



# Beyond Fear: Sociological Perspectives on the Criminalization of School Discipline

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## Abstract

Since the early 1990s American schools have adopted a number of practices – zero tolerance, school police, metal detectors, drug sweeps, and surveillance cameras – that signal a shift from a discretionary student disciplinary framework to a crime control paradigm. The sociological sub-field that centers on the examination and interpretation of the criminalization of school discipline is still in its formative stages and, consequently, even basic conceptual issues remain unsettled. However, sustained by a growing body of ethnographic research, the field's theoretical discussions and debates regarding the causes, consequences, and social distribution of school criminalization are complex, vibrant, and synergistic. In the broadest terms, this field explores how school criminalization expresses, accommodates, and reinforces broader fears and political-economic changes. The field also includes a disappointingly but understandably small number of quantitative studies that bear directly on these theories. The field's critical, sociological insights will find and resonate with a broader audience (including policy-makers) only after an equally innovative and vigorous quantitative empirical tradition emerges to refine and validate its theoretical contributions.

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## Introduction

Public and scholarly concern about school violence is hardly new. Public alarm over school violence in the early 1970s led to a massive national study (Gottfredson and Gottfredson 1985). Despite these concerns, there were, reportedly, fewer than '100 identified school police officers in US public schools' by the late 1970s (Brady et al. 2007, 457). By contrast, in 2003, public schools hosted 14,337 full-time school resource officers (Hickman and Reaves 2006). In 2007, 68.8 percent of American schools had 'security guards and/or assigned police officers' (Dinkes et al. 2009). The rapid importation of police personnel and expertise into America's schools, along with policies and technologies that help them manage school crime (e.g. mandatory law enforcement referrals, cameras, metal detectors), undoubtedly has changed the character of school discipline. School misbehavior that formerly prompted detention or suspension now routinely or automatically triggers arrest and referral to court (Rimer 2004). To illustrate, Florida schools referred 26,990 school-related offenses to juvenile courts during 2004–2005, 76 percent of which were for misdemeanors (Florida State Conference National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP], Advancement Project, and NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc. 2006). This phenomenon and contributing policies, practices, and social processes, have been referred to as the criminalization of school discipline – school criminalization for short (Hirschfield 2008).

This article reviews the sociological literature that pertains directly to school criminalization. We focus on four areas of theoretical and empirical inquiry. First, we discuss how sociologists, criminologists, and socio-legal scholars have conceptualized school criminalization and whether and how they have distinguished it from established notions of criminalization and similar concepts, such as intensified school surveillance and punishment. Second, we review claims and evidence regarding the social distribution of school criminalization, especially its harder and quantifiable forms. Third, we synthesize the rich but largely theoretical literature offering explanations of school criminalization. Finally, we review and critique the limited qualitative and quantitative research on the social consequences of school criminalization and offer recommendations for future research.

### **Conceptualizing criminalization in the school domain**

Many scholars contend that contemporary patterns of school security and punishment manifest or advance 'criminalization', whether of student behavior (Theriot 2009), school discipline (Hirschfield 2008), 'poor students' (Kupchik and Monahan 2006), schools and their governance (Simon 2006), 'youth and difference' (Lyons and Drew 2006), or social issues (Giroux 2003). Although few of them offer a clear or precise definition of criminalization, it is clear that their conceptions extend conventional scholarly definitions. Criminalization traditionally connotes the development and diffusion of criminal law that 'targets a set of activities perceived to be attached to a social group' in need of control (Jenness 2004, 150). Because studies of school criminalization do not focus on the origins or consequences of any new criminal laws, they fall outside of the traditional scope of 'criminalization studies'. That said, some scholarly conceptions of school criminalization are more closely aligned with classic conceptions. For example, Theriot applies the term mainly to the pursuit of criminal sanctions (e.g. arrest and court referral) in response to problems 'traditionally handled by school principals and teachers' (2009, 280). The official treatment of student misconduct as crime is facilitated by the enactment of rituals and roles that cast students as suspects, criminals, or prisoners. Accordingly, some consider forcing students within 'lockdown' environments to submit to warrantless or intrusive searches by authoritarian and armed police or dogs to be part and parcel of criminalization (Hirschfield 2008; Lyons and Drew 2006). Similar arguments have been applied to in-school suspension (Ferguson 2000), to prison-like alternative schools whose purpose is to contain and punish students excluded from mainstream schools even for crimes *off campus* (Reyes 2006; Simmons 2009), and to 'zero tolerance' disciplinary codes that embrace a logic of deterrence and incapacitation and resemble determinate sentencing schemes (Hirschfield 2008).

