	-4.35 (4.27)	.01	-4.95 (4.36)	.01	-1.85 (7.91)	.16	-5.45 (8.58)	.01	.53* (.78)	1.70	.48 (.72)	1.61
Perceived risk	.40 (.93)	1.50	.63 (.97)	1.87	-.25 (.99)	.78	.13 (.92)	1.14	.57 (2.00)	1.77	.01 (1.95)	1.01	.45 (.90)	1.57	.18 (.89)	1.19
Teacher victimization	-3.51 (4.81)	.03	-2.49 (5.05)	.08	2.53 (4.94)	12.55	2.12 (4.77)	8.34	-12.18 (11.63)	.01	-5.68 (10.21)	.01	1.67 (5.05)	5.30	5.08 (4.72)	160.2

(continued)

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Table 2. (continued)

Coefficients	Student conference				Peer mediation				Restitution				Community service			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)	b (SE)	Exp(b)
Concentrated disadvantage	.04 (.47)	1.04	.56 (.56)	1.76	.39 (.53)	1.48	.48 (.54)	1.61	−1.50 (1.34)	.22	−.91 (1.41)	.40	.53 (.48)	1.70	.85 (.52)	2.34
Urbanicity	.19 (.25)	1.21	.35 (.27)	1.43	.27 (.27)	1.31	.17 (.25)	1.18	1.41 (.78)	4.09	1.21 (.73)	3.34	.63* (.26)	1.88	.66* (.26)	1.94
Model summary																
Hosmer and Lemeshow χ^2	4.06		8.34		7.80		8.34		1.32		1.94		11.20		11.36	
Df	8		8		8		8		8		8		8		8	
p-value	.85		.40		.45		.40		.99		.98		.19		.18	

Note: [a] Reference categories are as follows: *student conference* is "not used often" ($= 0$), *peer mediation, restitution,* and *community service* is "not used" ($= 0$). SE = standard error.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

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lack of statistical significance of the *student delinquency and drug use* variable. The Hosmer and Lemeshow test suggests that the models provide a good fit to the data.

Table 2 also shows support for the second hypothesis: *Black student composition* is significantly and negatively related to *peer mediation* ($b = .-03$, p<.05), and the odds-ratio of this parameter estimate shows that this variable decreases the odds of a school using peer mediation in response to misbehavior (versus not using peer mediation) by a factor of .97. As with *student conference, percent free/reduced lunch* is a significant negative predictor of *peer mediation* when *Black student composition* is not included in the model (Model 3), such that schools with a greater percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch are less likely to respond to deviance with peer mediation. However, once *Black student composition* is introduced (Model 4), the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch no longer predicts the use of this response. The only other significant predictor of *peer mediation* in either model is *discipline training;* having high quality and quantity of discipline management training increased the odds of a school using peer mediation by 11.62. As with *student conference, student delinquency and drug use* is nonsignificant in both models and the Hosmer and Lemeshow test suggests that the models provide a good fit to the data.

Similarly, as predicted by Hypothesis 3, *Black student composition* is significantly and negatively related to *restitution* ($b = -.03$, $p<.05$), as seen in Table 2. The odds-ratio of this parameter estimate shows that the percentage of Black students decreases the odds of a school using restitution in response to misbehavior (versus not using restitution) by a factor of .98. No other variable is a significant predictor of *restitution* in Models 5 and 6, including *student delinquency and drug use.* Again, the Hosmer and Lemeshow test suggests that the models provide a good fit to the data.

Additionally, Table 2 shows support for the fourth hypothesis: *Black student composition* is significantly and negatively related to *community service* ($b = -.04$, $p<.05$), and the odds-ratio of this parameter estimate shows that the percentage of Black students decreases the odds of a school assigning community service in response to student misbehavior (versus not assigning community service) by a factor of .96. Notably, when *Black student composition* is not included (Model 7), *student delinquency and drug use* appears to predict a school's use of *community service*, such that schools with more student deviance are more likely to use community service as a response to misbehavior. However, once *Black student composition* is introduced (Model 8), *student delinquency and drug use* no longer predicts the use of community service. The only significant predictor of *community service* in both models

Table 3. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Results for Schools' Use of a Restorative Justice Discipline Model

Coefficients	Model 9			Model 10		
	b	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta
Constant	−2.794	1.481		−2.465	1.431	
Black student composition	—	—	—	−.019**	.006	−.367
Percent students free/ reduced lunch	−.015**	.005	−.392	−.009	.005	−.239
Percent Hispanic students	.012*	.006	.249	.004	.006	.077
Percent male students	.000	.012	−.002	−.002	.012	−.018
Principal supervision	.504**	.244	.185	.644**	.240	.236
Perceptions of administration	.750	.639	.121	.395	.627	.064
Discipline training	.353	.272	.124	.488	.265	.171
Student delinquency and drug use	1.918	1.639	.109	.644	1.632	.037
Perceived school risk	.003	.374	.001	.103	.362	.035
Teacher victimization	1.344	1.901	.083	1.650	1.835	.102
Concentrated disadvantage	.121	.196	.072	.306	.198	.182
Urbanicity	.122	.101	.118	.184	.099	.178
Model summary						
R-squared		.146			.214	
Adjusted R-squared		.065			.131	
F statistic		1.792*			2.581**	

Note: *$p<.05$. **$p<.01$.

is *urbanicity*, which increased the odds of a school using community service by 1.94. Again, the Holsmer and Lemeshow test suggests that the models provide a good fit to the data.

