

### RESEARCH BRIEF

## Out-of-School Suspension Outcomes: Examining Child Protection Involvement and BIPOC Identity

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

*The purpose of this study was to better understand the academic and justice system-related outcomes of out-of-school suspension, and whether these outcomes were related to other factors, such as involvement in Child Protective Services (CPS) and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Person of Color) identity.*

### BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Out-of-school suspension (OSS) is a disciplinary approach associated with negative outcomes — poorer academic performance, not finishing school, and justice system involvement (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009; Rosenbaum, 2018). Due to disproportionalities existing within OSS for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Person of Color) students, OSS is also a factor in the systemic issues of school push-out and the school-prison nexus (e.g., Annamma, 2017; Hughes et al., 2020; Morris, 2016; Staats & Contractor, 2014). School push-out refers to the way some students, particularly Black, disabled, and queer students experience exclusionary discipline and lack of academic support, resulting in poor academic performance and school dropout (Burbach, 2018; Morris, 2016). The school-prison nexus describes the complex relationship between the U.S. educational and prison systems. Movement from the school disciplinary to the justice system is exacerbated by law enforcement involvement in school discipline, OSS, and other forms of exclusionary discipline (Annamma, 2017; Hirschfield, 2018; Hughes et al., 2020).

BIPOC children *and* those with child protective services (CPS) involvement are overrepresented in both OSS and the juvenile justice system (Cho et al., 2019; Cho & Lee, 2021). Therefore, research must consider the potential interacting effects of race, CPS involvement (including out-of-home care), and OSS when examining academic and justice system outcomes. Because of small sample sizes, few studies have examined the school-prison nexus and school push-out for Indigenous students, despite Indigenous students being disproportionately suspended (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2017).

Our study aims to investigate the interaction of CPS involvement, BIPOC identity, and OSS on academic and justice system-related outcomes to answer:

- 1. Does involvement with Child Protective Services, out-of-home care setting, BIPOC identity, and OSS predict poorer academic achievement and higher levels of juvenile justice involvement?**
- 2. Are there significant interaction effects of OSS with CPS involvement, care setting, and BIPOC identity on academic achievement and juvenile justice involvement?**



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## METHODS

Through Minn-LInK, we integrated educational, child protection, out-of-home care, and juvenile justice data. We used regression analysis to study the relationship between the outcome variables (standardized math and reading scores, and juvenile justice system involvement), and independent variables (including OSS, CPS involvement, out-of-home care setting, BIPOC identity, among others).

Through the Minnesota Linking Information for Kids (Minn-LInK) project, we identified a sample of 3rd graders in Minnesota public schools in 2008-2009 (n = 60,035). After excluding those who were missing outcome data or data used as primary independent variables of interest, 55,924 students remained in the sample. We conducted some analyses with a subsample of students who experienced OSS at least once between 3rd and 5th grade - a total of 1,510 students. See Table 1 for sample characteristics.

We used a linear regression model to analyze the association between middle school MCA math scores, and all independent variables (elementary school OSS, three or more accepted CPS reports, BIPOC identity, gender, congregate care, receipt of free and reduced price lunch, emotional/behavioral disability [EBD], and attendance rate from 2009 to 2014), and a second linear regression model to analyze the association between middle school reading scores and the same independent variables. We used a parallel logistic regression model to understand juvenile justice system involvement. We repeated all three of these analyses in the subsample of students who experienced out-of-school suspensions, but with the primary independent variable being severity of the disciplinary incident, rather than out-of-school suspension.