As these examples illustrate, most sociologists subsume within school criminalization not only policies and practices that sanction student conduct *as* crime but also those that merely *associate* students and their problems with crime. In other words, school criminalization also entails casting students as quasi-criminals and responding to student problems with quasi-criminal justice solutions. This broader conception of criminalization draws on labeling theory, within which to 'criminalize' an individual or groups is to label them as criminal. Such conceptions also resonate within cultural criminology, which views crime as a cultural construction and examines how social units (e.g. schools and students) are imbued with crime-related meaning and imagery (i.e. 'symbolic criminalization') and how powerful actors (e.g. mayors and school principals) mobilize such meanings for specific political ends (Ferrell 1999; Hirschfield and Simon 2010). Within the school criminalization literature, Simon (2006) most forcefully advanced a symbolic model of school criminalization. He argued that not only is school governance increasingly centered on

the prevention and control of crime but that non-crime problems like low test scores are rhetorically associated with crime and punishment. Portraying failing schools and administrators, who may be placed on probation and face sanctions, as criminals, diverts attention from the structural causes of low student engagement and 'elevates centralized education policy-makers to the roles of prosecutor and judge' (Hirschfield 2008, 87).

Notions of criminalization that are predicated on the activation, appropriation, and diffusion of particular crime-related meanings are much more fluid than classic definitions, given that social meanings are fuzzy and contested. Clearly, policy changes that interfuse school disciplinary and criminal justice proceedings are more indicative of criminalization than practices that merely surveil students. Some scholars manage to avoid overly inclusive notions of criminalization, because they cluster school criminalization with related trends like expanded surveillance under larger umbrellas like 'post-industrial discipline' (Kupchik and Monahan 2006), 'zero tolerance culture' (Lyons and Drew 2006), and the 'youth control complex' (Rios 2006). Hirschfield (2008, 2009), by contrast, situates such practices along a criminalization continuum, with those that most decisively reflect and forward a conception of misbehaving students as criminals deserving of punishment at the 'hard' end and those (e.g. surveillance cameras) that tend to invoke and forge only weak associations with crime on the 'soft' end. Hirschfield (2008) contends that where a practice falls along this continuum depends on the manner with which it is employed and how it is perceived.

Sociological studies of specific school practices collectively illustrate the variability in their criminalizing potential. This flexibility is best documented in the case of school police. At the hardest end, the New York Police Department administers school security in New York City (NYC), and their prerogatives and priorities (e.g. total submission to their authority and aggressive enforcement of minor offenses) reportedly take precedence over all other institutional imperatives, including instructional delivery (American Civil Liberties Union and New York Civil Liberties Union 2007). Studies in NYC and elsewhere have documented that the introduction or expansion of police in schools has increased the share of crime reported to police, the number of 'noncriminal police incidents', and arrests for minor offenses like disorderly conduct (Brady et al. 2007; Theriot 2009; Torres and Stefkovich 2009). However, others have noted that some school resource officers (SROs) and professional security guards variably balance their enforcement duties with mentoring and instructional roles pursuant to the educational and socialization aims of the school (Casella 2003; Devine 1995; Hirschfield 2009; Kupchik 2009). That said, Kupchik's (2010) observational study of SROs in several suburban schools found that SROs bring to these non-traditional policing tasks a cognitive and professional orientation that leads them to define, symbolically if not legally, student problems as crime problems demanding a response that emphasizes enforcement over education or capacity-building. A 'law enforcement logic' can also spread to teachers and administrators and infuse other school practices (Hirschfield 2009; Kupchik 2009; Lyons and Drew 2006).

### **The social distribution of school criminalization**

For the most part, scholarship on the school disciplinary transformation draws fuzzy boundaries between school criminalization and the more general harshening or intensification of school security, surveillance, and punishment. The field also has offered disappointingly few concepts or measures that recognize distinctions or gradations in the quality, severity, or functions of various criminalizing school practices. The field's conceptual underdevelopment is problematic, because it hampers efforts to theorize and

examine variation in theoretically distinct types of criminalization across time and place (but see Hirschfield 2009). Overly inclusive conceptions may foster overly uniform depictions of school criminalization patterns across America's highly stratified social landscape.

