Disproportionate Discipline: How Bias and Threat Persistently Interact in Relationships:

Dr. Jason Okonofua, PhD
Stanford University
www.jokonofua.com; okonofua@stanford.edu

May 18th, 2016
Out-of-School Suspensions

Department of Education, 2012
Out-of-School Suspensions

- white: percent of total students vs. percent of suspended students
- black: percent of total students vs. percent of suspended students

Department of Education, 2012
Out-of-School Suspensions

Department of Education, 2012
Background

• Discipline problems are consequential
  – For teachers
    • Can hinder them from maintaining control over class
    • Can dishearten them & increases likelihood of attrition
  – For students
    • Can cause disengagement from school, alienation
    • Can increase likelihood of drop-out and incarceration

Balfanz, Spiridakis, Neild & Legters, 2003; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Hirschfield, 2009; Johnson, Yarrow, Rochkind, & Ott, 2009; Monahan, VanDerhei, Bechtold, & Cauffman, 2014; Pettit & Western, 2004; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Western, 2006; Also see McFadden, Marsh, Price & Hwang, 1992; Office for Civil Rights, 2012; Shaw & Braden, 1990; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982
Background

• How do discipline problems arise?
  – Poor teacher-student relationships

Birch & Ladd, 1997; Fine, 1991; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Murdock, 1999; Murray, 2009; Pianta et al., 1995; Tsai & Cheney, 2012
Holistic Approach

• How might disproportionate discipline arise?
  – Stereotyping
    • Racial stereotypes
    • Can guide perception and decision making
  – Threat
    • Apprehension about unfair treatment
    • Can lead to noncompliance

Balfanz, Bridges and Steen, 1998; Crocker et al., 1991; Cohen et al., 1999; Colquitt et al., 2001 Graham & Lowery, 2004; Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996; Lind, Kulik, Ambrose, & Park, 1993; Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002; Murphy & Tyler, 2008; Steele, 1997; Tyler, 1990; Weiner & Reyna, 2001; Yeager et al., 2014
Theory

• How might stereotypes contribute to disproportionate discipline?

• Disrespect
  – Stereotypes shape perceptions of it
  – Misinterpreted and misguided in relationship

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press
Perspectives on Psychological Science
Working Model of Recursive Processes

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press

Perspectives on Psychological Science
Working Model of Recursive Processes

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset

Student Behavior

Teachers’ mindset

Teacher Behavior

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press
Perspectives on Psychological Science
Working Model of Recursive Processes

- Racially stigmatized students’ mindset
- Student Behavior
- Teacher Behavior
- Teachers’ mindset

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press
Perspectives on Psychological Science
Working Model of Recursive Processes

Student Behavior

Teachers’ mindset

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset

Teacher Behavior

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press

Perspectives on Psychological Science
Racially stigmatized students’ mindset

Working Model of Recursive Processes

Student Behavior

Teachers’ mindset

Teacher Behavior

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press

Perspectives on Psychological Science
Working Model of Recursive Processes

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset

Student Behavior

Teachers’ mindset

Teacher Behavior

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press
Perspectives on Psychological Science
Working Model of Recursive Processes

- Racially stigmatized students’ mindset
- Student Behavior
- Teacher Behavior
- Teachers’ mindset

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press
Perspectives on Psychological Science
Working Model of Recursive Processes

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset

Student Behavior

Teachers’ mindset

Teacher Behavior

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press
Perspectives on Psychological Science
Working Model of Recursive Processes

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset

Student Behavior

Teachers’ mindset

Teacher Behavior

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press
Perspectives on Psychological Science
Working Model of Recursive Processes

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset

Student Behavior

Teachers’ mindset

Teacher Behavior

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press
Perspectives on Psychological Science
Working Model of Recursive Processes

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset

Student Behavior

Teachers’ mindset

Teacher Behavior

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press

*Perspectives on Psychological Science*
Working Model of Recursive Processes

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset

Student Behavior

Teachers’ mindset

Teacher Behavior

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press
Perspectives on Psychological Science
Working Model of Recursive Processes

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset

Student Behavior

Teachers’ mindset

Teacher Behavior

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press
Perspectives on Psychological Science
Working Model of Recursive Processes

- Racially stigmatized students’ mindset
- Student Behavior
- Teachers’ mindset
- Teacher Behavior
Teachers’ Predicament

Student Behavior: Disrespect, negative behaviors toward peers and teachers

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset: “Do I belong here in school? When teachers discipline me, does it mean they hate me or are biased?”

