RACE AND RESOURCES IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT:
THE EFFECTS OF SCHOOL SOCIAL CAPITAL AND RACIAL
MINORITY CONCENTRATION ON DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

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by

Lindsay Stutz

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Thesis written by
Lindsay Stutz
B.A., Mount Vernon Nazarene University 2007
M.A., Kent State University 2009

Approved by

__________________________________, Advisor
David A. Purcell, Ph.D.

__________________________________, Chair, Department of Sociology
Richard T. Serpe, Ph.D.

__________________________________, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
John R.D. Stalvey, Ph.D.
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I would first like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. David Purcell, for his guidance and helpful comments through each draft and step of this project. He has encouraged and broadened my interests in the areas of race and capital, two areas I look forward to continually exploring. I am proud to have been his first advisee. I would like to thank my thesis committee members, Dr. André Christie-Mizell and Dr. Joanna Dreby, as well, for their suggestions and time invested. My thesis was continually bettered by their input. I would also like to thank my fellow graduate students for their assistance throughout the thesis process. The knowledge of those that came before made my path that much easier. And, finally, I would like to thank my parents and my boyfriend, Jamie, for their unwavering support and belief in me and my ability to achieve my goals.
INTRODUCTION

While school crime rates have dropped during the course of the 1990s (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice 1999), other types of school disruptions are still prevalent. More than three-fourths of both males and females report that they have been a victim of sexual harassment at school (American Association of University Women 1993), 77 percent report being a victim of school bullying (Aalsma & Brown 2008; Oliver, Hoover, & Hazier 2000), and racial tensions in school continue to show up in the headlines (Chambliss 2007; Hernandez 2008; Miller 2007). These less violent forms of school problems, the present study’s topic of investigation, are less often examined in research than school crime (Dupper & Meyer-Adams 2002). They receive far less media attention than the rarer incidents of homicide or school shootings, but may lay the foundation for later violence, be significant enough to interfere with learning, or cause increased depression, absence, and school drop out (Chen 2008; Milofsky 1980; San Antonio & Salzfass 2007).

In this thesis, I consider the relationship between minor school disruptions and school social capital. I also examine the effect of racial minority concentration in schools and if minority concentration moderates the impact of school social capital. The school context allows a unique look into the lives of adolescents, particularly in terms of their
rates of disruption and violence (Felson, Liska, South, and McNulty 1994). School social capital has been linked to improved academic experiences in prior research and so may be influential in determining the rate of school-level disciplinary problems, operationalized here as the frequency of student racial tensions, bullying, sexual harassment of other students, verbal abuse of teachers, and disorder in classrooms. Social capital refers to the relationships between persons that facilitate action (Coleman 1988). In the present study, social capital in the school context refers to the relationships between parents/guardians, school officials, and community members that serve to decrease the occurrence of disciplinary problems. Previous research has focused on the relationship between school social capital and academic achievement (Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore 1982; Parcel & Dufur 2001b) with relatively little research extending school social capital beyond this outcome. The few studies that have done so investigate truancy and dropping out (McNeal 1999) or behavioral problems (Lee 1993; Zick, Bryant, & Osterbacka 2001). I seek to continue this trend of broadening the study of school social capital to explain rates of disciplinary problems within schools.

School racial characteristics may moderate the effect of school social capital or they may have a direct impact on problem behavior of their own. Racial minority students may not receive the same beneficial social capital from schools that White students do (Wright & Fitzpatrick 2006) or they may have less access to social capital within their networks (McNeal 1999). A direct link between problem behavior and minority status may exist as racial minority students are more likely to attend violent
schools than their White counterparts (Kenty-Drane 2005) and feel “very unsafe” when at school (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice 1999). Schools with higher concentrations of racial minorities tend to have increased rates of problem behavior on the whole as well (Hoffman and Dufur 2008), which may be due to the differential exposure of racial minorities to poverty and unemployment (Chen 2007; Sampson 1997; Wilson 1987). In this study, I also seek to determine if the concentration of racial minorities affects the occurrence of disciplinary problems either directly or by moderating school social capital’s effects.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to examine the school social capital of secondary schools and how it is related to school differences in disciplinary problems. I examine how school social capital and racial minority concentration directly affect the reported rate of disciplinary problems through a nationally representative data set of United States public schools. Given that previous research suggests that these two factors do not act independently, I also investigate how school social capital is moderated by schools’ racial minority concentration. I first examine previous research on both school social capital and race and their connection to disciplinary problems, as well as why an interacting influence between the two may be present. Then, I test my hypotheses using data from the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) in multivariate regression. Finally, I address the results and implications for policy and future research. It is my hope that this paper encourages more extensive school-level investigations and promotes a broadening of school social capital to include the study of disciplinary problems.
This paper has three important sociological contributions. First, it utilizes school-level data, which are less often used to investigate problem behavior. Most research on school disruption and violence has focused on individual schools (Nickerson & Martens 2008), so this study expands the extant research by investigating a large sample of nationally representative schools. Disciplinary problems impact the learning environment and safety of the school for all students, not only the offenders and victims and so a school-level analysis is necessary. The dearth of school-level research may be due to the lack of data at this level on outcome variables of interest or possibly to the consistent focus on explaining individual-level behaviors rather than outcomes for schools as a whole. However, school-level research can be used to confirm findings from or show that different processes are occurring at the individual-level.

Secondly, I extend the use of school social capital beyond academic achievement to determine its impact on school disciplinary problems. As the relationships that can enhance children’s educational experiences, school social capital is likely to not only better these experiences by increasing learning but also by decreasing behavior that detracts from learning. Finally, I explore the conditioning influence of racial minority concentration on school social capital, recognizing that school social capital may not work in the same way for all schools. Differences in access to and potential benefits from school social capital based on minority concentration should not be overlooked in promoting the advantages of such capital.
LITERATURE REVIEW

School social capital

Coleman (1988:98) defines social capital as components of structure “that facilitate certain actions of actors, whether persons or corporate actors, within that structure.” In relation to children, in particular, social capital refers to “the norms, the social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are of value for the child’s growing up” (Coleman 1990:334). Relationships with stronger bonds and closed circles result in greater social control and ability to work towards common goals, which could be beneficial in guiding students towards positive behavior. Coleman (1988) notes three important facets of social capital: obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness of structures; information channels; and norms and effective sanctions.

