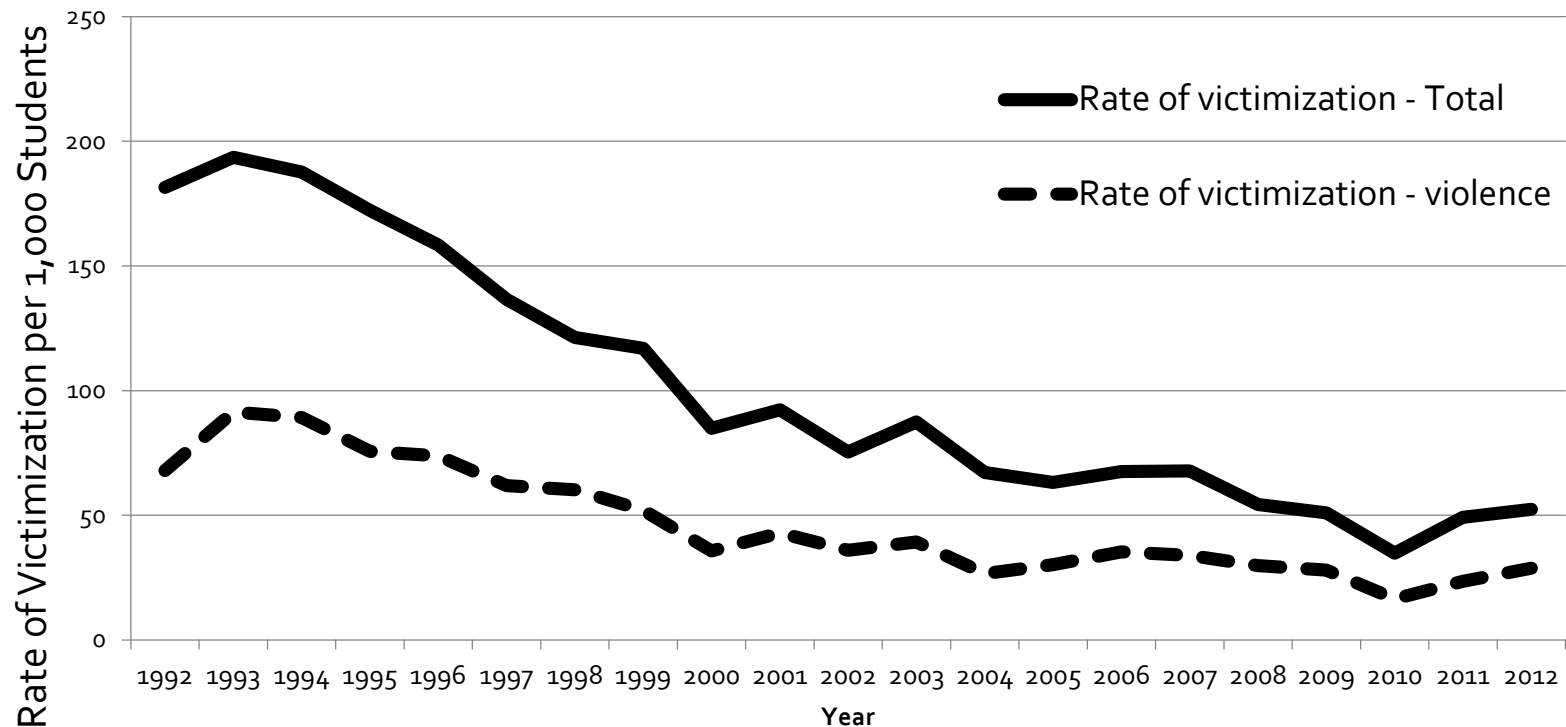Aaron Kupchik
Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice
University of Delaware