Teachers’ mindset: “Will this student disrespect me by hindering my teaching? Is this misbehaving student a troublemaker?”

Teacher Behavior: Harsh punishment of racially stigmatized students
Pattern Indication Study

• 190 currently practicing teachers
  – 154 White, 10 Black, 6 Asian, 16 Latino, 1 Native, 1 Other, 2 NA
  – 140 female; 49 male; 2 NA
  – 40 elementary; 52 middle; 92 high school
  – Free or reduced lunch: mean = 42.4%, std dev= 31.6
  – Population: mean = 1213, std dev = 713.6
  – Percent White students: 49%, 29.4

• Student manipulation: White X Black
  – Jake, Greg, DeShawn Darnell

• Test: within and between subjects

Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015
Psychological Science
School Information

• You are about to review information from an actual office referral. The referral is from a junior high school like the pictured one, which is located in a middle-class neighborhood in the mid-west. The average student-teacher ratio is 26 students to every one teacher at the school.
Infraction

- **Jake/Darnell** is consistently disrupting the class environment by strolling around the classroom at random intervals, getting tissues from the tissue box multiple times during a 50 minute class, throwing items away constantly; in general, **Jake/Darnell** circulates around the room and up and down the rows to see what other students are doing, have eyes on him, and disrupt the flow of the lecture or activity the class was participating in.

Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015
*Psychological Science*
Feeling Troubled: 1st Infraction

- First Infraction
- Second Infraction

White  Black

Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015

*Psychological Science*
Disciplinary Action: 1st Infraction

- White
- Black

Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015
*Psychological Science*
Infractions

• 3 days later the student misbehaves again...
Infractions

• Jake/Darnell is sleeping in class. You tell him to pick his head up and get to work. He only picks his head up. He chooses to rest it on his hand and continue to sleep. So you ask him one more time and again, Jake/Darnell refuses to do work. You ask him to leave class and go to the office to tell them that he won’t do his work and choses to sleep instead. He refuses to do this as well.
Feeling Troubled: 2\textsuperscript{nd} Infraction

\textit{Second infraction race effect}: \( t(189) = -3.24, p = .001, d = .5 \)

Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015
\textit{Psychological Science}
Feeling Troubled: 2\textsuperscript{nd} Infraction

\begin{itemize}
  \item First Infraction
  \item Second Infraction
\end{itemize}

\textbf{Interaction:} $F(1, 189) = 3.97, p = .048$

Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015
Psychological Science
Disciplinary Action: 2\textsuperscript{nd} Infraction

Second infraction race effect: \( t(189) = -2.50, p = .013, d = .4 \)

Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015
Psychological Science
Disciplinary Action: 2nd Infraction

Interaction: $F(1, 189) = 4.47, p = .036$
Black Students As Troublemakers

Race effect: $t(189) = -2.23, p = .027, d = .3$

Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015
*Psychological Science*
Black Student Misbehavior
Perceived Pattern of Misbehavior

Race effect: $t(187) = -2.67$, $p = .008$, $d = .4$

Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015
Psychological Science
Black Students Suspended Down the Road

Race effect: $t(188) = -2.07, p = .039, d = .3$

Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015
Psychological Science
Suspend Down the Road

Race of Student

Suspension

Pattern

$b = .3**$

*b* = $p < .05$

** = $p < .01$

*** = $p < .001$

$b = .2**$

$b = .3**$ | $b = .2$ n.s.

Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015

*Psychological Science*
Disproportionate Out-of-School Suspensions

Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015
Psychological Science
Relation to Real World Outcomes

Out-of-School Suspensions
- White
- Black

Disciplinary Action: 2\textsuperscript{nd} Infraction
- White
- Black

Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015
Psychological Science
Students’ Predicament

Student Behavior: Disrespect, negative behaviors toward peers and teachers

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset: “Do I belong here in school? When teachers discipline me, does it mean they hate me or are biased?”

Teachers’ mindset: “Will this student disrespect me by hindering my teaching? Is this misbehaving student a troublemaker?”

Teacher Behavior: Harsh punishment of racially stigmatized students
Methods

  – United States Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics
  – N = 10,341

• Relevant items
  – N ~ 5,000
Primary Predictors

• **SES**: Household income
  - $1 = < $500 - 14 = > $75,000 (mean: 11= $35,000-39,999; SD: 3.4)

• **Stigma**: Student Race
  - 3,673 No Stigma (White, Asian) x 2,076 Stigmatized (Black, Hispanic, or Black and/or Hispanic mixed with anything other than White and/or Asian; American Indian; Native Alaskan)

• **Police Presence**: Police at School
  - Does your school take any measures to make sure students are safe?
    - Security Guards or Assigned Police Officers (3,955 Y v. 1,666 N)
Outcome: Perceived Teacher Respect

• Think about the teachers at your school, would you (1 = Strongly Agree - 4 = Strongly Disagree) that...
  
  – A: Teachers treat students with respect (r)
  – B: Teachers care about students (r)
  – C: Teachers do or say things that make students feel bad about themselves
  
  – $\alpha = .74$ ; mean: 3.2; SD: 0.5
## Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perceived Teacher Respect (Simple Models)</th>
<th>Perceived Teacher Respect (Additive Model)</th>
<th>Perceived Teacher Respect (Interaction Model)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stigma: Unstigmatized</strong></td>
<td>0.060*** (0.013)</td>
<td>0.037* (0.014)</td>
<td>-0.039*** (0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SES</strong></td>
<td>0.014*** (0.002)</td>
<td>0.006** (0.002)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 (0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Police Presence</strong></td>
<td>-0.085*** (0.015)</td>
<td>-0.067*** (0.015)</td>
<td>-0.070*** (0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neighborhood Crime</strong></td>
<td>0.112*** (0.008)</td>
<td>0.049*** (0.008)</td>
<td>0.048*** (0.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Unfairness</strong></td>
<td>0.533*** (0.012)</td>
<td>0.521*** (0.014)</td>
<td>0.519*** (0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Type: Public</strong></td>
<td>-0.181*** (0.024)</td>
<td>-0.081*** (0.024)</td>
<td>-0.078** (0.024)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stigma: Unstigmatized X SES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.013*** (0.004)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Adjusted R2</th>
<th>Residual Std. Error</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4,467</td>
<td>0.284</td>
<td>27.66</td>
<td>297.00***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4,466</td>
<td>0.286</td>
<td>27.63</td>
<td>256.80***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001
Main Effects: Perceived Respect from Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perceived Teacher Respect (Simple Models)</th>
<th>Perceived Teacher Respect (Additive Model)</th>
<th>Perceived Teacher Respect (Interaction Model)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stigma: Unstigmatized</strong></td>
<td>0.060*** (0.013)</td>
<td>0.037* (0.014)</td>
<td>-0.039*** (0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SES</strong></td>
<td>0.014*** (0.002)</td>
<td>0.006** (0.002)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 (0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Police Presence</strong></td>
<td>-0.085*** (0.015)</td>
<td>-0.067*** (0.015)</td>
<td>-0.070*** (0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neighborhood Crime</strong></td>
<td>0.112*** (0.008)</td>
<td>0.049*** (0.008)</td>
<td>0.048*** (0.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Unfairness</strong></td>
<td>0.533*** (0.012)</td>
<td>0.521*** (0.014)</td>
<td>0.519*** (0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Type: Public</strong></td>
<td>-0.181*** (0.024)</td>
<td>-0.081*** (0.024)</td>
<td>-0.078** (0.024)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stigma: Unstigmatized X SES</strong></td>
<td>0.013*** (0.004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Note:**