In schools, if parents participate in school activities to help school officials and then expect them to reciprocate in the future through information or assistance with their children, then the school officials are obliged to return the favor. In order for this reciprocal relationship to work, an element of trust that obligations will be repaid must exist. Once this trust is established, information channels are opened so that knowledge can be gained at a future date through social connections that will facilitate action. For example, information on students’ behavior is reported to parents who will then attempt
to influence that behavior. Information exchange assists in forming norms and
encouraging students to follow them, thus reinforcing certain behaviors while inhibiting
others. Capital is gained through these reciprocal relationships and social networks and
can then be activated to procure better results for oneself, through improved academic
performance or decreased victimization odds (Coleman 1988).

However, Bourdieu (1966) notes that social capital can also be used as a way for
elite society to continually reproduce itself while excluding others. For example, in
segregated areas where those with higher rates of financial and human capital have left,
poor racial minorities do not have access to the social networks, or social capital, that
could lead to employment because their networks are filled with others like themselves
(de Souza Briggs 2005; Wilson 1987). Those who do not have capital are separated from
those who do while those with capital interact only with others like themselves. If
students are disadvantaged due to their race/ethnicity or social class, then the lack of
social capital only compounds these obstacles. Schools may act as a network-creator for
students who lack positive social connections, or, they may only contribute to the already
stable networks of students with more social capital (Munn 2000).

Social capital can also work in a collective sense at the institutional level. Putnam
(1995, 2000:20) writes that social capital is at the same time both a “private good” and a
“public good,” so that social capital’s benefits go to both the investor in social relations
and to non-participants in the community due to reciprocity, trust, and norm
reinforcement. Communities with greater civic engagement and higher levels of trust
have lower homicide (Rosenfeld, Messner, & Baumer 2001) and death (Lochner,
Kawachi, Brennan, & Bucca 2003) rates. While states with greater social capital, characterized by citizens with higher rates of trust, socialization, and participation in the community, have fewer high school drop-outs and pregnant teenagers (Putnam 2000).

At the school-level, social capital is usually measured as varying forms of parent involvement related to schooling (Haghighat 2005; Lee 1993; Muller & Kerbow 1993; Sui-Chu & Williams 1996; Zick Bryant, & Osterbacka 2001). Other studies include schools’ outreach efforts to parents and guardians as a form of school social capital (Haghighat 2005), though this addition is not common. School social closure, akin to Coleman’s (1990) concept of intergenerational closure, occurs as parents and school officials form relationships (Parcel & Dufur 2001a). This closure involves “sufficient ties between a certain number of people to guarantee the observance of norms” (Portes 1998:6). My operationalization of school social capital includes not only parental involvement and school outreach efforts, but also community group involvement in schools. Community involvement as school social capital has not been included in past studies, even though community groups are a part of the community social network and a form of external social capital (involvement of an adult in the life of another’s child) (Coleman 1990). Community groups may provide additional social capital to schools by offering their services or expertise, reinforcing social norms, or filling a void where parental involvement may be lacking.

School social capital is generally linked to increased educational attainment and following school rules (Munn 2000). For example, Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore (1982) use social capital to explain higher performance by poor children in Catholic schools,
who have stronger networks due to the overlap of relationships at school and church, compared to similarly situated children in public schools. The link between school social capital and academic results has been shown across numerous studies (Harman & Yeh 1980; Lee 1993; Muller & Kerbow 1993; Sui-Chu & Willms 1996; Zick Bryant, & Osterbacka 2001). Yet, a small minority of studies reports no connection or a negative impact from parental involvement as a form of school social capital (Haghighat 2005; Horn & West 1992). These differences may result in some cases from the way parental involvement is measured. For instance, parent-initiated involvement (Haghighat 2005) may not be influential because it stems from parents seeking to intervene due to a child’s schooling crisis while parental involvement in parent-teacher organizations and school activities (Harman & Yeh 1980; Sui-Chi & Willms 1996) represents relationship-building between school and home and so is beneficial.

While the previous literature has focused primarily on educational attainment as the outcome measure, a few studies examine problem behavior (Lee 1993; Hoffman & Dufur 2008; McNeal 1999; Noh & Kimura 2007; Wright & Fitzpatrick 2006), but this avenue is far less often explored than school social capital’s effects on academics. Parental involvement in the home context, through parent-child discussions, parent-child activities, or knowing children’s friends, is negatively related misbehavior (Lee 1993; Zick, Bryant, & Osterbacka 2001) and involvement in parent-teacher organizations and monitoring of students’ behavioral and academic development are related to a lessened likelihood of truancy and dropping out (McNeal 1999). While these previous studies focus on behavioral problems and nonattendance, the present study investigates school
social problems, which may be even more influenced by school social capital due to their social nature. The disciplinary problems studied here include issues among students and between students and teachers. One type of social problem, school bullying, has been shown to be reduced by social capital, but only in terms of peers’ commitment to excellence rather than through adult and school social relationships (Noh & Kimura 2007). This paper will advance the emerging research on school social capital by further investigating its connection to disciplinary problems and by including multiple measures of school social capital. I expect school social capital, in terms of school outreach and parental and community involvement, to decrease the rate of disciplinary problems in schools.