School Disciplinary Systems

National Research Council
Roundtable on Understanding Crime Trends
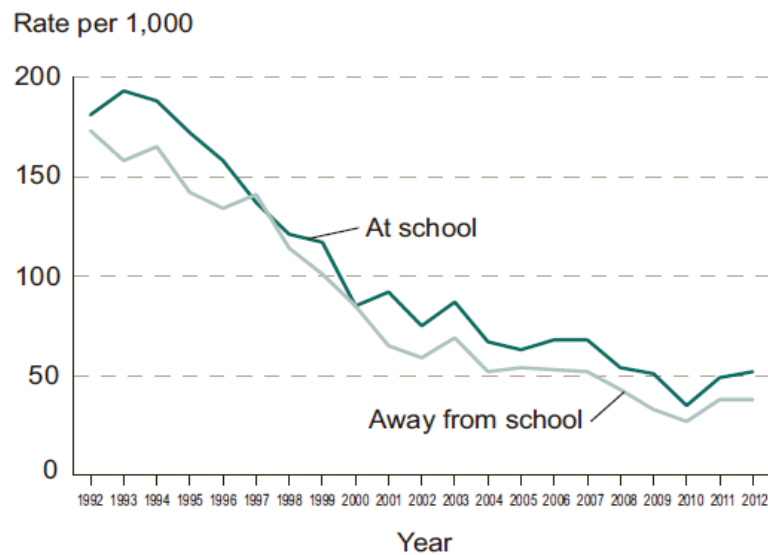May 18, 2015

School Crime

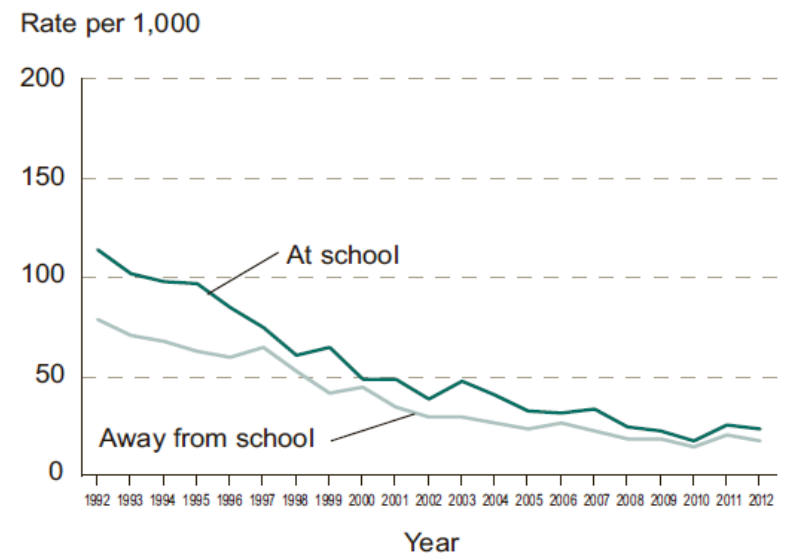Figure 1. Rate of Total and Violent Victimization per 1,000 students, Students Ages 12-18, by Year (1992-2013)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2013