Finally, the results of the ordinary least squares regression models shown in Table 3 provide support for the fifth hypothesis: *Black student composition* is significantly and negatively related to comprehensive *restorative justice discipline*, such that schools with a greater percentage of Black students are less likely to respond to student misbehavior with an overall restorative justice model of discipline (−.019, *p*<.001). Notably, when *Black student composition* is not included (Model 9), both *percent students free/reduced lunch* and *percent Hispanic students* are significantly related to *restorative justice discipline*, such that schools with a greater percentage of students who receive

free or reduced-price lunch and a smaller percentage of Hispanic students are less likely to respond to use restorative practices as a response to misbehavior. However, both of these relationships are rendered nonsignificant once the percentage of Black students in the school is taken into account (Model 10). The only predictor that maintains significance in both models is *principal supervision*, such that schools with more effective principals are more likely to respond to misbehavior with restorative discipline. Also of note is the relative size of the betas in the second model: *Black student composition* is the strongest predictor of *restorative justice discipline*, with a beta of −.367. The R-squared of this model shows that 21.4% of the variance in the use of restorative practices is explained and the F statistic indicates a good fit to the data.

Discussion

This study examined whether student racial composition of schools contributes to the likelihood of schools using restorative justice responses to student misbehavior. Given previous findings that schools with a larger proportion of Black students are more likely to use punitive discipline, it was predicted that schools with more Black students would be less likely to implement restorative justice practices, which are known to be an effective response to crime and delinquency. Five hypotheses were tested, which predicted that a greater percentage of Black students in schools would be negatively related to the use of student conferences, peer mediation, restitution, community service, and overall restorative justice discipline in response to student misbehavior.

As described in the Results section, all five hypotheses were supported. A greater percentage of Black students decreased a school's odds of using student conferences, peer mediation, restitution, or community service in response to student violations. In addition, a greater percentage of Black students decreased the likelihood that a school would use an overall restorative justice model of discipline. Notably, when the racial composition of the student body was not accounted for, other factors such as student socioeconomic status and student deviance predicted the use of many of the restorative responses as well as the use of restorative discipline overall. However, once the percentage of Black students in the school was included, these influences were rendered spurious, no longer relating to the use of restorative discipline. In addition, for one of the restorative techniques—restitution—the percentage of Black students in the school was the *only* statistically significant predictor. Similarly, although other factors were related to the use of an overall restorative justice model of discipline, the percentage of Black students in the school was the strongest predictor.

The racially disparate use of a restorative justice approach to discipline found here is troubling. While punitive disciplinary techniques lead to detrimental consequences such as school failure, dropping out, and even increased delinquent behavior (Fabelo et al., 2011; Foney & Cunningham, 2002; Nichols, 2004; Schiraldi & Zeidenberg, 2001), a restorative approach to school discipline can create a more positive school climate with beneficial student outcomes (Bazemore & Schiff, 2010; Hendry, 2009; Morrison, 2007; Reistenberg, 2012). Indeed, Bazemore and Schiff (2010) propose that a restorative justice philosophy, combined with a focus on communal school organization (Gottfredson, 2001; Payne et al., 2003), offers a model of inclusionary dialogue that repairs harm and creates a whole-school environment of supportive relationships, accountability, and peacemaking values. Previous research has shown that communal schools, which may often use restorative justice frameworks for discipline management, have powerful consequences for all members of the school community (Gottfredson, 2001; Payne et al., 2003). Teachers in communally organized schools experience better morale and satisfaction as well as fewer absences and less victimization (Battistich & Solomon, 1997; Bryk & Driscoll, 1989; Payne, 2008, 2009; Payne et al., 2003). Additionally, students in communally organized schools demonstrate less delinquency, misbehavior, fear, victimization, and dropping out, and have greater empathy, school bonding, and academic interest, motivation, and achievement (Battistich & Hom, 1997; Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995; Bryk & Driscoll, 1989; Payne, 2008; Payne et al., 2003; Phaneuf, 2006; Solomon, Watson, Battistich, Schaps, & Delucchi, 1992; Stewart, 2003). Although it is harder for a racially diverse school to become communally organized, once such a school achieves this community, the effect on school disorder is greater than for a more homogenous school (Payne, 2012), suggesting a potential mediating effect. Thus, if a restorative philosophy could result in schools becoming more communally organized, this could facilitate students becoming more bonded to school. This, in turn, could decrease the likelihood that these students will misbehave, resulting in a greater chance for future student success, both in and out of school.

Study Limitations and Future Research

An important limitation of this study is the cross-sectional nature of the data, which makes it impossible to truly determine the causal direction of the associations found here. For instance, the negative association between the percent of Black students in a school and restorative justice approaches to discipline suggests the effects of racial threat, as predicted in this study.