Concentration of racial minority students

Student racial characteristics may directly affect the occurrence of disciplinary problems or they may moderate the influence of school social capital. Racial differences in disciplinary problems are apparent at both the individual- and school-level. Racial minority students, particularly Black and Hispanic youth, are sent to the principal’s office more often (Wallace et. al. 2008), receive suspension/expulsion more often (Fratt 2002; Mattison & Aber 2007; Wallace et. al. 2008), and have higher rates of dropout (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 1999) and misbehavior (Blau, Stearns, & Hamilton 2003) than Whites. Among White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian youth, Black students have the highest rates of being unprepared for class and also rather frequent occurrences of cutting class and causing disciplinary problems, second to Hispanics and
Whites, respectively. Hispanic students have the highest rates for cutting class and are also more likely to be unprepared for class than others (Blau, Stearns, & Hamilton 2003).

Although the impact of racial disadvantage has been examined at the individual-level, studies of the impact of racial minority concentration on school-level outcomes are sparse. The few school-level studies that do exist suggest that schools with a high percentage of racial minorities are more likely to have increased misbehavior (Hellman & Beaton 1986; Hoffman & Dufur 2008; National Center for Education Statistics 2008). A greater percentage of “other non-White” (youth who are neither White nor Black) has a positive effect on suspension rates at both the middle and high school level, possibly due to a high quantity of offenders or victims within this group (Hellman and Beaton 1986). Hoffman and Dufur (2008) find that the percentage of racial minority students at the school-level is positively related to individual-level delinquency. The present study seeks to undertake school-level research to determine the impact of racial minority concentration on school rates of disciplinary problems.

To further exacerbate racial minorities’ higher rates of offense, Black and Hispanic parents have far less contact with school officials than White or Asian parents (Blau, Stearns, & Hamilton 2003) and less involvement in school activities (Chavkin 1993). Asian children overall tend to have lower rates of delinquency compared to other racial minorities and so are often matched up with White students rather than racial minorities (Blau, Stearns, & Hamilton 2003). In the present study, Asians are included in the racial minority category and so it is important to note that these “White-like” experiences of Asians may only apply to those in middle-class settings (Lew 2007).
Asians of lower class standing are more likely to identify and interact with other racial minorities, leading to outcomes similar to those of poor Black and Latino youth (Lew 2007).

The link between the percentage of racial minority children in schools and higher rates of delinquency is not necessarily direct, however. Contextual factors that differ between Whites and racial minorities due to structural inequalities in society have an important impact on delinquency. Racial minority children are more likely than White children to be exposed to family disruption, poverty, and a lack of employment opportunities (Blank 2001; Sampson 1997; Shapiro 2007; Wilson 1987), which result in higher rates of problem behavior and lessened academic achievement (Blau, Moller, & Jones 2003; Sampson 1997). Shaw and McKay (1969) find that it is not the ethnic background of the respondents that results in delinquency, but rather their contextual location (poverty, population turnover, and ethnic heterogeneity). They conclude that while crime rates for Black boys are higher than those for White boys, they cannot say that the rates would be greater if the White boys were in similar situations (see also Krivo & Peterson 2000; Sampson 1987; Sampson & Groves 1989; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls 1997). However, it is impossible to put Whites in the exact situation as Blacks, facing not only income deficiencies, but also structural barriers of racism and lack of sufficient institutions/resources. In fact, in the United States, Sampson and Wilson (1995) could not find a single city with a population over 100,000 in which Blacks lived with equal or lower rates of poverty and single-headed households to Whites.
It is also improbable that racial minority children will have the same educational environment or resources as White children (Hacker 1992; Kozol 1991; Kozol 2005; Sampson 1997; Sampson & Wilson 1995). Black children are more likely than Whites to attend schools that are violent, poor, urban, and predominantly non-White and in areas where more people are unemployed, on welfare, and there are few middle class workers (Cook & Evans 2000; Kenty-Drane 2005). Kozol (1991) writes of the vast disparity in school environments between White children and racial minorities. For instance, Black children in Illinois face buildings with sewage systems that overflow into their school kitchens. Similarly, racial minority children in New York attend school in a former roller skating rink without windows or a playground and those in Chicago have moldy books without a library. Schools filled primarily with White children in nearby communities do not face such deficiencies. While these schools are blessed with a few exceptional teachers who give of their own time and money, it is not enough to make up for the lack of qualified staff and resources (Kozol 1991).

Schools with higher percentages of non-White students receive lower rates of per-pupil expenditure than more White schools in their district, once Title I money is excluded (Condron & Roscigno 2003). Kozol (2005) reports school spending for the 2002-2003 school year across six metropolitan areas, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Milwaukee, Boston, and New York City. Schools with mostly racial minorities and poor students spend between 49 (Chicago) and 78 (Milwaukee) percent of the money spent per student in mostly White and non-poor schools. And the money schools do receive must
stretch farther in central cities simply to cover basic needs and school repairs rather than be spent on bonuses such as computers (Kozol 1991).

The disparities among schools persist, causing continuing differential outcomes. Cook and Evans (2000) show that over time, the quality of disadvantaged urban schools and predominantly racial minority schools, the schools racial minority children are more likely to attend, continue to decline. They report that the Black-White gap in reading scores “appears to be due entirely” (p. 747, emphasis added) to the declining relative quality of poor urban schools and schools that are less than 20 percent White. Poor quality and lower-funded schools, then, have more occurrences of problem behaviors (Hellman & Beaton 1986; Pandjiris 2003). And racial minority students will stay in these schools as the desegregation efforts of years past have fallen by the wayside and American schools are resegregating (Kozol 2005; Orfield 2005). Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project at the University of California, Los Angeles and education policy researcher, notes that “during the 1990s, the proportion of Black students in majority White schools has decreased…to a level lower than in any year since 1968” (quoted in Kozol 2005:19). In short, schools that racial minority children attend face concentrated disadvantage in funding, facilities, and resources. Thus, I expect schools with higher proportions of racial minority students to have higher rates of disciplinary problems.