Figure 2.1. Rate of nonfatal victimization against students ages 12–18 per 1,000 students, by type of victimization and location: 1992–2012
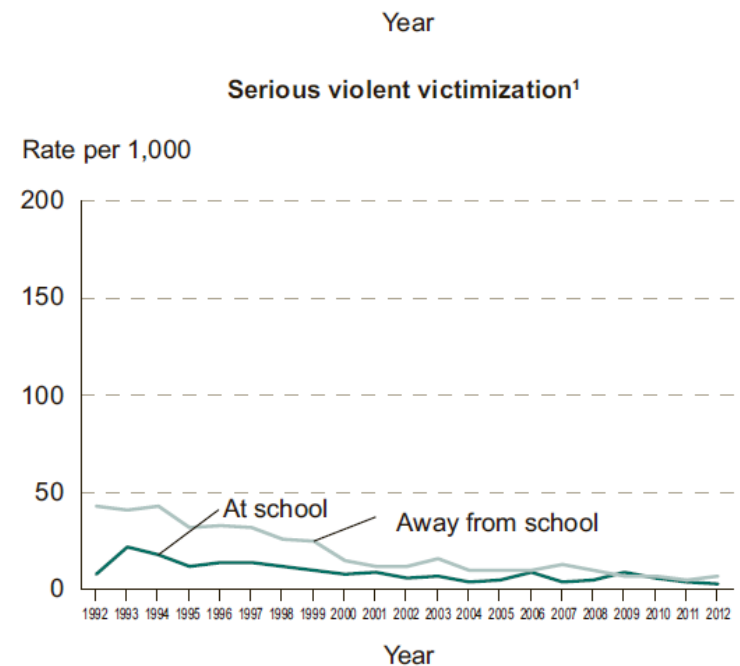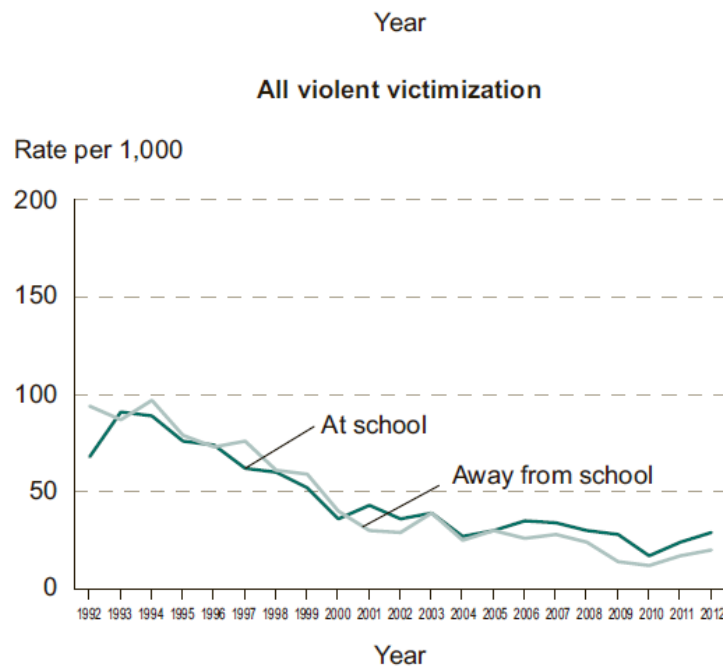

Total victimization

Rate per 1,000

At school

Away from school

Theft

Rate per 1,000

At school

Away from school

Year

All violent victimization

Serious violent victimization[1]

Year

Year

All violent victimization

Serious violent victimization[1]

Rate per 1,000

Rate per 1,000

At school

Away from school

At school

Away from school

1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012

1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012

Year

Year

[1] Serious violent victimization is also included in all violent victimization.