**Table 1. Sample Characteristics**

Sample of all students included in the analysis						
	Total n = 55,924	White n = 41,829 (74.8%)	Black n = 5,018 (9%)	Latinx n = 3,597 (6.4%)	Asian n = 3,215 (5.7%)	Indigenous n = 1,265 (2.3%)
Gender = female	26,799 (48.8%)	20,325 (48.6%)	2,463 (49.1%)	1,732 (48.2%)	1,635 (50.9%)	644 (50.9%)
OSS in 3rd-5th grade	1,510 (2.7%)	636 (1.5%)	624 (12.4%)	101 (2.8%)	52 (1.6%)	97 (7.7%)
3 or more CPS records before 3rd grade	116 (0.2%)	56 (0.1%)	38 (0.8%)	6 (0.2%)	1 (0.03%)	15 (1.2%)
Congregate Care	350 (0.6%)	152 (0.4%)	123 (2.5%)	28 (0.8%)	14 (0.4%)	33 (2.6%)
Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	19,916 (35.6%)	9,444 (22.6%)	3,650 (72.7%)	2,400 (66.7%)	1,367 (42.5%)	932 (73.7%)
Emotional/Behavioral Disability	7,598 (13.6%)	5,199 (12.4%)	722 (14.4%)	433 (12.0%)	242 (7.5%)	273 (21.6%)
Attendance Rate	M = 0.80 SD = 0.33	M = 0.85 SD = 0.29	M = 0.68 SD = 0.38	M = 0.66 SD = 0.40	M = 0.80 SD = 0.34	M = 0.73 SD = 0.34
Sample of students who experienced OSS in grades 3-5						
	Total OSS-only (n = 1,510)	White (n = 636)	Black (n = 624)	Latinx (n = 101)	Asian (n = 52)	Indigenous (n = 97)
Gender = female	337 (22.3%)	87 (13.7%)	196 (31.4%)	14 (13.9%)	10 (19.2%)	30 (30.9%)
Severity of disciplinary incident (range 2-29)	M = 17.47 SD = 6.92	M = 16.64 SD = 7.31	M = 18.22 SD = 6.12	M = 16.59 SD = 7.84	M = 17.58 SD = 7.21	M = 19.01 SD = 7.27
3 or more CPS records before 3rd grade	21 (1.4%)	5 (0.8%)	12 (1.9%)	1 (0.9%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (3.1%)
Congregate Care	47 (3.1%)	14 (2.2%)	26 (4.2%)	3 (3.0%)	1 (1.9%)	3 (3.1%)
Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	922 (61.1%)	301 (47.3%)	535 (85.7%)	78 (77.2%)	40 (76.9%)	79 (81.4%)
Emotional/Behavioral Disability	453 (30.0%)	239 (37.6%)	146 (23.4%)	21 (20.8%)	7 (13.5%)	40 (41.2%)
Attendance Rate	M = 0.70 SD = 0.36	M = 0.76 SD = 0.34	M = 0.66 SD = 0.37	M = 0.58 SD = 0.39	M = 0.74 SD = 0.37	M = 0.64 SD = 0.36

## FINDINGS

BIPOC students, students with emotional/behavioral disabilities, and students who experienced congregate care were more likely to experience negative outcomes of OSS.

### Full Sample

Results of the linear regression analysis (Supplemental Table A) indicated that middle school **MCA math scores** were negatively associated with early experiences of OSS, Indigenous, Black, and Latinx identity, experience of congregate care, eligibility for free or reduced price lunch, and emotional/behavioral disability. MCA math test scores were positively associated with attendance rate. **MCA reading scores** were negatively associated with early experiences of OSS, Indigenous, Black, Latinx, and Asian identity, experience of congregate care, eligibility for free or reduced price lunch, and emotional/behavioral disability. MCA reading test scores were positively associated with attendance rate and female identity. Results of the logistic re-

gression analysis indicated that early experiences of OSS, and Indigenous and Black identity were significantly associated with increased odds of **juvenile justice involvement**. Being female was significantly associated with decreased odds of juvenile justice involvement.

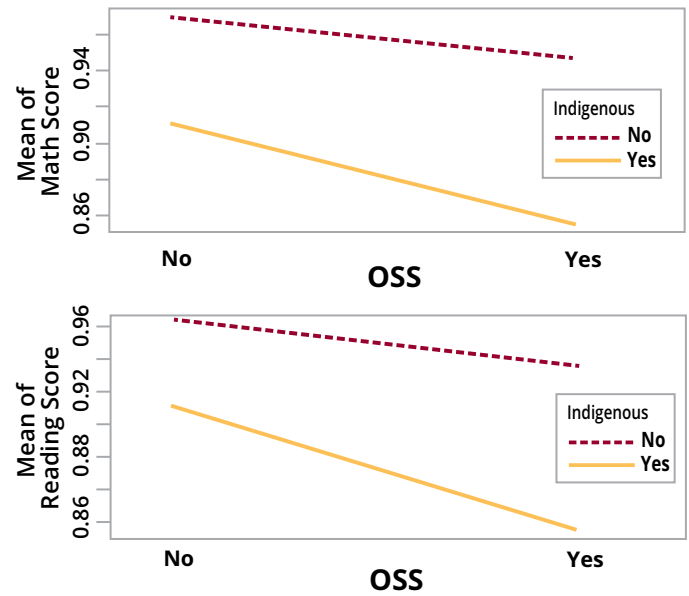
## OSS Subsample

We also conducted linear and logistic regression models (Supplemental Table B) with the subsample of students who experienced OSS between 3rd and 5th grade in order to determine whether severity of the disciplinary incident was associated with academic and juvenile justice outcomes. Results of the linear regression model indicated that middle school **MCA math scores** were negatively associated with Indigenous and Black identity, experience of congregate care, and eligibility for free or reduced price lunch among students who experienced OSS. MCA math test scores were positively associated with attendance rate among students who experienced OSS. Middle school **MCA reading scores** were negatively associated with Indigenous and Black identity, eligibility for free or reduced price lunch, and emotional/behavioral disability among students who experienced OSS. MCA reading test scores were positively associated with attendance rate. Results of the logistic regression model indicated that severity of the disciplinary incident, Black identity, and emotional/behavioral disability were associated with increased odds of **juvenile justice involvement** among students who experienced OSS.