*Interacting influences*
Based on the aforementioned structural inequalities faced by racial minorities, they may not experience school social capital in the same way as White students (Perreira, Harris, & Lee 2006; Wright & Fitzpatrick 2006). Social networks available to racial minorities and Whites vary in their amount of information useful to students’ development (Bowdon 2007; Dunham & Wilson 2007; Wright & Fitzpatrick 2006), leading to differential access to the benefits of social capital. Also, the effects of social capital might differ by race (Perreira, Harris, & Lee 2006; Wright & Fitzpatrick 2006). Among Black, White, and Hispanic youth, only White and Hispanic adolescents significantly benefit from school social capital (Wright & Fitzpatrick 2006). Black youth receive beneficial social capital from other sources, such as parental and neighborhood involvement. Parental involvement as social capital has been shown to have fewer returns for racial minorities, with several forms of involvement only benefitting Whites (McNeal 1999). Testing for race as a conditioning influences on social capital acknowledges the distinction between actual social capital and “the ability to obtain [it] by virtue of membership in different social structures” (Portes 1998:5), a problem in some conceptions of social capital. This interacting influence has not been examined in previous research on disciplinary problems, but based on its effect in other studies of social capital I expect that the effects of school social capital on disciplinary problems will be moderated by the concentration of racial minority students.

*Summary and hypotheses*
School social capital has been shown to be influential in students’ educational experiences and the occurrence of problem behavior, as students with more parental involvement and other forms of school social capital have lower rates of offense. I expect that this relationship will also hold at the school-level with multiple measures of school social capital. Racial differences in disciplinary problems exist at both the individual- and school-level, with racial minorities having higher rates of offense. Prior research suggests a direct influence of racial concentration on frequency of problems in schools. A moderating effect on school social capital may also be present as racial minorities tend to have lesser amounts of social capital, and receive fewer benefits from it, compared to Whites. This information leads me to the following hypotheses:

Social Capital Hypotheses

_Hypothesis 1a:_ Parental input will be negatively related to school disciplinary problems.

_Hypothesis 1b:_ Training provided to parents will be negatively related to school disciplinary problems.

_Hypothesis 1c:_ Programming to involve parents in maintaining school discipline will be negatively related to school disciplinary problems.

_Hypothesis 1d:_ Parent participation will be negatively related to school disciplinary problems.

_Hypothesis 1e:_ Community involvement will be negatively related to school disciplinary problems.

Racial Concentration Hypothesis
Hypothesis 2: Racial minority concentration in schools will be positively related to disciplinary problems.

Moderation Hypotheses

Hypothesis 3a: The effects of parental input will be moderated by racial minority concentration.

Hypothesis 3b: The effects of training provided to parents will be moderated by racial minority concentration.

Hypothesis 3c: The effects of programming to involve parents in maintaining school discipline will be moderated by racial minority concentration.

Hypothesis 3d: The effects of parent participation will be moderated by racial minority concentration.

Hypothesis 3e: The effects community involvement will be moderated by racial minority concentration.
DATA AND METHODS

Sample

The data used to investigate my hypotheses come from the 2003-2004 SSOCS, a nationally representative, public use data set sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Surveys were completed by school authority figures - such as public school principals, vice-principals, counselors, administrative staff, superintendents, or security personnel - that were knowledgeable about school crime, disciplinary actions, and violence prevention programs in their institutions. These school authority figures will hereafter be referred to generally as “principals” as principals and vice-principals completed 82 percent of the surveys. The respondents were asked to complete the surveys based on the 2003-2004 school year. Schools offering only pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, or adult education were excluded by NCES, as were special education, alternative, and vocational schools. The SSOCS was linked to the 2003-2004 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) to offer additional information about the surveyed institutions. Variables that come from SASS data are noted as such.

The survey was administered to public schools of all levels yielding 2,772
responses, a 77.2 percent response rate. NCES used several methods to maximize the response rate including having trained interviewers call principals, checking to see if missing items could be determined from answers to other survey questions, and utilizing imputation procedures to create values for missing questionnaire items. The present study focuses on data from high schools only. Information from 1,009 high schools was collected from principals; however, due to missing data the effective sample size for this investigation is 811. The loss of data stems from incomplete responses on school social capital questions, which are essential for the present investigation. The mean values of the sample used in this study do not differ significantly from the sample as a whole with one exception, school size. The schools used in this study are significantly larger (3.45) than all high schools surveyed (3.39).

**Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable of interest is a scale representing the frequency of five disciplinary problems in schools. This measure is based on the sum of principals’ ratings of how often specific problems occur, including student racial tensions, student bullying, student sexual harassment of other students, student verbal abuse of teachers, and widespread disorder in classrooms. Principals rated the frequency of occurrence from 1 (never happens) to 5 (happens daily). These items have been reverse-coded so that higher levels indicate greater frequencies of disciplinary problems. The items loaded onto a common factor with a Cronbach’s alpha of .755. Responses range from five (all 5 problems never occur) to 23 (problems occur once a week). The average occurrence of
Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for All Variables (N = 811).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean (Percentage)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary Problems</td>
<td>Frequency of disciplinary problems</td>
<td>11.070</td>
<td>2.919</td>
<td>5 - 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input (=1)</td>
<td>School has a formal process to obtain parent input</td>
<td>.619</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0 – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training (=1)</td>
<td>School provides training/assistance to parents in dealing with students’ problem behavior</td>
<td>.422</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0 – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program (=1)</td>
<td>School has a program that involves parents helping to maintain school discipline</td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0 – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (&lt;25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, &gt;75%)</td>
<td>Percent of parents involved in open houses, parent-teacher conferences, subject-area events, and volunteering at school</td>
<td>8.439</td>
<td>2.596</td>
<td>1 - 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Involvement</td>
<td>Count of community groups involved in school safety</td>
<td>3.144</td>
<td>1.083</td>
<td>0 – 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration (&lt;5%, 5-20%, 20-50%, &gt;50%)</td>
<td>Percentage of racial minority students in the school (matched from SASS survey)</td>
<td>2.570</td>
<td>1.106</td>
<td>1 - 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controls</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Size (&lt;300, 300-499, 500-999, 1000)</td>
<td>School enrollment (matched from SASS survey)</td>
<td>3.450</td>
<td>.861</td>
<td>1 – 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban (=1)</td>
<td>School is located in an urban area (matched from SASS survey)</td>
<td>.255</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0 – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Crime (Low, Moderate, High)</td>
<td>Crime in the community where school is located</td>
<td>1.282</td>
<td>.538</td>
<td>1 – 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>Percent of students enrolled in special education</td>
<td>12.819</td>
<td>6.830</td>
<td>0 – 81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the five types of disciplinary problems is 11.070. Descriptive statistics for all study variables are presented in Table 1.