NOTE: Due to methodological changes, use caution when comparing 2006 estimates to other years. "Serious violent victimization" includes the crimes of rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault. "All violent victimization" includes serious violent crimes as well as simple assault. "Theft" in-cludes attempted and completed purse-snatching, completed pickpocketing, and all attempted and completed thefts, with the exception of motor vehicle
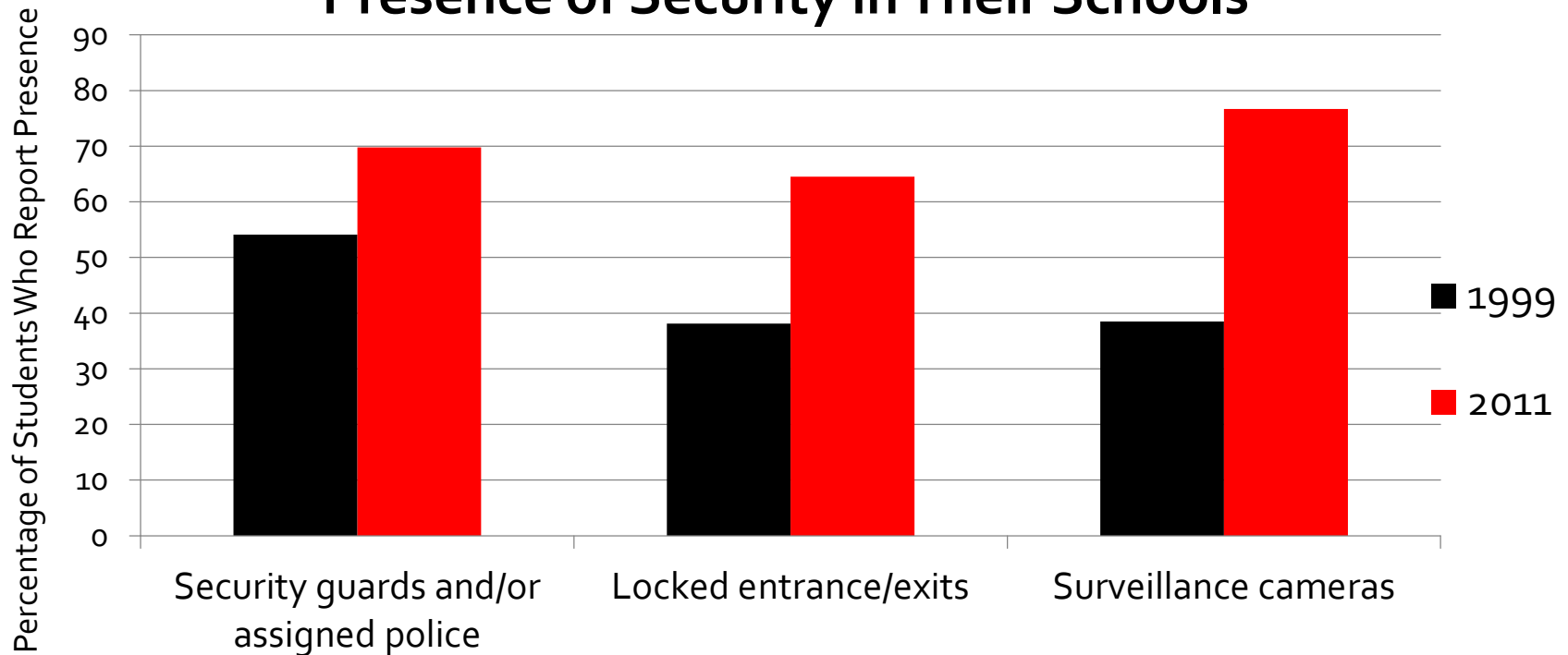
School Crime

