

The Problems Public Schools Face: High School Misbehaviour in 1990 and 2002

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Misbehaviour in high school impacts learning and instruction in the classroom as well as the educational climate of the institution. In this report, changes in administrators', teachers', and students' reports of misbehaviour between 1990 and 2002 were examined using two national US databases. There was little change in administrators' perspectives on the severity of misbehaviours, with some reported increase in verbal abuse of teachers and decrease in alcohol use. School urbanicity was not related to administrator reports of misbehaviour. Students reported less fighting and skipping class in 2002, but an increase in disruptions by other students and drug availability was found.

Introduction

Misbehaviour in high school impacts instruction in the classroom and the educational climate of the building. This study compared the extent of misbehaviour among tenth grade public high school students in 1990 and 2002, using two national databases, the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS88) and the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS2002). Several perspectives on student misbehaviour were explored: school administrator reports of building-wide student misbehaviour; teacher reports of student misbehaviour in the classroom; and student reports of their own misbehaviour and the misbehaviour of other students.

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Significant events may have impacted student conduct, directly or indirectly, during this 12-year time frame. National data show that students report being fearful of coming to school, increased weapon possession at school, and incidents of both student and teacher victimization (Elliott, Hamburg & Williams, 1998). The real and perceived threat of violence in schools increased during the 1990's. In 1993, 4% of the nation's high school students reported not going to school for safety reasons compared to about 7% in 2001 (CDC, 2004). Furthermore, the nation was shocked by the tragic school shootings that occurred during the late 1990's. This surge of violence prompted several national, state, and local efforts to respond with violence prevention efforts. At the federal level, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Community Act of 1994 provided federal grants to states to implement violence and drug prevention programs in schools. Zero tolerance policies were widely implemented during this time in an effort to respond to perceptions that schools were unsafe. Most school districts have enacted broad zero tolerance policies for responding to a wide range of both minor and serious offenses. Despite their prevalence, these policies have become controversial and their effectiveness has been questioned (Holloway, 2002; Skiba, 2004).

Student misbehaviour can be detrimental to students, to teachers, and to administrators alike. Research has consistently found that student misbehaviour in high school is related to depressed academic achievement and increased dropping out (Alexander, Entwisle & Horsey, 1997; Blum, Beuhring & Rinehart, 2000; Bucholz, 1990; Finn, 1993; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Rumberger & Larson, 1998). Students who are late for class or skip class do not benefit from the missed instruction. When students misbehave in class, all students are distracted from learning and teaching is interrupted.

In a 1995 survey of teachers, 17 percent of respondents reported that they lost 4 or more hours of teaching time each week due to disruptive students, and another 19 percent lost 2 or 3 hours each week (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 1995, reported in Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2003/2004). Fighting, stealing,

alcohol or drug use, and verbal or physical abuse of teachers create problems both for teachers and administrators. A 1997 survey of principals found that problems of student tardiness, absenteeism, physical conflicts among students, and alcohol use were encountered frequently (Heaviside, Rowand, Williams & Farris, 1998). The amount of time spent by administrators dealing with these issues can be considerable, detracting from time available to focus on the school's academic programs (Achilles, 2002; Borelli, 1997; Kingery & Coggeshall, 2001; Ruenzel, 1998). According to one principal, "In my first principalship...I look back on the experience now in absolute amazement that I did anything other than discipline. By the second semester my assistant and I spent the entire school day dealing with discipline referrals" (Borelli, 1997).

The Impact of Specific Forms of Misbehaviour

Studies of misbehaviour tend to focus on specific forms of misconduct, particularly truancy, the use of illicit substances, and fighting or other violent acts.

Absenteeism/Truancy. Missing school or class for any reason is likely to interfere with learning (Finn & Rock, 1997). Attendance rate in elementary grades tend to be high (Roderick et al., 1997). In later grades, the decision to attend school or class rests increasingly with each student. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), during the 1999–2000 school year the percent of absences reported by eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade students to be attributable to skipping were 9.0, 15.6, and 26.1 percent, respectively. The NCES also reported 4.0 percent of eighth-grade students, 9.3 percent of tenth-grade students, and 15.8 percent of twelfth-grade students cut three or more classes over a four week period (Wirt et al., 2002).