Depending, in part, on the scope of their conceptualizations of school criminalization, scholars posit a strikingly even or strikingly uneven social distribution of school criminalization. The former, convergence argument is best represented by Kupchik and Monahan (2006) and Simon (2006), a position partly grounded in the comparably widespread use of school police and surveillance cameras among America's urban, suburban, and rural schools (Kupchik 2009). The fact that suburban school police are more likely to be armed and to conduct random 'lockdowns' and drug sweeps with drug-sniffing dogs also runs counter to the notion that urban schools are more criminalized or 'prisonized' than affluent suburban schools (Hirschfield 2008; Lyons and Drew 2006). The convergence view also is buttressed by intensive observations of four high schools – two with few minorities, one about half black, and one 92 percent Hispanic (Kupchik 2009). Although Kupchik found that black students, less protected by powerful parents, were more likely to be targets of fear, suspicion, and exclusion, especially in the school where they are prevalent, he also reported that arrest is the standard sanction for fighting only in one of the *advantaged* high schools. Echoing Simon (2006), he concluded that students in all four schools are 'are socialized into the carceral state, in which policy-makers govern through crime' (Kupchik 2009, 311).

Adherents of the convergence view have made an important contribution to the sociology of education insofar as they challenge and qualify cultural reproduction traditions that hold that school practices, including discipline, sort disparate students (along dimensions of race, class, and gender) into different positions in the adult social order. However, studies on the unique milieu of the 'lowest tier' inner-city schools suggest refinements of the convergence perspective (Devine 1996). Although these schools are a small minority of America's schools, their students account for a vastly disproportionate share of future dropouts and prisoners (Nolan and Anyon 2004). Several scholars have suggested that some inner-city schools have embraced security and penal technologies and procedures that aim to safely contain minority students and habituate them to the rhythms and rigors of prison life (Hirschfield 2008; Nolan and Anyon 2004; Wacquant 2001). Some empirical evidence is indirectly supportive of this position. Hirschfield (2009) noted that although urban schools composed largely of minority students make up only about 15 percent of the nation's middle and high schools they represent about three quarters of middle and high schools that scan their students with metal detectors daily. Likewise, Welch and Payne (2010) examined myriad possible sources of variation in schools' use of 'extreme disciplinary measures' (e.g. notifying police and charging students with crimes). They found that, consistent with their narrow 'racial threat' framework, percent black was the *only* significant predictor in multivariate models even after controlling for student delinquency, urbanicity, and concentrated disadvantage. Another national study suggested that only the schools with the 'smallest minority student percentage' had significantly lower rates of criminalization (i.e. share of serious crime reported to the police), than other schools (Torres and Stefkovich 2009). The social capital of white and middle class parents apparently shields their children from overt and 'hard' criminalization (Hirschfield 2009; Kupchik 2010).

### **Sociological explanations of school criminalization**

Several sociologists have posited theories of variation in school criminalization across time or space (or both). Viewed as an overly unified whole, this fertile and variegated field

seems to be irrigated by two intersecting theoretical currents, which are harmoniously integrated in the most comprehensive account (Lyons and Drew 2006). The first perspective, essentially a sociology of fear, depicts school criminalization as a social and political response to fears of school crime and associated social insecurities. The second perspective, reminiscent of but not beholden to the critical functionalism of Bowles and Gintis (1976), takes as a starting point shifts in the social structure or the political economy and theorizes school criminalization as efforts to accommodate or bolster emergent structural realities and realignments of power.