Figure 2. Number of Homicides of Youth Ages 5-18 at School, 1992-2011
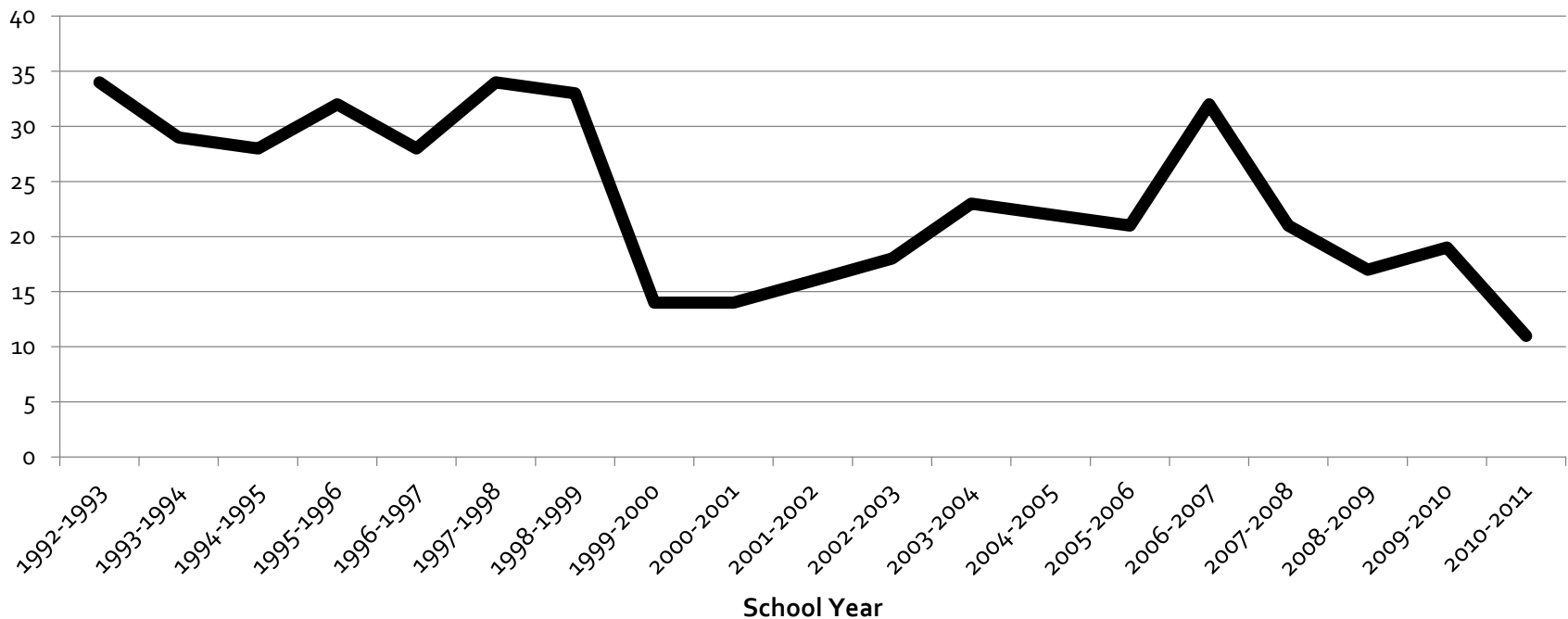
