

The shift to inclusionary school policies: Are exclusionary approaches outdated?

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The journey

- 2004 – Funding from Criminology Research Council for analyses
- 2005 - Analyses and submission of suspension paper
- 2006 - Paper published in Journal of Adolescent Health
- 2007 - Awarded ARC grant on school discipline (2008-2010)
 - Paper on rates published in Journal of School Health
- 2008 – Funds awarded by RE Ross Trust & Collier Charitable Fund for dissemination of suspension findings
- 2009 – Writing articles for professional magazines for educators
 - Holding this forum
- 2010 – Complete ARC project and disseminate findings

Overview of presentation

- The current policy context
- Some definitions
- What do we know about the impact of exclusion on students?
- Why does suspension have negative effects on students?
- Next steps in research
- What are the alternatives?



The current policy context

- Focus on social inclusion and equity

State level

- Student engagement guidelines (DEECD)
- Student wellbeing (CEO)
- Increase school leaving age to 17

Federal level

- Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians

What is school exclusion?

- In this presentation, exclusion refers to
 - out-of-school (or external) suspension
 - expulsion



How do we define inclusive schools?

Above all, inclusion is about a **philosophy of acceptance where all people are valued and treated with respect**. Indeed, it is argued that **inclusion is unending**, so that there is no such thing as an inclusive school (Ballard 1995). According to this notion, **all schools can continue to develop greater inclusion**, whatever their current state (Sebba and Ainscow 1996). Recent understandings of inclusive schooling have described a process that **fosters participation by all pupils and staff** as a base for future school development (Bines 2000).

Carrington, .S & Robinson, R. (2004). Case study of inclusive school development: A journey of learning. *Int J. Inclusive Education*, 8 (2), 141-153.

How common are exclusionary approaches?

- School suspension is the most commonly used disciplinary technique
- Rates vary greatly from school to school
 - from 9% to 92% of enrolments in USA schools
- The length of suspensions also varies greatly from a few hours to more than 20 days

Rates vary depending on ...

- **Minority status**
- **Socioeconomic status**
- Gender (> for males)
- Urbanicity (> in urban schools)
- Age of students
 - lowest in younger grades, highest in middle school and drop in later high school
 - the drop after middle school could be a “push out” effect (those excluded drop out of school)
- School (some schools have much higher rates)
- Child’s experience of abuse or neglect
- Teacher attitudes (25% of classroom teachers responsible for 66% of office referrals; US, Skiba)

This suggests:

- a) factors other than student behaviour lead to exclusion
- b) exclusion is not used in a fair and equitable way

Is exclusion used only for the most serious offences?

No

- USA figures
 - suspensions
 - after fighting
 - attendance issues and abusive language
 - expulsions
 - usually for severe behaviour problems
 - BUT sometimes used for moderate behaviour problems

Sweet-dealing students have been told they'll be kicked out of a top Merseyside school if they don't stop giving their classmates a sugar high. St Anselm's College principal Simon Duggan claims the trade in illicit lollies and fizzy drinks on school buses is sparking fights and leading to theft and obesity. He said the racketeers would be suspended if caught.

- mX , Nice One, 3rd June 2009, p.7

In AUS, is exclusion used only for most serious offences?

■ **NSW 2008 report**

■ Expulsions

- 61% for misbehaviour
- 39% for “unsatisfactory behaviour at post compulsory age”

■ “Long” suspensions (average 12.7 days)

- 47% for physical violence
- 40% for persistent misbehaviour
- 7% for “serious criminal behaviour related to the school”

Key factors influencing whether or not student is suspended?

- school characteristics
 - teacher attitudes
 - school governance
- student ethnicity

In the long-term, suspensions are not effective

- High rates of “re-offending” after suspension
- Number of suspensions in elementary school best predicts student suspension in middle school
- Suspension predicts school dropout
- Suspension associated with student and teacher reports of a less effective and inviting school climate
- Schools with higher rates of school suspensions have lower average scores on measures of academic achievement

Our Victorian Study



Effects of suspension on student antisocial behaviour

International Youth Development Study

	Year 7		Year 9	
	VIC	WASH	VIC	WASH
Sample Size (<i>N</i>)	984	961	973	981
Mean age (yrs)	12.9	13.1	14.9	15.1
Female (%)	50.8	50.8	52.2	49.6

12 month retention rate of 99% retention in each state.