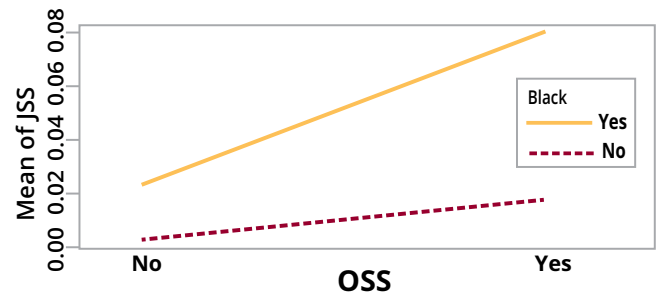
## Interaction Models

Students who experienced OSS in elementary school had lower math scores in middle school than those who did not experience OSS. However, there was a significant interaction between OSS and Indigenous identity in their relationship with math scores as an outcome. For Indigenous students, the difference in math scores between those with and without OSS was smaller than for non-Indigenous students (Figure 1). Students who experienced OSS also had lower reading scores in 6th through 8th grade than those who did not experience OSS. As with math scores, there was a significant interaction between OSS and Indigenous identity, such that differences in reading scores for Indigenous students with and without OSS was smaller than for non-Indigenous students (Figure 1). Students who experienced OSS had a higher likelihood of juvenile justice involvement than those who did not experience OSS. For Black students, that difference was amplified— the difference in the likelihood of juvenile justice involvement for Black students with OSS compared to those without OSS was significantly greater than the difference in the likelihood of juvenile justice involvement between non-Black students who experienced OSS and those who did not (Figure 2). Finally, while EBD was not a predictor of juvenile justice involvement in the logistic regression,

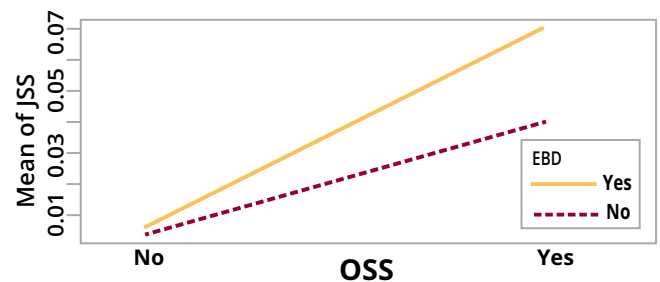
**Figure 1. Interaction of Indigenous Identity and Early OSS in Academic Outcomes**



**Figure 2. Interaction of Black identity and Early OSS in Juvenile Justice Involvement**



**Figure 3. Interaction of Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities and Early OSS in Juvenile Justice Involvement**



there was a significant interaction between EBD and OSS in their relationship with juvenile justice involvement. Specifically, while there was no relationship between EBD and juvenile justice involvement among students with OSS, among those without OSS, there was a positive relationship between EBD and juvenile justice involvement (Figure 3).

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain a clearer understanding of the outcomes of OSS in elementary school, with a particular focus on the relationship between these outcomes and other potentially relevant variables, such as BIPOC identity and involvement in CPS. We found that OSS experiences in elementary school were related to poorer academic performance in middle school as well as a higher risk for juvenile justice involvement. In addition, Black students, Latinx students, Indigenous students, students who experienced congregate care, lower income students, and students with emotional or behavioral disabilities were also at higher risk for some or all of these outcomes.

While there was no interaction between OSS and involvement in CPS, we did find that OSS had a greater negative impact on Indigenous students' academic outcomes than it did on non-Indigenous students' outcomes. Similarly, OSS had a greater impact on Black students' risk for juvenile justice involvement than it did for non-Black students, and the same was true for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities compared to those without disabilities. This demonstrates that not only are certain groups of students more likely to experience OSS, they also may be disproportionately impacted by the negative outcomes of OSS. These findings are consistent with the current understanding of how school push-out and the school-prison nexus disproportionately affects BIPOC students and students with disabilities. Our findings add to the understanding of these systemic issues in demonstrating that Indigenous students are also affected. Practitioners in schools and those involved in educational policy-making should make sure that students involved in the child welfare system and BIPOC students are supported in academic settings, and find alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices. In addition, practitioners working in the child welfare system should support the academic achievement of students they work with.

### LIMITATIONS

*The primary limitation of this study is the age of the data. While we were working with the most recent available information, impacts of COVID-19 and other more recent events are not reflected in these findings. In addition, designations of identities such as race, ethnicity, disability, and gender are based on educational records, which may not accurately or completely reflect the identities of students.*

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