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2013, Figure 1.1
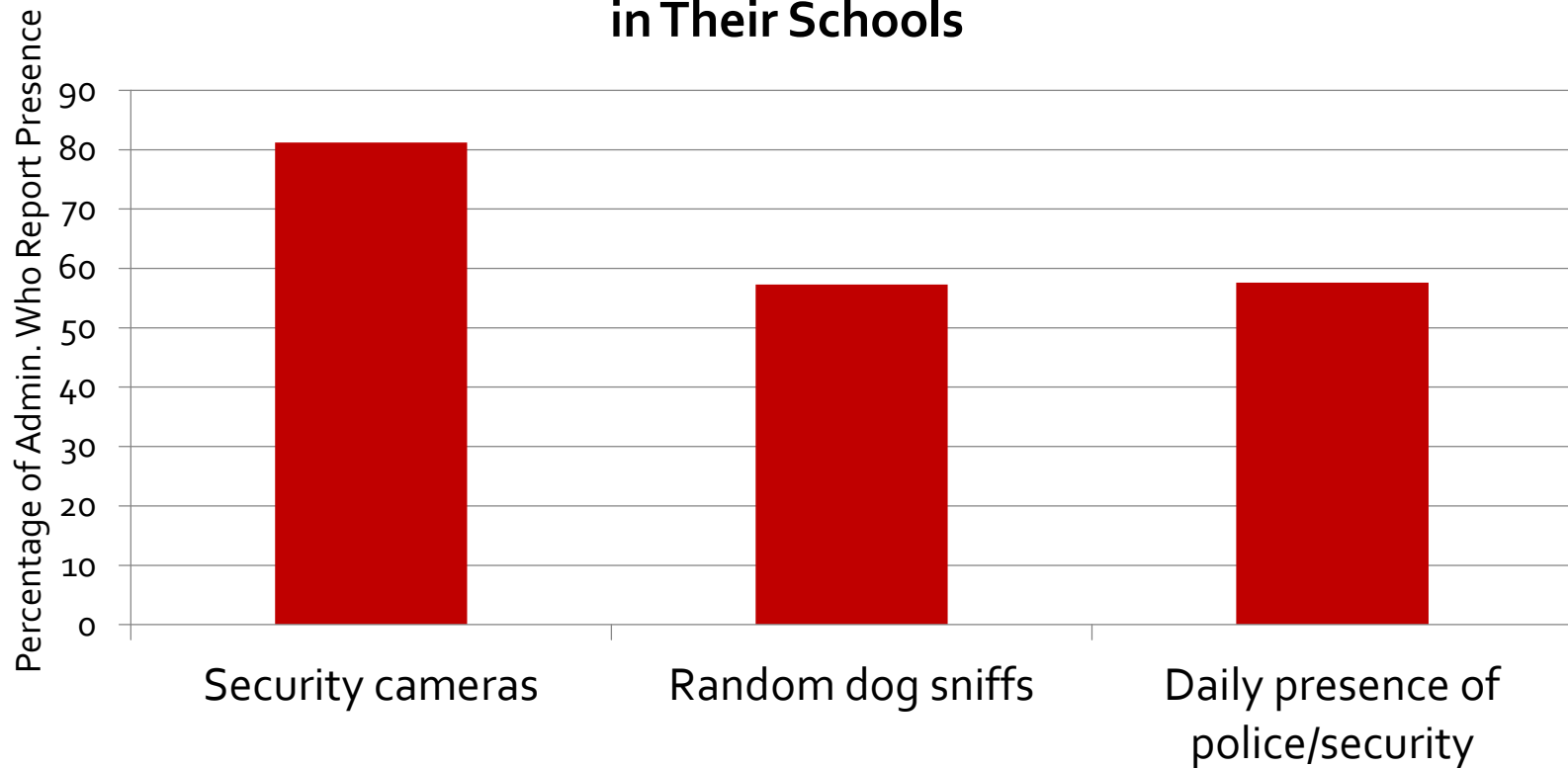
Security Practices