24 month retention rate of 98% (VIC) & 99% (WASH).



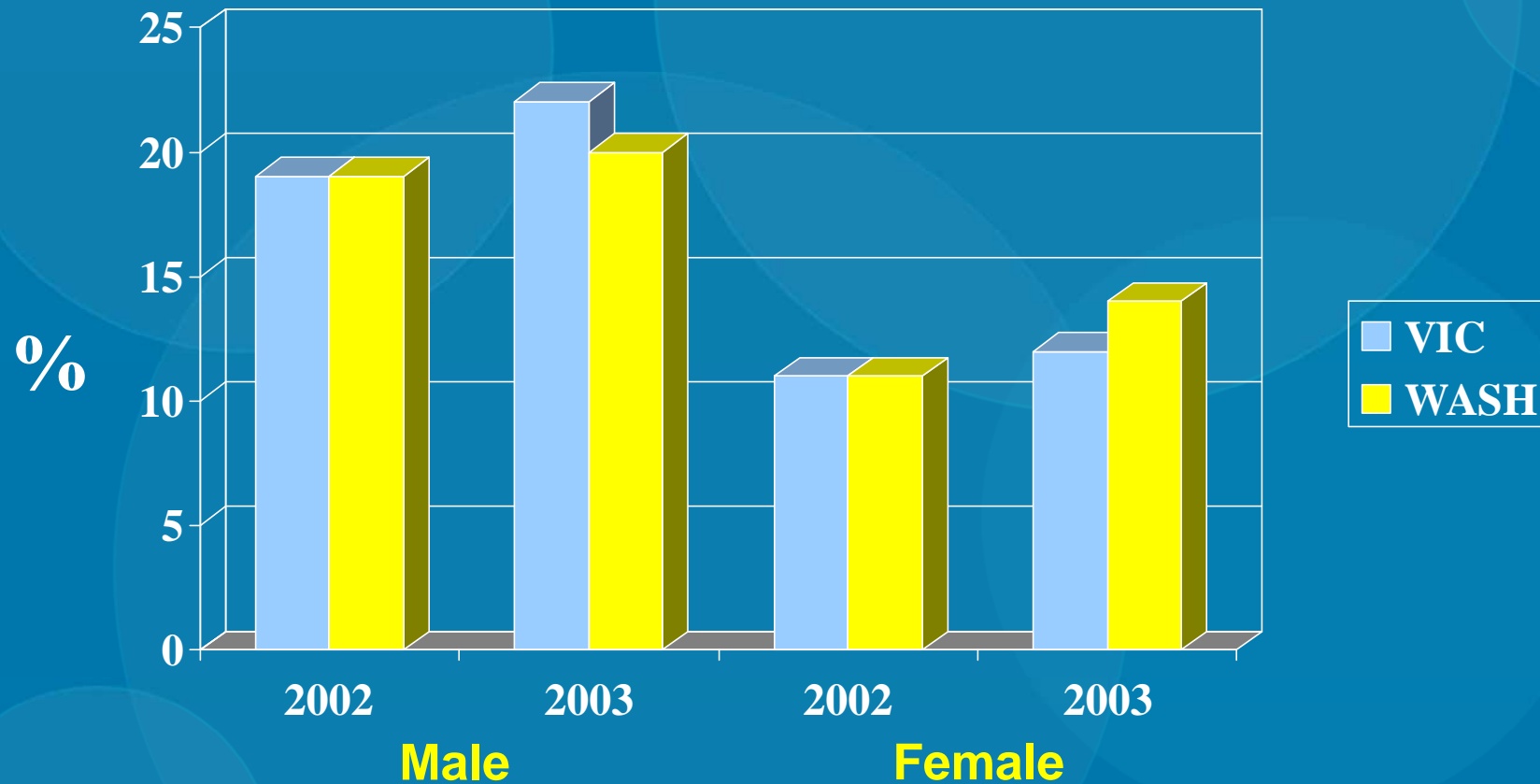
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/north-america/usa/>