Independent Variables

School Social Capital. Five school social capital variables are available in the SSOCS data. The first three are forms of school outreach. Principals responded as to whether their schools “have a formal process to obtain parent input on policies related to school crime and discipline,” “provide training or technical assistance to parents in dealing with students’ problem behavior,” and/or “have a program that involves parents at school helping to maintain school discipline.” Three-fourths of the schools reported having at least one of these forms of outreach to involve parents with school discipline. The most common form of outreach was obtaining parent input, which 62 percent of schools participated in. Forty-two percent of schools offered training to parents while less than 20 percent had programming to involve parents in school discipline.

The fourth measure of school social capital is the percentage of parents attending school events. This item is a scale formed by four survey questions about parents’ participation in school events (open houses, conferences, special subject-area events, volunteering at school). The items loaded onto a common factor with a Cronbach’s alpha of .803. Principals responded on a four point scale ranging from one (0-25% attendance) to four (76-100% attendance). The responses to each survey item were summed to create the participation scale used here. The mean participation score is 8.439. Schools that did not offer all types of events were excluded from analysis.
Lastly, school social capital is measured by the amount of outside community groups involved in schools’ efforts to “promote safe, disciplined, and drug-free schools.” This item is formed from four survey questions about community groups’ involvement (social services, juvenile justice, law enforcement, mental health). These items loaded onto one common factor with a Cronbach’s alpha of .701. On average, schools had three community groups involved in their safety efforts. Ninety-four percent of schools reported having at least one outside group involved in school safety.

*Racial Minority Concentration.* Percent of racial minority student enrollment (coded as < 5%, 5 - 20%, 20 – 50%, > 50%) was given for each school based on data from the 2003-2004 version of SASS. This variable was converted to a categorical variable by the NCES to preserve the anonymity of responding schools. All racial minority students are included in this percentage, including Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American. The schools being analyzed in this paper are relatively evenly distributed among the four categories of racial minority concentration: approximately one-fourth of schools fall into each of the racial minority enrollment categories, with slightly fewer schools in the less than five percent category and slightly more in the greater than 50 percent category.

*Control Variables*

I included the following control variables that have been shown to influence disciplinary problems in prior research. *School size* (Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor, & Zeira 2004) and *urban location* (Redding & Shalf 2001) can both increase
schools’ occurrences of disciplinary problems. To preserve anonymity of responding schools, school size was grouped into response categories of less than 300 students, between 300 and 499 students, between 500 and 999 students, and more than 1,000 students, so that a higher response indicates higher enrollment. Urban location is a dummy-coded variable with one indicating that a school is located in an urban area. Both variables come from the SASS data set. Community crime level is measured by principals’ estimation of the crime level in the area in which their school is located. Principals responded by stating that their school is located in a low level crime area, a moderate level crime area, or a high level crime area. Higher rates of crime outside of a school can lead to greater crime within schools (Hellman & Beaton 1986; Laub & Lauritsen 1998). The final control variable, special education students, is reported by whole percentages based on the enrollment of these students. Higher rates of special education students can also lead to increased problems in schools (Kaplan & Cornell 2005; Wright & Dusek 1998).

Analytic Strategy

I use ordinary least squares regression with interaction modeling to analyze my findings. The model involving all variables is shown in Figure 1. I first regress frequency of disciplinary problems on school social capital and all control variables. I then enter racial minority concentration in the second step to determine if it is a significant predictor of disciplinary problems net of school social capital and control variables. Following the examination of direct effects I standardize all variables to reduce the risk of
multicollinearity and ease the interpretation of coefficients. Then, I introduce interaction terms between each of the school capital variables and the concentration of racial minorities (input x concentration, training x concentration, program x concentration, participation x concentration, community involvement x concentration). This step allows me to determine whether and how the concentration of racial minorities impacts the strength or direction of school social capital’s effect on disciplinary problems. Each interaction term is entered into a separate model to show each term’s unique contribution to the model, though only the significant interaction terms are presented in regression tables. In the final model, all interaction terms are entered simultaneously.

Multicollinearity checks for direct effects revealed no areas for concern (all tolerance statistics were greater than .7). When all interaction terms were included, the tolerance statistic for racial minority concentration fell to .469 (as it was a part of all interaction terms). All other tolerance statistics in this check were greater than .61.

![Figure 1: Explanatory Model.](image-url)
RESULTS

Bivariate Analyses

Prior to investigating the main hypotheses of this research, I first examine zero order correlations (see Table 2). All associations are in the expected direction in relation to the frequency of disciplinary problems with the exception of community involvement. However, this unexpected relationship is not significant and is almost zero. Training ($r = -.089$, $p < .05$), participation ($r = -.170$, $p < .01$), and racial minority concentration ($r = .102$, $p < .01$) are all significantly associated with disciplinary problems, as are all control variables. Greater school social capital is related to decreased problems while a higher percentage of racial minorities is associated with more frequent disciplinary problems. Disciplinary problems are positively associated with larger schools, urban location, high crime communities, and those institutions with higher numbers of special education students. Four of the five school social capital variables are also significantly associated with racial minority concentration. Schools with greater racial minority concentration are more likely to try to involve parents through input, training, and programming, yet have fewer parents actually participating. Schools may be instituting more outreach efforts to draw in uninvolved parents, who are more likely to be racial minorities (Blau, Stearns, & Hamilton 2003; Chavkin 1993).
Table 2: Correlation Matrix for All Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disciplinary Problems</th>
<th>Input</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Comm Inv</th>
<th>Concentration</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Special Ed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.223***</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td>.111***</td>
<td>.163***</td>
<td>.037</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comm Inv</td>
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<td>.198***</td>
<td>.120**</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
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<td>.085*</td>
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<td>-.199**</td>
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<td>Size</td>
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<td>.110**</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.069*</td>
<td>.131***</td>
<td>.213***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>.089*</td>
<td>.128***</td>
<td>-.147***</td>
<td>-.059</td>
<td>.415***</td>
<td>.216**</td>
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<td>Crime</td>
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<td>.063</td>
<td>.076*</td>
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<td>.340**</td>
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<td>-.072*</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.134**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Significant at p < .05  
**Significant at p < .01  
***Significant at p < .001