The first social fact that the fear perspective explains is the relatively early and intense criminalization of inner-city schools. Threats of escalating violence in Chicago schools (including a murder) prompted none other than Jesse Jackson to call for school metal detectors in 1989 (Hagan et al. 2002). Teachers' and principals' fears of being injured or sued by students also helped explain why, in both Chicago and NYC, their professional associations were eager to transfer frontline disciplinary responsibilities to school security and police forces during the early 1990s (Devine 1996; Hirschfield 2008). Fear is even more critical to the rapid diffusion of criminalization among relatively and increasingly safe, non-urban schools. Burns and Crawford (1999) explained that a string of well-publicized rural and suburban school shootings beginning in 1997 led to exaggerated perceptions of vulnerability throughout the country's low-violence schools. They demonstrated that the resultant intensification in punishment and security had all the elements of a moral panic – media-fed hostility toward a 'folk devil' generating an emotionally driven punitive response disproportionate to the actual threat. (Although, Dunbar and Villaruel (2004) reported divergent dynamics in rural schools). The nearly universal and irrational belief of local politicians, educators, and parents in the vulnerability of their own schools along with racially biased responses that also target non-violent behavior (e.g. zero tolerance and sweeps for drugs) suggest that school criminalization is not merely a response to fears about school violence. Rather, several scholars root fears of school violence in more generalized fears of youth. These scholars view youth as scapegoats onto which politicians and the media have diverted social anxieties about urban social pathologies, downward mobility, and the declining ability of the government and corporations to insulate the white majority from them (Giroux 2003; Lyons and Drew 2006; Simon 2006).

Sociological scholarship on school criminalization has recently shifted its etiological focus from fears of school violence, *per se*, to broader social anxieties rooted in socio-structural and political-economic change and the 'political utility' of fear-mongering and of criminalization (Lyons and Drew 2006). Studies in this vein have collectively outlined various ways in which schools' penal practices reflect and promote extant and emergent structural and political configurations. Prevailing modes of discipline prior to the present 'criminalization era' upheld the notion, sustained by a strong industrial economy and 'New Deal Coalition', that public education is a social right necessary for the full citizenship and economic security of America's working class (Lyons and Drew 2006; Simon 2006). Likewise, the court- and legislative-mandated institution of procedural safeguards during the 1960s and 1970s that sought to protect students, especially minorities and students with disabilities, from the punitive whims of biased school authorities and police is a direct legacy of the Civil Rights Movement (Arum 2003). Accordingly, structural and political-economic school criminalization narratives are essentially about the macro-forces that have 'weakened the structural and ideological foundations of school disciplinary practice' (Hirschfield 2008, 80) and their political and practical consequences.

Two of these macro-forces are the crumbling industrial economy and mass incarceration. Deindustrialization weakened organized labor and stripped both urban and rural

residents of legitimate employment opportunities, contributing to strong illicit economies (Duncan 2000). Whites and the middle class responded to and exacerbated urban problems by fleeing with their tax dollars to the suburbs, thereby concentrating youthful poverty and crime in the inner-city (including its public schools) and contributing to increased youth violence in the late 1980s. Elevated crime and its stability and racialization, widening social and cultural rifts between cities and suburbs, and pervasive fear and social anxiety all contributed to punitive shifts in justice policy (Garland 2001). The concurrent massive expansion of the justice system gave a boost to ailing rural economies (Hirschfield 2008).

According to Hirschfield (2008), deindustrialization and the growth of the penal industry had two direct implications for schools' penal transformation. First, the billions of tax dollars invested in mass incarceration help deprive schools of effective but costly means to improve student behavior, such as modernizing facilities and hiring more qualified teachers and guidance counselors. The penal industry's uneven flow of benefits to rural state legislators actually incentivized their disinvestment in urban schooling and their support of exclusionary school policies. Second, the growth of the criminal justice system created powerful networks of criminal justice professionals who may have directly promoted school criminalization whether via expanding juvenile justice and police roles in schools or serving as school security consultants and vendors that spread fear and sell technologies that promise to enhance schools' crime detection capacities (Casella 2006; Hirschfield 2008).

The foregoing structural conditions and related assaults on the effectiveness and benevolence of 'Big Government' from both the Left and the Right beginning in the mid-1960s set the stage for the ascendancy of a new model of governance which Simon (2006) calls 'Governing Through Crime'. Under this prosecutorial style of governance, political executives derive legitimacy not through redistributing resources, enhancing human capital, or protecting civil rights but, rather, through protecting citizens from real and imagined 'crime' and holding 'offenders' accountable. Because public crime discourse is highly individualized, prioritizing crime is a politically convenient means of diverting attention from deep and complex problems. In the school context, this model is most directly evident in the state-mandated collection of school crime data and implementation of 'zero tolerance'. It is also manifest in school safety and 'school accountability' reforms, such as the federal Safe Schools Act of 1994 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, whereby centralized policy-makers at the state and local level define poorly performing and 'dangerous' schools and impose sanctions and specific reforms on qualifying schools (Hirschfield 2009). Disproportionately criminalizing low-achievers and truants can, in turn, help financially strapped teachers and schools attain state-imposed achievement and attendance thresholds (Hirschfield 2008).