Student Self-Report Survey

- Risk and protective factors
 - 5 levels (community, school, family, peer, individual)
- Antisocial behaviour
 - *theft
 - *vehicle theft
 - *wag school
 - *sell illegal drugs
 - *attack someone
 - *carry weapon
 - *beat up others
 - *drunk/high at school
 - *threaten others with weapon
 - *take handgun to school

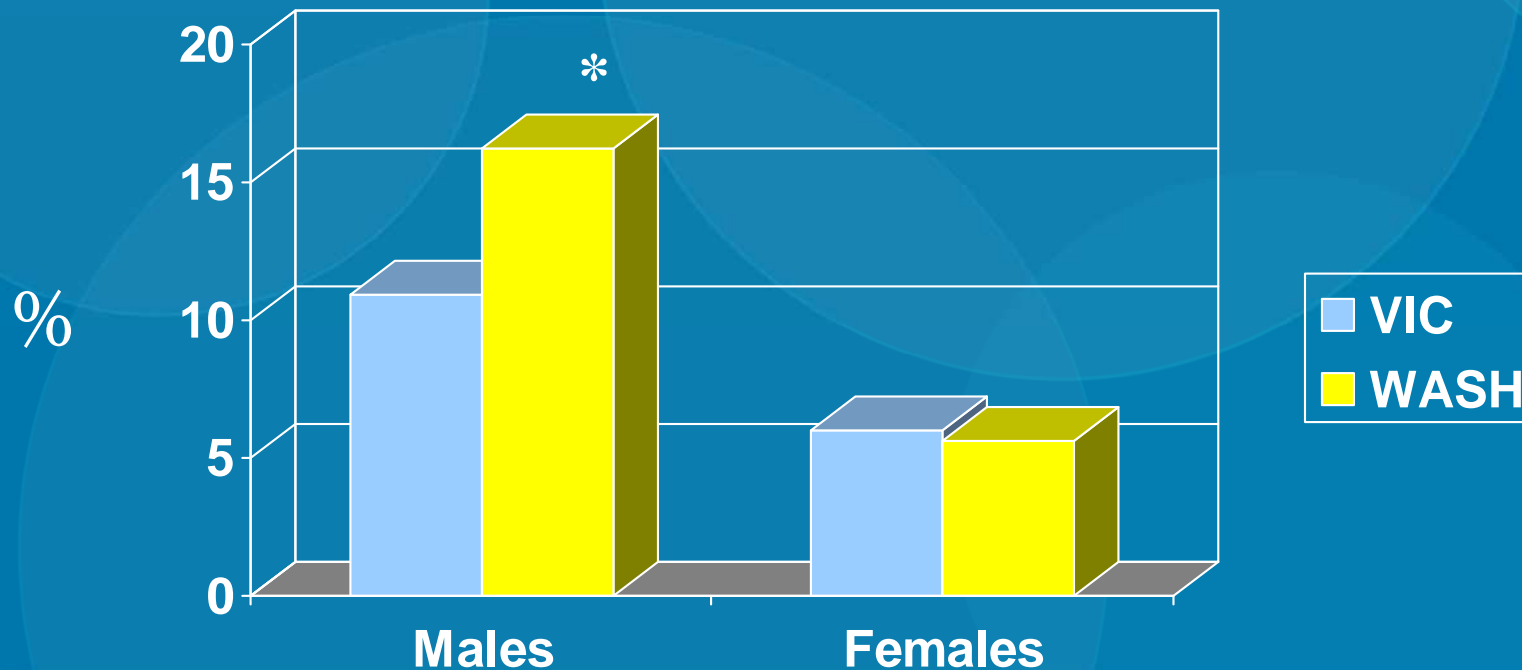


Antisocial Behaviour (AB)