Multivariate Analyses

Knowing that disciplinary problems are significantly associated with the majority of the predictor variables; do school social capital and racial concentration predict these problems in regression analyses? Table 3 displays the main effects models from the multivariate regression analyses. Two of the school social capital variables significantly decrease the frequency of disciplinary problems. These results support hypotheses 1b and 1d that training provided to parents and parent participation result are negatively related to occurrences of disciplinary problems. It appears that simply having any type of school capital is not enough. Particular types of capital are necessary, in this case training to parents and actual parent participation, to decrease disciplinary problems. For schools that offer training to parents on how to deal with students’ problem behaviors, disciplinary problems are significantly decreased by more than one half of a frequency category (b = -.577, p < .01). Parent participation in school events also significantly decreases the occurrence of disciplinary problems (b = -.107, p < .01). Hypotheses 1a, 1c, and 1e are not supported by Model 1. Having a formal process to obtain parent input,
Table 3: OLS Regression of Disciplinary Problems on School Social Capital and Racial Minority Concentration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>SE</th>
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</thead>
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<td>-.573**</td>
<td>.210</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.098</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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<td>.039</td>
<td>-.110**</td>
<td>.040</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comm Inv</td>
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<td>.086</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.104</td>
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Control Variables

<table>
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<th>Model 1</th>
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<th>SE</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>SE</th>
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<td>.619**</td>
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<td>.014</td>
<td>.040**</td>
<td>.014</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Constant

|                     | 8.063***| .663| 8.143***| .683   |

Adjusted R²

|                     | .115***| .115***|

Number of Cases

|                     | 811    | 811   |

*Significant at p < .05
**Significant at p < .01
***Significant at p < .001
programming to involve parents in school discipline, and outside community involvement do not significantly affect the rates of disciplinary problems.

The second model of Table 3 examines the direct effect of racial minority concentration on the occurrence of disciplinary problems. *My second hypothesis, that the concentration of racial minorities would be positively related to the occurrence of disciplinary problems, is not supported by Model 2.* Despite the significant association in the bivariate analyses, the concentration of racial minority students in schools does not significantly impact disciplinary problems when school social capital and control variables are included in the model. In analyses not shown here, I regressed disciplinary problems on all school social capital variables and racial minority concentration and then entered the control variables in decreasing order of their correlation with minority concentration to determine the cause of the non-significant relationship. In the model including only school social capital and concentration, an increased percentage of racial minorities was significantly related to increased disciplinary problems (p<.05), as would be expected. Once urban location was added to the model, however, racial minority concentration no longer significantly affected the rate of disciplinary problems.¹ After the inclusion of community crime in the subsequent model, urban location no longer had a significant affect either.²

---

¹ Results from a Sobel test for mediation showed that urban location mediates the effect of racial minority concentration on disciplinary problems.

² Results from a Sobel test for mediation showed that community crime mediates the effect of urban location on disciplinary problems.
Table 4: OLS Regression of Disciplinary Problems on School Social Capital and Racial Minority Concentration with Interaction Terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
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<td>-.143</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>-.145</td>
<td>.106</td>
</tr>
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<td>Training (1=yes)</td>
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<td>-.303**</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>-.306**</td>
<td>.105</td>
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<td>Program (1=yes)</td>
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<td>.130</td>
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<td>.133</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td>-.111**</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>-.117**</td>
<td>.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.086</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.086</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.104</td>
<td>-.044</td>
<td>.127</td>
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<td><strong>Interaction Terms</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input x Concentration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training x Concentration</td>
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<td>.090</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.195*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program x Concentration</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation x Concentration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comm Inv x Concentration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.153*</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.884***</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.865***</td>
<td>.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban (1=yes)</td>
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<td>.127</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Crime</td>
<td>.639**</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>.597**</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>.606**</td>
<td>.206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Ed.</td>
<td>.039**</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.040**</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.037**</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.107***</td>
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<td>11.085***</td>
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<td>11.117***</td>
<td>.152</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted R²</strong></td>
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<td>.118***</td>
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<td>.118***</td>
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<td>.121***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Cases</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>811</td>
<td></td>
<td>811</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at p < .05
**Significant at p < .01
***Significant at p < .001
Following the introduction of the social capital and concentration main effects, I entered interaction terms for each type of school social capital by racial minority concentration into separate models (see Table 4). Only significant interactions are presented. These models reveal that the effects of certain types of school social capital differ by the concentration of racial minority students in schools, lending support to hypotheses 3b and 3e that the effects of training provided to parents and community involvement would be moderated by racial minority concentration. The first model in Table 4 presents the significant training by concentration interaction, which indicates that the negative impact on disciplinary problems from training to parents is stronger in schools with higher concentrations of racial minority students. As the percentage of racial minorities in schools increases, the negative effect of training on disciplinary problems decreases (indicating a stronger negative effect on disciplinary problems). Although training for parents is associated with decreased disciplinary problems for all schools (see Table 3, Model 1), the decrease in disciplinary problems for high minority schools is more than 5 times as great as the decrease for low minority schools. Thus, the beneficial impact of training to parents is conditioned by school racial minority concentration. This interaction with standardized variables is presented graphically in Figure 2.
Minority concentration also moderates the effect of community involvement (see Table 4, Model 2). As the percentage of racial minorities in schools increases, the effect of community involvement on disciplinary problems increases (indicating a stronger positive effect on disciplinary problems). Figure 3 illustrates this significant interaction, clearly showing why community involvement did not have a significant main effect in Table 3. The relationship between community involvement and disciplinary problems for schools with fewer racial minority students is the opposite of the relationship for schools with a high percentage of racial minority students. In low racial minority concentration schools, community involvement works in the expected direction: greater community involvement is associated with a decrease in the occurrence of disciplinary problems. Conversely, greater community involvement in schools with a high concentration of racial minorities is associated with increased occurrences of disciplinary problems.
Community involvement appears to work very differently across schools. The interaction term for training and the interaction term for community involvement continue to be significant in the final model that includes all interaction terms.