Figure 3. Student (ages 12-18) Reports of the Presence of Security in Their Schools

Source: National Criminal Victimization Survey, School Crime Supplement

Security Practices

Figure 4. Administrator Reports of Presence of Security in Their Schools

Percentage of Admin. Who Report Presence

Security cameras — Random dog sniffs — Daily presence of police/security

Source: NCES Schools and Staffing Survey, Public Secondary Schools, 2011-2012

Punishment Practices

- Zero tolerance policies
- Suspensions
  - Mostly minor offenses
- Arrests
- Racial/ethnic minorities disproportionately targeted

Punishment Practices

Figure 3. Suspensions as Percent of Enrollment, by Race

Legend: ■ Black ■ White ■ Hispanic ■ Native American ■ Asian/PI
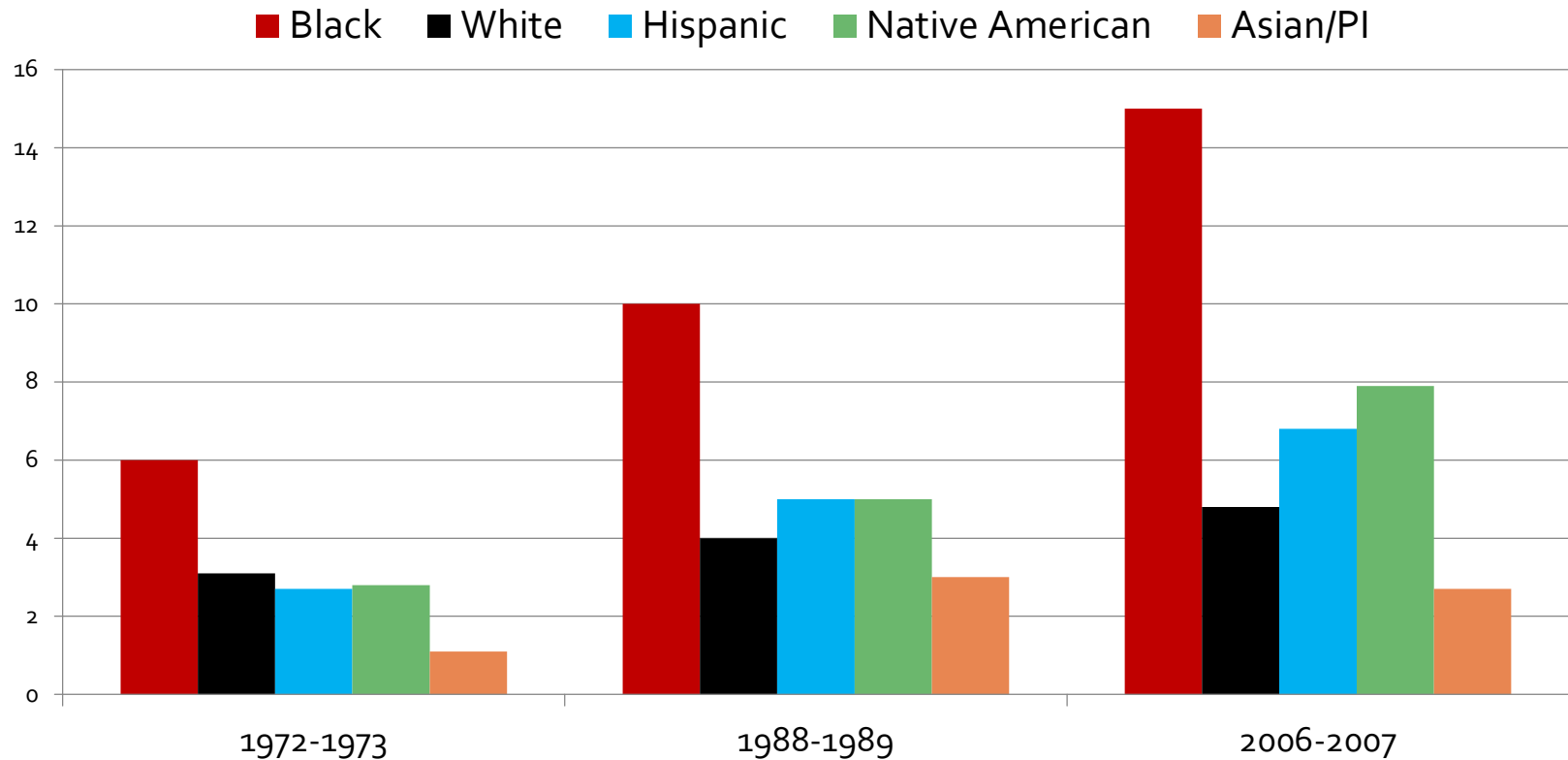
Source: Daniel J. Losen and Jonathan Gillespie, 2012, *Opportunities Suspended: the Disparate impact of disciplinary exclusion from school*. UCLA Civil Rights Project

Ineffective Crime Prevention

- Fair, firm rules are necessary
- Suspension:
  - No evidence of effectiveness
- Policing:
  - Few rigorous studies
  - Evidence of increased rates of drug and weapons offenses

Why is it Ineffective?

- Ignores actual problems
  - Policing/punishment prioritized over treatment
- Criminalizes normal misbehavior
- Hurts school social climate
  - Alienates students
  - Sites of caring ⟹ Sites of law enforcement
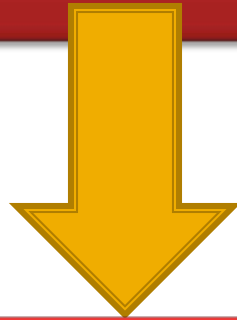 - Lower test scores

Consequences to Students

- Failure, dropout
- Unemployment
- Arrest, incarceration
- Racial disproportionality
- Bullying victimization

Consequences to Parents

- Stress
- Missed work
- Conflict with other children
- Disengage with school

Consequences to Communities

Suspension by grades 7-12

Lower likelihood of voting, volunteering as adults (ages 18-26; 25-33)

Recent Reform

- Federal initiatives
  - DOJ/DOE
  - December 2012 Senate hearing
  - OCR investigations
- State-level policy changes
- City-level policy changes

Substance of Reform

- School/Police/Court MOUs
- Restrictions on suspension
- Program implementation
  - PBIS
  - Restorative justice

Evidence on Best Practices

- Student empowerment
- Socio-emotional learning
- Restorative justice

More inclusive social climate

Better behavior

Barriers to Reform

- Resistance to evidence
  - Intransigent belief in effectiveness of police and security
- Budgetary constraints
- Hostile teaching climate
- Institutionalized practices