No state differences in rates of AB

Suspension rates in 2002



More WASH males than VIC males suspended

Factors Influencing Development of Antisocial Behaviour

Data from 2002 to 2003



Summary of results

- **Protective factors (↓ likelihood of AB)**
 - Being female
 - Student believing in the moral order
 - Student emotional control
 - Attachment to mother
- **Risk factors (↑ likelihood of AB)**
 - 2002 AB
 - Student attitudes favourable to drugs
 - Interaction with antisocial peers
 - Poor school grades
 - Perceived availability of drugs in community
- **Impact of suspension**
 - School suspensions in 2002 increased the likelihood of AB in 2003 by 50%
 - above and beyond other factors

Predictors of violent behaviour

- Violent behaviour measured as:
 - attacking someone with the idea of seriously hurting them
 - beating someone up so badly they needed medical attention
- Similar findings to those for antisocial behaviour
- School suspensions in 2002 increased the likelihood of violent behaviour in 2003 by 70%
 - above and beyond established factors

Does suspension only affect suspended student?

No

- Suspensions/exclusions affect:
 - suspended student
 - other students in classroom
 - school staff
 - parents and siblings of suspended student
 - broader community

Summary of effectiveness of exclusion

- Intuitively, “get-tough” approach offers promise
- However, there are a range of concerns about the use of exclusion
- Too many to suggest that exclusion is the best way to handle student challenging behaviour, **particularly in an inclusive school**
- Exclusion doesn't fit with current policy context

Why does suspension have negative effects?

- **Rewards challenging behaviour**
 - If students don't want to go to school
 - If students gain notoriety from peers
- **Lack of adult supervision**
 - May link up with other young people who get into trouble
- **Impact on learning**
 - Raise risk of falling behind
- **Doesn't resolve underlying issues**
 - Taking time to understand these issues worthwhile
- **Punishment doesn't work**
 - Research shows punitive approaches are not effective

Gaps in the research

- Prospective studies of outcomes of children excluded from school
- Connections between education and juvenile justice system and test school-to-prison pipeline
- Cost-benefit studies to show relative benefits of removing students from school cf costs to society of removing students from school
- Systematic efficacy research on programs with and without exclusion policies and practices
- Research on alternatives to exclusion and feasible ways of implementing these

APA Zero Tolerance Task Force 2008

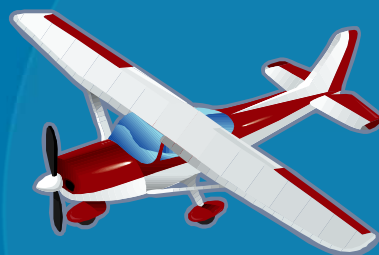
Next steps in our research

- Explore how school suspensions impact on later antisocial behaviour
 - Effect on school achievement?
 - Influence of deviant peers?
 - Impact on attitudes and behaviours?
- Study the long-term impact of suspension on behaviour
- Associations between sociodemographic factors and suspension

Newer phase of IYDS

- Australian Research Council grant
- 2008-2010
- *How does school discipline affect student behaviour, wellbeing and educational outcomes?*
- Student survey
- Student interviews
- Staff focus groups & Principal interviews

Are there effective alternatives to exclusion?



"These kids [trouble makers] need to be out. It's unfair to the rest. My job is like a pilot on a hijacked plane. My job is to throw the hijacker overboard."

(Fine, 1989, p. 167 cited in Smyth & Hattam, 2004, p.146).

“Mainstream schools need to make their exclusion practices inclusive. This would incorporate involving the parents in a solution-focused manner that had the immediate and future education interests of the child at the forefront of the negotiations.”

McDonald & Thomas (2003), p. 119

Alternatives

- Improve use of exclusion
- Evidence-based prevention strategies
- Whole-school restorative practices
- Internal suspension
- Behavioural contract
- Withdrawal of privileges
- Improve teacher training
 - More on behaviour management in pre-service training
 - Ongoing professional development once teaching

Questions/Discussion