![Figure 3: Disciplinary Problems by Community Involvement and Racial Minority Concentration.](image)

School social capital does not impact disciplinary problems in the same way across all types of schools. Had I only investigated main effects I would have assumed that racial minority concentration was not influential in predicting disciplinary problems, despite prior research that points to a link between racial minority status and delinquency. The significant interaction terms reveal that racial minority concentration is influential in that it affects the impact of school social capital in reducing disciplinary problems. Assuming that involving outside community groups or providing a training program would decrease disciplinary problems at the same rate in all schools would be erroneous. These efforts may result in no reduction in disciplinary problems in certain schools,
thereby wasting resources on efforts that will have little to no impact. The interaction terms reveal which schools would benefit most from these efforts. In the case of training, schools with greater concentrations of racial minority students would benefit the most; whereas, for community involvement, schools with fewer racial minority students would see the greatest decrease in disciplinary problems.

Finally, across all models, the control variables – school size, special education students, and community crime – have a significant positive impact on the occurrence of disciplinary problems, as would be expected from previous research (Hellman & Beaton 1986; Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor, & Zeira 2004; Wright & Dusek 1998). The only non-significant control variable is urban location. As mentioned previously, the effect of urban location on disciplinary problems is mediated by community crime.
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper was to examine the effects of school social capital on disciplinary problems as well as to determine if racial minority concentration affected disciplinary problems or moderated the effect of school social capital. My first set of hypotheses, that increased school social capital would be negatively associated to disciplinary problems, was supported by the results for two forms of school social capital (Hypotheses 1b, 1d). Parent participation and training to parents had a statistically significant negative effect on the frequency of disciplinary problems. The results supported the findings of previous research on the effects of parental participation/involvement (Lee 1993; McNeal 1999; Zick, Bryant, & Osterbacka 2001). All schools, then, should seek to promote parent participation. However, several obstacles may stand in parents’ way including schools’ lack of effort to involve families (Dauber & Epstein 1993; Feuerstein 2001; McKernan McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn 2003), ethnic-specific parenting practices (Dornbusch & Glasgow 1996), socioeconomic status (SES) (Feuerstein 2001; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie 1987), and family size (Feuerstein 2001). These hindrances should be taken into consideration as schools plan efforts to incorporate parents in school activities. The
impact of parental training found here also supported the results of prior research (see, for example, Hawkins, Catalano, Jones, & Fine 1987; Kazdin 2005). Training as preventive intervention has been shown to relate to decreases in juvenile delinquency, though not in specific relation to school-associated outcomes.

I also hypothesized that racial minority concentration would be positively associated with disciplinary problems, which was not supported by the results. Schools with greater proportions of racial minorities were not more likely to have increased disciplinary problems even though research conducted at the individual-level would have suggested otherwise. While the bivariate association between racial concentration and disciplinary problems was significant, the relationship did not hold in multivariate analyses due to mediation by urban location. The lack of impact from racial concentration suggests that it is not the race of students that causes more frequent disciplinary problems, but rather, other factors that are more common among racial minority schools. Thus, persons seeking to decrease disciplinary problems in schools should first determine what characteristics are more common in racial minority schools, such as the control variables mentioned above, lower SES (Blank 2001; Shapiro 2007), or less parental involvement (Blau, Stearns, & Hamilton 2003; Chavkin 1993). Policies should then be aimed at low SES schools or schools with a lack of parental involvement rather than at “Black schools” or “Latino schools” because race is not the underlying cause of problem behavior.

Even though racial minority concentration did not have a direct effect, it was important for explicating the relationship between school social capital and disciplinary
problems. Racial minority concentration conditioned the effects of training to parents and community involvement, supporting the view that race is decreasing in importance for directly determining outcomes, but is still significant in influencing the process related to outcomes (O’Connor 2003). Training negatively affected disciplinary problems in all schools, but had a stronger impact on schools with more racial minority students. Community involvement, on the other hand, had a negative impact on disciplinary problems in mostly White schools, but was related to an increase in disciplinary problems in high racial minority concentration schools.

Based on the findings from the significant interaction terms, training for parents should be implemented in schools with greater racial minority concentration as my findings suggest that they might receive the most benefits from this form of school social capital. As mentioned previously, it is not the minority concentration that determines disciplinary problems, but other contextual factors. So training should actually be utilized in schools that are larger, in higher crime urban areas, and of lower SES backgrounds – the types of schools racial minority students are more likely to attend (Cook & Evans 2000; Kenty-Drane 2005). This differential effect of training for parents may stem from racial minority parents needing school outreach to become involved in schools (McKernan McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn 2003). Opportunities for contact with schools have been shown to increase parent involvement both at school and at home in an urban and predominantly Black community (McKernan McKay et. al. 2003). Parents may need to be invited to school if they see a separation between the home and school contexts (Lareau 2003) or if they fear racial injustice and discrimination from
educational institutions (McKernan McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn 2003). The differential impact may also be due to the fact that training available at school is more accessible, geographically and financially, to racial minority, low SES parents (González-Ramos 1990). While higher SES parents may have the option of outside resources to deal with children’s problem behavior, training at school may be one of the few resources available to low SES parents and so a stronger direct effect is noticeable (Juszcsak, Melinkovich, & Kaplan 2003).