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

---

**Observations:** 4,467

**Adjusted R2:** 0.284

**Residual Std. Error:** 27.66

**F Statistic:** 297.00*** 256.80***
Results

Racial Stigma
- White & Asian students
- Black, Latinx, & Native students

Okonofua, invited resubmission
Social Psychology and Personality Science
Interaction: Perceived Respect from Teachers

Interaction: \( t(4466) = 3.34, p < .001, d = .10 \)
Combining Teachers’ and Students’ Predicaments: Interactive Intervention

Student Behavior: Disrespect, negative behaviors toward peers and teachers

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset: “Do I belong here in school? When teachers discipline me, does it mean they hate me or are biased?”

Teacher Behavior: Harsh punishment of racially stigmatized students

Teachers’ mindset: “Will this student disrespect me by hindering my teaching? Is this misbehaving student a troublemaker?”
Teacher Mindset

Laboratory Experimentation
Teacher Study

- 41 teachers
  - 36 White; 1 Asian; 3 Black; 1 Unknown
  - 73% male
  - Ave. Experience: 14 years; Age: 41
  - 2 removed for missing data

Conditions: punitive-mindset v. empathic-mindset

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science
• Good teacher-student relationships are critical for students to learn self-control in the classroom at times.
Label Student a Troublemaker

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science
Results

• Punitive Themes
  – Threaten student
  – Assign detention
  – Involve principal

• Empathic Themes
  – Ask why student misbehaved
  – Adjust context

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science
Student Mindset

Laboratory Experimentation
Student Perspective Study

- 302 participants (credit pool)
  - 153 females & 147 males
  - 144 White; 41 Asian; 57 Black; 38 Mixed or Native; 18 Other

Conditions:

punitive-discipline v. empathic-discipline

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science
Sample Materials

• Control
  • You leave your seat to get tissues from the tissue box multiple times during a 50 minute class. Mrs. Smith assigned two days of detention to you and threatens to tell the principal about your misbehavior. Later, you get up and throw items away in the wastebasket on the other side of the room. Mrs. Smith asks has the principal talk to you about your misbehavior.

• Treatment
  • You leave your seat to get tissues from the tissue box multiple times during a 50 minute class. Mrs. Smith asks you why you are moving around the class so much. Later, you get up and throw items away in the wastebasket on the other side of the room. Mrs. Smith rearranges the room so that the wastebasket and tissue box are closer to your desk.

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science
Respect

Indicate the extent to which you agree... I think Mrs. Smith deserves my respect

(1 = Strongly Disagree – 7 = Strongly Agree)

Empathic-discipline effect: $t(300)=20.98$, $P<0.001$, $d=2.42$

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science
Desire to Behave Well

Indicate the extent to which you agree... I want to behave in this class

(1 = Strongly Disagree – 7 = Strongly Agree)

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science
Desire to Follow Rules

Indicate the extent to which you agree... It is important to me that I follow rules in this class

(1 = Strongly Disagree – 7 = Strongly Agree)

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science
Perceived Pattern of Misbehavior

Respect

Discipline Mindset

b = 2.0***

Student Behavior: Disrespect, negative behaviors toward peers and teachers

b = 0.6***

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset: “Do I belong here in school? When teachers discipline me, does it mean they hate me or are biased?”

b = 0.6*** | b = 0.6*

Teacher behavior: Harshest punishment afforded

b = 0.6***

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science

* = p < .05
** = p < .01
*** = p < .001
Interactive Intervention

Randomized Control Trial
Field Experiment
Participants

• 5 schools across 3 school districts
• 36 Teachers
  – 32 completed all materials
  – 7 Male; 24 Female; 1 NA
  – 19 White; 5 Asian; 2 Latino; 2 Black; 2 Other; 2 NA
  – 1,580 Students
• Mostly Latino
Intervention Schedule

Late-Fall

Session 1
- 45-minutes
- Empathic-Mindset v. Technology-Control Teacher Survey

Early-Winter

Session 2
- 25-minutes
- Booster Materials by condition
- Follow-up Student Survey