Drug and alcohol use. A large percentage of students use alcohol and drugs, although there is some evidence that this is declining. Recent national trends show that illicit drug use among students is generally down compared to recent decades (Johnston, O'Malley,

Bachman & Schulenberg, 2007). In a study of trends in risk behaviors from 1991 to 2003 (CDC, 2004), the percentage of students who reported ever using alcohol declined from 81.6 percent in 1991 to 74.9 percent in 2003. The percentage of students who reported ever using marijuana increased from 1991 to 1997 (from 31.3 to 47.1 percent), but then decreased from 1997 to 2003 (from 47.1 to 40.2 percent).

Substance use is also a problem in school settings. About 29% of U.S. high school students reported having been offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004). A recent investigation of school-related substance use showed that 12 percent of high school students had used alcohol on school property and 16 percent had used marijuana on school property during the 6 months preceding the survey (Finn, 2006). Further, about one-third of high school principals reported that student alcohol or drug use was a moderate or serious problem in their school (Heaviside et al., 1998).

Fighting. Frequent fighting on school grounds can create distress for students involved in fights and for those who are not—distracting them from their studies and discouraging them from attending school (Hamburg, 1998). In 2003, 33.0 percent of high school students reported that they had been in one or more physical fights in the previous 12 months, 11.3 percent in two or three fights, and 7.8 percent in four or more fights (CDC, 2003). The majority of fights occurred off school grounds, but 12.8 percent of students reported that they had been in fights on school property. However, this is a significant decline from the 16.2 percent who reported fighting on school property in 1993 (CDC, 2005).

Fifty-five percent of high school principals reported at least one physical attack or fight that warranted calling law enforcement officials during the 1996-97 school year (Heaviside, et al., 1998). Principals of urban schools and schools with enrollments of one

thousand students or more were most likely to report these incidents.

Other disruptive acts. Less violent forms of behavior also disrupt the teaching/learning process; for example, talking or verbal disruption in the classroom, throwing objects, and disobeying the teacher (Dolan et al. 1989). More serious acts, such as theft, vandalism, weapon possession, and physical abuse of teachers can cause concerns for safety to supersede learning. In a report of trends in violent behavior among high school students, the CDC (2005) found that 29.8 percent of students reported property stolen or deliberately damaged at school one or more times during the 12 months preceding the survey (CDC, 2004). During that period, 9.2 percent of students had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property one or more times, and 6.1 percent of students reported possessing a weapon on school property on at least one of the thirty days prior to the survey. Still, that represents a decline from 11.8 percent in 1993 (CDC, 2005).

Gang membership increases the likelihood of committing violent acts—both in school and elsewhere (Fagan & Wilkinson 1998). For other students, the presence of gang members, the violence they enact, and the threat that they project, heighten students' stress levels and hinder their ability to focus on academics (Hamburg 1998; Ralph et al. 1995).

Co-occurrence of misbehaviours. Often, schools that experience one significant behavior problem also have others. For example, Finn (2004) found that schools with a high degree of alcohol problems tended to have other problems such as robbery and vandalism. Schools that experienced significant drug problems were more likely to experience high rates of tardiness, class cutting, absenteeism, student conflict, robbery, vandalism, verbal abuse of teachers, and racial conflict.

Research Questions

This study examined student and school administrator reports of school-wide levels of misbehaviour, and student and teacher reports of tenth-grade student misbehaviour in 1990 and 2002, to compare the extent of misbehaviour among high school students at two points in time. Specifically, the research questions were: (1) What misbehaviours do public high school administrators, tenth-grade students and their teachers most often report as prevalent in their schools? Are the patterns of misbehaviour similar in urban, suburban, and rural schools? (2) How have patterns of misbehaviour changed from 1990 to 2002?

Method

Participants

This study used data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) and the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002). Both studies were conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

NELS:88. The NELS:88 survey tracked a national cohort of youth as they progressed from eighth grade through high school, and onto postsecondary education and employment as young adults. The initial data collection took place in the spring of 1988 when the participants were in eighth grade. Subsequent data collections took place in 1990, 1992, 1994 and 2000, when the cohort was in tenth grade, in twelfth grade, age 20 and age 26, respectively. This analysis used data from the first follow-up collection in 1990. The NELS:88 first follow-up school sample was comprised of students who were included in the base year sample.