The funds of predominantly White schools would be better spent in involving community groups in their school safety efforts as training has less of an effect on their rate of disciplinary problems. The differential impact of community involvement may be due to schools with more racial minorities having greater occurrences of disciplinary problems (Hoffman & Dufur 2008) and then seeking community involvement after the fact in an attempt to decrease such problems. The unexpected relationship may also be a function of how community groups are involved in schools. If they are brought in to provide mentoring or preventive intervention the associated outcomes will likely be different than if social services or law enforcement are brought in to deal with child abuse or rising school crime, the latter causes for involvement being more common in low SES areas (Chen 2008; Coulton, Crampton, Irwin, Spilsbury, & Korbin 2007). Community groups’ involvement in schools with more racial minority students may also be ineffective due to a cultural mismatch (Gregory & Mosley 2004; Monroe 2005) between racial minorities and the methods of community groups. White teachers of African American students have been shown to act both race- and culture-blind in their teaching
and discipline practices, which may make racial minority students feel disconnected from and uninterested in school (Gregory & Mosley 2004). If the same processes are prevalent in the efforts of community groups, then they are likely to be ineffectual as well.

Examined more closely, community involvement as a form of school social capital aids only the group of schools that are traditionally advantaged, the more White schools. This connection to already advantaged groups is also evidenced at the individual level (McNeal 1999). The variant benefits available to racial groups suggest that social capital may need to be reconceptualized to take account of differences in racial groups’ socialization experiences and the amount of resources available through their social networks (Bowdon 2007; McNeal 1999). For example, racial minority parents may not know how to become involved in their child’s schooling (Chavkin 1993). Or, if they do, parental contact with schools may not provide an equal amount of social capital. Contact may benefit White students more than racial minorities because their parents have matching cultural scripts to those of teachers, or greater cultural capital (Lareau & McNamara Horvat 1999). School social capital could be expanded to include preparing children for school, bringing children to school on time, and/or home educational activities to include ways that racial minority parents assist their children (Chavkin 1993; Epstein & Dauber 1991).

The findings of this study suggest that future research should include a broader set of measures for school social capital, including those mentioned above. Community involvement should also be considered more fully due to the inconsistent effects found here. Other groups could be investigated, such as religious or business groups, that might
decrease disciplinary problems for racial minorities as students of different racial backgrounds receive social capital from varying sources (Wright & Fitzpatrick 2006). More school-level data should be utilized to confirm the effects of school social capital as it can be considered a “public good” (Putnam 2000:20) and a property of schools as a whole. School-level data can also investigate racial minority concentration by measuring the contextual effects and structural disadvantages faced by racial minorities such as dilapidated facilities, lack of school funding, and under-qualified teachers. Then these situations can be compared to schools with greater proportions of White students to investigate structural differences and how these differences may condition the effects of school social capital.

Future studies should also seek to address the limitations faced in this research. Three potential limitations of this study are worth noting. Previous research has shown SES to be influential in school disruption and disciplinary problems (Chen 2008; Clark & Lab 2000), and as possibly interacting with racial characteristics (Blau & Blau 1982; Lareau & McNamara Horvat 1999). However, I was unable to control for school-level SES in the present study. Though I do not measure SES, I include measures of urban location and crime levels, which can be seen as a proxy, however poor, for SES with residents in high crime urban areas assumed to have lower SES than others. Prior research using the 2000 version of the SSOCS finds no significant impact of school-level SES on rates of bullying, suggesting a lack of impact on certain types of school disciplinary problems (Noh & Kimura 2007).
Another limitation faced in this study was the inability to distinguish between racial minority groups. The variable available from the SASS data only refers broadly to racial minority students, so Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American children are all included in one category. Differences may in fact exist based on schools’ predominant racial minority. For example, Asian students may fare better in a mostly White setting than Black students because their “model minority” status allows them to blend easier or be grouped with Whites (Lew 2007). Black students continue to suffer the most in the United States as they face *de facto* residential and educational segregation (Farley & Squires 2005; Johnson & Shapiro 2003; Massey & Denton 1993), leading to concentrated disadvantage. The Black-White dichotomy in race relations continues to be salient as new groups are fitted into these categories and some Asians and Hispanics become “honorary Whites” (Bonilla-Silva 2003:278).

Finally, this study is based on principals’ perceptions of disciplinary problems in their schools. Principals’ accounts may differ from students’ reporting of incidents they have encountered (Coggeshall & Kington 2001; Harris & Hathorn 2006). However, principals provide a unique perspective and can rate their school as a whole based on experience and school records (VanderJagt, Shen, & Hsieh 2001), resources to which students do not have access. Principals are also highly influential in discouraging the disciplinary problems studied here (Harris & Halthorn 2006; Harris & Petrie 2003) and their perceptions will likely affect school policy on disciplinary problems.

In closing, the results of this study display the usefulness of school-level data for examining disciplinary problems, social capital, and race. School social capital is
influential in inhibiting disciplinary problems and need not be applied to educational achievement only. Also, school social capital can be interpreted more broadly to include other social connections that may impact students’ behaviors beyond parental involvement, an important point as institutions plan programs to decrease students’ disciplinary problems. Schools should consider not only actual parent involvement, but also their outreach efforts to include parents and involvement by community groups. The social networks thus created can be used to procure safer schools with fewer disciplinary problems for students. In short, my results support the application of school social capital to the explanation of disciplinary problems and point to the need for more exploration of the interacting influences of racial minority concentration and school social capital. It is my hope that these findings will be used to shape policies to involve parents and community groups in schools so that schools can serve as network creators and thereby decrease the dangers faced by students in their daily lives. Social policy can have a direct impact in schools and so should focus on providing safer hallways through social connections.
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