Alternatively, it is also possible that this relationship is due to a shift in the student composition after these restorative policies were adopted. However, it is likely that the use of longitudinal school data would bolster these findings, considering that previous time-series research supports the minority threat perspective in relation to the severity of criminal policy (Kent & Jacobs, 2004). Nevertheless, in order to assess proper temporal ordering, future studies of the school-based racial threat hypothesis should be longitudinal in nature.

Another notable limitation pertains to the relationship between survey participation and community characteristics: Schools in areas with more female-headed households, greater urban populations, and more households that receive public assistance were significantly less likely to have participated in the original study. It is unlikely, however, that the basic conclusions of our study would have changed had these schools been included. Exploratory analyses investigating possible nonrandom attrition bias by examining schools located in communities similar to the nonparticipating schools show that these schools were both more likely to have a greater percentage of Black students than other schools and less likely to use restorative techniques. Therefore, it is likely that this study's results would have intensified had non-participating schools been included, suggesting that the findings may represent a conservative estimate of the racial threat hypothesis. It is possible that the relationships examined here are not linear in the distribution region of the nonparticipating schools; however, the linear relationship between community characteristics and nonparticipation, student racial composition, and restorative justice practices suggest otherwise. Nevertheless, we would benefit from future research that replicates this study with more representative samples.

The operationalization of restorative justice techniques poses another potential limitation. As discussed in the methods section, the principal survey does not specify whether the restorative practices were part of an overall communal approach in the school or merely individual behavior modification techniques unassociated with an overall disciplinary philosophy inherent to communally organized schools. In addition, the data do not include specific information on how each principal actually implemented these practices. Although previous research has highlighted student conferences, peer mediation, restitution, and community service as valuable restorative justice practices (Fields, 2003; Hendry, 2009; Morrison et al., 2005; Riestenberg, 2012; Wachtel & McCold, 2001), it is important to acknowledge that a full communal approach requires a fundamental shift that addresses not just discipline, but the entire school climate and community as well (Bazemore &

Schiff, 2010; Cremin, 2010; Morrison, 2010). Given our findings surrounding these restorative practices, however, it is likely that the findings of our study would be intensified had we been able to measure the implementation quality of the specific practices and the existence of a full communal model within the school. Even so, future research should attempt measure whether schools have adopted an overall restorative and communal framework to guide relationships within the school.

In addition, racial threat research could benefit from studies that specifically examine the reason there appears to be a diminished use of restorative justice approaches to discipline in schools with more Black students. Because previous research has shown that individual student race is associated with harsher school punishments (Brown & Beckett, 2006; Ferguson, 2000; Giroux, 2003; Noguera, 2003; Skiba et al., 2002; Watts & Erevelles, 2004), it appears worthwhile to examine whether bias, stereotypes, discrimination, or racism by teachers and other school officials mediate the relationships established in this study. Additionally, due to possible limitations of the compositional measures used in this study, it may be worth assessing the influence of perceptual indicators of racial threat, as some tests in criminal justice contexts have done (Chiricos, Welch, & Gertz, 2004). Although not necessary for school-level tests of the racial threat hypothesis, it could certainly illuminate the processes seen here. It would also be valuable to include measures of principal race, ethnicity, and gender in future analyses, as race-based theories suggest that discrimination may impact the use of restorative discipline in a number of ways. And, finally, because research has shown racial threat predicts not only harsher social control measures in the criminal justice system and schools, but also a reluctance to adopt restorative justice practices in schools, it may be worthwhile to determine whether restorative justice is less likely in criminal contexts as a result of racial threat.

Conclusion

It should not be acceptable for the racial composition of a school's student body to impede the potentially powerful influence of restorative justice on student outcomes, both in school and beyond. The findings of this study demonstrate that schools with a greater percentage of Black students are less likely to use restorative justice practices in response to misbehavior. However, a switch from a punitive model of discipline to a restorative justice philosophy seems crucial both for overall student success and a more inclusive, less stratified educational system. A transformation to a restorative

justice model would enable schools to emphasize social engagement over social control (Morrison, 2010), which could reduce the use of exclusionary discipline, allow for the reintegration of "problem" students, and ultimately create a true school community. Implementing such an approach could augment school efforts to become more communally organized, which could then enhance students' bonds to school; this may, in turn, decrease their involvement in deviant and delinquent activities. While individual principals may choose to use restorative programs in their own schools to achieve these benefits, a more effective and far-reaching approach would be to focus on public policy initiatives that address educational imperatives. Aggregate level policies endorsing restorative justice in schools are also less likely to be affected by racial characteristics of students. Although the fundamental shift in orientation is likely a great challenge for schools, the transformative nature of the restorative justice model renders it a promising and encouraging approach to school discipline.

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Bios

Allison Ann Payne is the associate director of the Villanova University Honors Program and an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice. Her research interests include juvenile delinquency, school-based delinquency prevention, criminological theory, and program evaluation.

Kelly Welch is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at Villanova University. Her research interests include race and crime, sociology of punishment, criminological theory, andsocial justice.