Students who were not in public schools in tenth grade in 1990 due to retention in grade, advancement to a higher grade, or dropping out were not included in this analysis. The resulting sample was comparable to the base year ELS:2002 sample which was comprised of all students in school and in tenth grade. Sample sizes in the analyses of NELS:88 student data ranged from 12,431

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to 14,956, depending on the degree of missing data for particular variables.

A questionnaire was also administered to the principal of each high school; 874 school principals responded to the survey which included questions regarding student behavior. Selected teachers were asked to respond to a survey that included questions about the student's behavior. Teachers who taught mathematics, English, science and social studies were eligible for selection; two teachers for each student were surveyed. Sample sizes in the analysis of NELS:88 teacher responses ranged from 11,423 to 15,271 depending on the degree of missing data for particular variables.

ELS:2002. The first Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 data collection took place in 2002 when the participants were in tenth grade. As with the NELS:88 sample, only students who attended public schools were included in this study. The number of cases ranged from 10,893 to 11,953, depending on the degree of missing data for particular variables. The analysis of ELS:2002 school administrator responses included all schools for which valid responses to survey items included in this study were available ($n = 475$). Selected teachers were asked to respond to a survey that included questions about the student's behavior. Teachers who taught mathematics and English were eligible for selection and an attempt was made to survey two teachers of each student. Sample sizes in the analysis of ELS:2002 teacher responses for this study ranged from 9,288 to 9,689 depending on the degree of missing data for particular variables.

Measures

Three sets of measures were used for this report: (1) administrator reports of thirteen misbehaviours, (2) measures of five misbehaviours exhibited by individual tenth grade students, reported by the students and their teachers, (3) tenth-grade students' reports of four misbehaviours exhibited by other students in their schools.

Administrator reports of student misbehaviour. In both surveys, administrators were asked to report the degree to which thirteen misbehaviours were a problem in their school – tardiness, absenteeism, class cutting, physical conflicts among students, gangs, robbery or theft, vandalism, use of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, possession of weapons, physical abuse of teachers, verbal abuse of teachers, and racial/ethnic conflict among students. Response choices were slightly different in the two surveys. In NELS:88 they were “Not a problem,” “Minor problem,” “Moderate problem,” and “Serious problem.” The “Moderate” and “Serious” options were collapsed into a single category for this report. In ELS:2002, the response choices were “Happens daily,” “Happens at least once a week,” “Happens at least once a month,” “Happens on occasion,” and “Never happens.” The responses “Happens daily” and “Happens at least once a week” were collapsed into a single category.

Teacher and student reported misbehaviour. In the NELS:88 and ELS:2002 data collections, teachers of each tenth grade student participant were asked to respond to survey questions about the behavior of the student. This study used two questions from the teacher survey: how often the student was tardy and how often the student behaved disruptively in the classroom. Response choices were “Never,” “Rarely,” “Some of the time,” “Most of the time,” or “All of the time.” Dichotomous indicators of whether the frequency of each misbehaviour exceeded a cutoff indicating a high rate of that misbehaviour were constructed. Students who received ratings of “Most of the time” or “All of the time” for a misbehaviour from both teachers were considered to have exceeded the cutoff for that misbehaviour.

Student responses to three survey questions in NELS:88 and ELS:2002 about their own misbehaviour were used, and dichotomous indicators of a high frequency for each misbehaviour were constructed. Students reported how often they were in a fight during the first half of the school year. Response choices were “Never,” “Once or twice,” or “More than twice.” The cutoff used for a high rate of fighting was any incident of fighting in the first

half of the school year. Students were also asked how often they had cut or skipped class, and been in trouble for not following school rules during the first half of the school year. Response choices for these items were “Never,” “1-2 times,” “3-6 times,” “7-9 times,” or “Over 10 times.” Cutting/skipping class three or more times and getting into trouble three or more times were considered high rates of occurrence for these misbehaviours.

Misbehaviour by other students. Students also reported on four misbehaviours by other students in their schools. Students indicated whether they agreed with the statement “Other students often disrupt class.” Response choices were “Strongly disagree,” “Disagree,” “Agree,” or “Strongly agree.” Dichotomous indicators that students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement were created for each survey for use in the analysis. Students also indicated whether or not something had been stolen from them, someone had offered to sell them drugs, or someone had threatened them at school during the first half of the school year. Response choices were “Never,” “Once or twice,” or “More than twice.” For this analysis, dichotomous indicators that students had experienced the incident one or more times were created for each of the three questions on both surveys.