End of School Year

Data Collection
- Collect Suspension Records
Empathic-Discipline Materials

• Relationships with students are important
  – They shape students attitudes about school and behavior

• Empathize with students
  – Students worry about being treated fairly and with respect

• Response to misbehavior
  – Misbehavior is an opportunity to nurture relationships with students

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
*Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*
Empathic-Discipline Materials

• “In middle school, I didn’t feel like I belonged. It seemed like the teachers always called on the other students. So I didn’t pay attention in class and sometimes I got in trouble. One day I got detention and, instead of just sitting there, my teacher talked with me about what happened. He really listened to me. And then he told me that he had trouble sometimes in middle school but that it gets better. It felt good to know I had someone I could trust in school.”

• -- a 7th grader

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science
Empathic-Discipline Materials

• “In middle school, I didn’t feel like I belonged. It seemed like the teachers always called on the other students. So I didn’t pay attention in class and sometimes I got in trouble. One day I got detention and, instead of just sitting there, my teacher talked with me about what happened. He really listened to me. And then he told me that he had trouble sometimes in middle school but that it gets better. It felt good to know I had someone I could trust in school."

• -- a 7th grader
Empathic-Discipline
Materials

“When I was a child, I remember worrying about how I would be treated by teachers at my school. But I will always remember Ms. McBride, who treated me with respect and trust. She showed me that teachers could make all the difference in how students feel about school. Now, I make a point of treating my students with respect and I find that they respect me more in return.”
When I was a child, I remember worrying about how I would be treated by teachers at my school. But I will always remember Ms. McBride, who treated me with respect and trust. She showed me that teachers could make all the difference in how students feel about school. Now, I make a point of treating my students with respect and I find that they respect me more in return.”
Overall Effect
(Suspended v. Not)

Mindset effect: OR=0.42, Z=-3.33, P=0.001

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science
Effect By Pre-Post

Mindset effect: OR=0.49, Z=-2.37, P=0.018
Effect By Race & Gender

Mindset effect: OR=0.49, Z=-2.37, P=0.018

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science
Sample Treated Teacher Response

• To build positive relationships I...
  – Greet every student at the door with a smile every day no matter what has occurred the day before.
  – I NEVER hold grudges. I try to remember that they are all the son or daughter of someone who loves them more than anything in the world. They are the light of someone’s life!

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science
Sample Treated Teacher Response

• To build positive relationships I...
  – Answer their questions thoughtfully and respectfully no matter what their academic history with me has been
  – Hold every student accountable to the same rules and standards of behavior

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016  
Proceedings of the National Academy of Science
Respect Students’ Perceive

Teachers and other adults at my school treat me with respect?

*Interaction*: \( t(1438) = 2.57, P = 0.010 \)

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016
*Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*
Future Directions: Teachers’ Predicament

• Intersectionality?
  – Black or Latina girls viewed as “sassy”

• How might an escalation-effect play out in other contexts?
  – Majority Black school; more diverse School
  – Work place
  – Police contact
Future Directions: Students’ Predicament

• Why does a police presence lead to perceiving less respect from teachers?
  – “classroom as courtroom”

• Why does stigma shape perceptions of respect?
  – Experimental work
Future Directions: Interactive Intervention

• How does empathic-discipline from one teacher lead students to feel better about all teachers?
Future Directions: Interactive Intervention

- By what mechanisms—other than respect—does empathic-discipline lead to better relationships?
  - For teachers?
  - For students?
Future Directions: Interactive Intervention

• How might the empathic mindset affect other teachers and administrators?
Future Directions: Interactive Intervention

• An empathic-mindset might improve what other contexts?
  – Other demographics of schools?
    • Jennifer Eberhardt
  – Non-school environments?
    • Benoit Monin
  – Juvenile detention
    • Gregory Walton & Jennifer Eberhardt
Thanks!

• Collaborators:
  – Jennifer Eberhardt, Gregory Walton, Carol Dweck, David Paunesku

• Please learn more
  – Website: www.jokonofua.com

• Please share your thoughts
  – Email: okonofua@stanford.edu