Contemporary incarnations of governing through crime tend to articulate a neo-liberal vision of limited government, an anemic public sphere, and market-based policy approaches (e.g. inter-school competition and charter schools) (Lyons and Drew 2006). Within this vision, the good citizen is the obedient consumer and legitimate governance is limited to protecting unfettered consumers and producers from those who are unwilling or unable to successfully compete. Several sociologists have described how modes of school criminalization express and reinforce a neo-liberal political agenda (Giroux 2003; Kupchik and Monahan 2006; Lyons and Drew 2006). Whereas school discipline could provide opportunities to expose and cooperatively resolve conflicts by engaging students and staff as democratic citizens (Kupchik 2010), zero tolerance and school policing are in keeping with a neo-liberal governing model that abdicates responsibility for addressing

social grievances (Lyons and Drew 2006). Zero tolerance discipline helps the government mask social injustice and underinvestment by expressly negating the importance of any mitigating factors (Giroux 2003). The transfer of disciplinary responsibilities from school professionals to the police also supports this purpose given that police are ill-equipped to recognize and address the psychological and social roots of school misconduct (Kupchik 2010). By demonizing offenders (and inner-city schools more broadly), promoting fear and moral absolutism, and leaving criminogenic conditions unaddressed, such tactics increase the public's receptivity to even more governing through crime (Lyons and Drew 2006).

The preceding accounts do not fully explain why school professionals, who often espouse progressive rather than neo-liberal ideals, are generally complicit in school criminalization. In addition to noting practical reasons for their compliance and cooperation (e.g. their strong interests in reducing classroom disruptions and school police officers' lower risks of being injured or sued after intervening in response to misconduct by a disabled student), some sociologists have posited that some modes of criminalization may help school actors prepare students for their anticipated adult futures (Hirschfield 2008). As educators in financially strapped schools increasingly internalize the structural realities of mass incarceration and unemployment, it becomes easier for them to see troubled students, especially blacks, as 'bound for jail' and to treat them as such (Ferguson 2000; Nolan and Anyon 2004). A recent study found that New Haven high school students believed that school adults' predictions of future imprisonment marked them for punitive treatment (while facilitating actual incarceration) (McClellan, forthcoming). Kupchik and Monahan added that exposure, of poor and middle class students alike, to penal rituals helps to mold workers that 'embody extreme and flexible compliance to the vicissitudes of the marketplace' and 'submit willingly to scrutiny and manipulation' (Kupchik and Monahan 2006, 627).

### **The social consequences of school criminalization**

Some theories of the causes of school criminalization, as cultural reproduction theories, are predicated upon or buttressed by the presence of particular social consequences of school criminalization. Although sociological scholarship on the consequences of criminalization is quite broad and diverse it coheres around two central, interrelated themes. First, pursuant to cultural reproduction theories, school criminalization helps reproduce and legitimize the social and political order. Second, school criminalization is an ineffective or counter-productive response to student behavioral problems because of its adverse effects on schools' social climates. Only a small handful of sociological studies were attentive to the potential social benefits of criminalization.

The first set of studies, drawing from ethnographic observations, highlighted several means by which school criminalization bolsters contemporary relations of power. One aspect of the neo-liberal agenda that school criminalization appears to advance is a narrow public sphere and a docile citizenry. Lyons and Drew (2006) observed a 'zero tolerance culture' in two high schools. This culture offers a model of disempowered citizenship. It transfers disciplinary authority from traditional school authorities, who draw at least some of their authority from their responsiveness to the needs and demands of students and their parents, to centrally mandated, inflexible disciplinary codes and city police officers who are largely insensitive to these needs. Several scholars have argued that school officials have rewritten traditional civic lessons through adopting centrally mandated disciplinary and policing practices that give students (and most teachers) little say. Students

and their parents learn that they have no meaningful influence over their schools (and, perhaps, the state or corporate institutions they serve and emulate) (Kupchik 2010; Kupchik and Monahan 2006). One of the few available political levers is claiming victimhood, a role that confers a very circumscribed political agency (Lyons and Drew 2006; Simon 2006). Students view criminalized schools as preoccupied with the enforcement of rules and performance standards rather than with providing constructive, transformative, and empowering experiences to those who show initiative or play by the rules (Bracy 2010).

School criminalization teaches students not only that they have little recourse should the government violate their rights, but that they have few rights to begin with. Lyons and Drew (2006), Kupchik (2009), and Bracy (2010), all noted little opposition to the ubiquitous presence of cameras and police and even to seemingly intrusive and abusive police conduct. Opposition is neutralized not only by dynamics of fear, insecurity, and dependency (Lyons and Drew 2006; Simon 2006) but also by an early-ingrained sense that rituals of submission are 'part of everyday life' (Rios 2006, 48). School criminalization can help instill 'passive acquiescence to state and corporate power' (Lyons and Drew 2006, 195) not only through normalizing docility and inflexible governance but also through convincing students that they are unworthy of better treatment. Student interviews have suggested that criminalization not only negatively labels the students who face harassment, arrest, and exclusion and bear all the blame, but it also demeans rule-abiding students for whom crime-fixated and prisonized schools signal that they are, primarily, risks to be managed, and, secondarily, students to be educated (Brotherton 1996; Fine et al. 2004; Lyons and Drew 2006; McClellan, forthcoming; Rios 2006).

Although school criminalization aims to reduce disruption and disorder (via socialization, deterrence, and exclusion), it may fail to achieve these aims in practice (see Bracy 2010 for a review). Another major contribution of this sociological sub-field is that it suggests some reasons why. This scholarship is informed by a rich sociological tradition of examining aspects of school social climates that promote student engagement, compliance, and safety. These features include a sense of trust and caring, fair rules and rule enforcement, and a sense of community (Bracy 2010; also see Gottfredson 2001). The earliest studies (Brotherton 1996; Devine 1996) emphasized that ceding disciplinary authority and responsibility to the police, although it helped teachers focus on instruction, also reduced their capacity to understand and address their students' problems and students' willingness to confide in their teachers. Teacher disengagement combined with relatively disrespectful treatment by school security and police may erode student perceptions of trust and caring (Brotherton 1996; Kupchik 2010; Rios 2006). Likewise, such treatment and other aspects of school criminalization may threaten the perceived legitimacy of school rules (Kupchik 2010). Limited research suggests that rather than seeing zero tolerance and school policing as fair because they limit discretion or because students normalize unfair treatment, many students judge these practices as unfair. These views can stem from a perceived lack of due process or perceived favoritism on the part of disciplinary agents (McNeal and Dunbar 2010). Kupchik and Ellis (2008) found that using 'nonpolice security guards', who are presumably more responsive to the expectations of teachers and students, were associated with greater perceived rule fairness than using police as security. On the other hand, random locker searches, which presumably treat everyone equally, were associated with greater fairness. To the extent that differential treatment highlights and reinforces hierarchical social divisions in the school along the lines of race, class, gender, or even athlete status, it can weaken a school's sense of community (Bracy 2010).

Although most scholars in this field tend to focus on the counter-productive aspects of school criminalization, a few have sounded some more pragmatic and encouraging notes.

Some evidence suggests that, especially in relatively disorderly schools, the failure to respond aggressively and decisively to dangerous or disruptive students would also have adverse effects with respect to fear, trust, legitimacy, and community. Several accounts feature students unequivocally supporting more and tighter policing of their schools, because fear and disruptive students directly hinder their learning (Bracy 2010; Hirschfield 2009; McNeal and Dunbar 2010). Conceivably, a system of criminalized school discipline that is responsive to prevailing student norms and concerns and is implemented in conjunction with softer strategies like ‘mediation, counseling, and conflict resolution’ could strengthen schools’ orderliness and cohesion without harming legitimacy and trust (Casella 2003, 875).

### **Assessment and recommendations**

School criminalization scholarship is far more advanced theoretically than it is conceptually and empirically. Conceptual underdevelopment has hampered efforts to develop and validate measures of criminalization. Scholars have individually and collectively offered rich and complex causal narratives that assign variable weight to actual school crime, fear, school resources, concerns about external performance standards and sanctions, concerns about liability, and corresponding shifts in political-economic conditions, political/social values, and expectations of students’ futures. Some qualitative studies offer compelling support for some of these narratives (Brotherton 1996; Devine 1996; Hagan et al. 2002; Kupchik 2010). However, we are aware of no studies that attempt to systematically measure the relative importance of any of these factors or to sequentially order them. The few published quantitative studies (e.g. Welch and Payne 2010) are cross-sectional and focus on general school characteristics (e.g. urbanicity, racial composition) rather than on, for example, ‘values, perceptions, attitudes, and milieu-specific political dynamics’ (Hirschfield 2009, 40).

The absence of a solid, quantitative, theory-testing tradition in this field is arguably even more unfortunate with respect to theories of the consequences of criminalization. Scholars have developed some extremely cogent and compelling arguments for why criminalization should promote, for example, docility, distrust, disunity, and alienation but they can offer little empirical evidence that meets prevailing social scientific standards of validity. Brady et al. (2007) found that attendance rates worsened more in NYC schools specifically targeted for criminalization than in comparison schools. Kupchik and Ellis (2008) and Mayer and Leone (1999) report concordant findings with respect to the links between focal practices and fairness and disorder, respectively, but did so with cross-sectional data. The few other studies (e.g. Jackson 2002) that examine schools before and after criminalization have focused on a narrow set of outcomes like crime and perceptions of the police (see Bracy 2010 for a review of this non-sociological research). As a result, sociological scholars of school criminalization collectively build a surprisingly weak statistical case to counter narrow, simplistic, and persuasive appeals to the logics of fear, deterrence, and incapacitation.

Unfortunately, this quantitative empirical drought will not end easily. Firstly, opportunities to measure schools’ social and behavioral climates before and after the onset of major modes of school criminalization are extremely limited since most schools have already implemented zero tolerance and school police. Secondly, especially in the most disadvantaged and criminalized schools, it is nearly impossible to separate the influence of school criminalization from other time-varying school features that may adversely affect students’ attitudes and behaviors like ‘structural conditions, teacher turnover, heat, overcrowding, unqualified faculty, [and] inadequate...materials’ (Fine et al. 2004, 2197–8).

These obstacles call for innovative methods that, although less methodologically rigorous than is ideal, can still help illuminate the consequences of criminalization. For example, scholars should make more use of retrospective interviews and archival methods to compare the social, cultural, and organizational dynamics of schools before and after criminalization. A particularly helpful comparative approach in this vein would be for ethnographers or survey researchers to re-investigate criminalized schools that were similarly examined prior to criminalization. Finally, one can examine the long-term impact of criminalization by comparing, across differentially criminalized cohorts of students within the same schools or across differentially criminalized schools, adult employment, incarceration, and relevant social attitudes. Although most opportunities to measure the social impact of school criminalization have passed, such innovative methods and due attention to insights from the expanding network of scholars who have theorized and ethnographically observed the criminalization process may ultimately cultivate opportunities to examine the impact of efforts to resist or reverse it.

### Short Biographies

Paul J. Hirschfield is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and in the Program of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University; New Brunswick, New Jersey. Hirschfield's research is located at the intersection of criminology, social control, and social stratification. Most of his work aims to uncover the causes and social implications of the widespread criminalization of adolescent deviance and school misconduct, especially in the inner-city. He has authored or co-authored related papers in *Criminology*, *Sociology of Education*, *Theoretical Criminology*, *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, and *Sociological Forum*. He is currently conducting a federally funded study on competing approaches to the reintegration of youth from correctional facilities into New York City schools. He is also examining the impact of concentrated, proactive policing on social attitudes, and behavior among African-American and Latino school children. He holds a BA in Psychology and Sociology from Kalamazoo College and a PhD in Sociology from Northwestern University, Evanston.

Katarzyna Celinska is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Law, Police Science and Criminal Justice Administration at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City. She has conducted research in the areas of women's incarceration, prisoners' reentry, and juvenile delinquency prevention and interventions. She has authored and co-authored papers in *Sociological Perspectives*, *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, and the *Prison Journal*. She previously taught sociology and criminal justice courses at University of Utah and Loyola University, Chicago. She holds a master's degree in Law from the University of Warsaw, and a PhD in Sociology from the University of Utah.

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