Analysis

The extent of misbehaviour was explored in two steps: (1) In the first step, administrator reports of the prevalence of specific misbehaviours in 1990 and in 2002 were analyzed. (2) In the second step, misbehaviour reported by teachers and students, and student experiences of misbehaviour by other students were examined in 1990 and 2002.

A type I error rate of $\alpha = .01$ was used throughout the analysis. Cases missing a value on one or more variables were excluded from all analyses involving the particular variable(s). Sampling weights were used in all analyses of student data so that the weighted sample was representative of the population of tenth graders in each respective year. Frequency distributions and z-tests

were used to explore differences in student misbehaviour in 1990 and 2002.

Analyses of student and teacher data were carried out using the AM software (Cohen et al., 2003) available for use with complex databases like NELS:88 and ELS:2002 that have sampling designs involving selection by strata and primary sampling units. This type of sampling design results in more homogenous groups at the school level because students attending the same school are likely to have more common characteristics than would result from simple random sampling. To adjust for this, the AM program accepts the sampling weight, sampling stratum, and primary sampling unit variables, and produces accurate standard errors of estimates in the analysis.

In the first step of the analysis, thirteen misbehaviours were ranked in descending order according to the percent of administrators who reported each as “moderate” or “serious” on the NELS:88 survey or as occurring “at least once a week” or “daily” on the ELS:2002 survey. Rankings were carried out for all schools, and for urban, suburban and rural schools, separately. To assess the consistency of the severity of each misbehaviour over time, Spearman rank correlations between the 1990 and 2002 rankings were computed.

In the second step of the analysis, five misbehaviours reported by students and teachers were examined. The percent of students exhibiting a high rate of each behavior, and the change from 1990 to 2002, were determined. Student experiences of other students disrupting class, of having property stolen, being offered drugs, or threatened were also analyzed in this phase. The percent of students experiencing each problem and the change between the two time points were determined.

Results

Administrator Reports of Misbehaviour

According to school principals, the most common behavior problems in both 1990 and 2002 were tardiness and absenteeism (Table 1). Even though the scales are not the same, 61% of principals reported that tardiness was a moderate to serious problem in 1990, and 98% of principals reported that tardiness occurred at least once a week or daily in 2002. The least common problems in 1990 were those involving physical threat or violence (gang activity, racial conflict, weapon possession, and physical abuse of teachers). The same four remained the least common misbehaviours in 2002. In both 1990 and 2002, about 2% of principals reported that weapon possession was problematic in their schools, and less than 1% reported frequent problems with physical abuse of teachers.

Table 1. Percent and ranking of school administrator report of misbehaviour: 1990 and 2002

<i>Misbehaviour</i>	<i>Percent and Rank Exhibiting Misbehaviour</i>			
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2002</i>
	<i>Percent^a</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Percent^b</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Tardiness	61.0	1	98.3	2
Absenteeism	55.3	2	98.5	1
Alcohol use	37.1	3	16.2	9
Class cutting	36.6	4	88.8	3
Drug use	23.7	5	19.6	7
Physical conflict	12.6	6	40.5	4
Vandalism	8.9	7	16.6	8
Robbery/theft	8.7	8	27.2	6
Verbal abuse of teacher	7.1	9	29.2	5
Gang activity	4.4	10	5.5	10
Racial conflict	4.4	11	3.2	11
Weapon possession	2.2	12	2.1	12
Physical abuse of teacher	0.5	13	0.4	13

^a Indicates the percentage of administrators who indicated misbehaviour was a “moderate” or “serious” problem in their school; ^b Indicates the percentage of administrators who indicated the problem occurred “at least once a week” or “daily” at their school.

The rank order of problems remained fairly stable from 1990 to 2002; the correlation between the ranks was 0.81 (Table 2). In general, there was little change from one time point to the other. Of the thirteen problems, two showed the most noteworthy changes over time, that is, an increase or decrease of three or more ranks. These were verbal abuse of teachers which moved up in ranking from the ninth to the fifth most prominent problem, and alcohol use which moved from the third to the ninth most prominent problem. Drug use was also rated as less prominent in 2002 but the change in ranks was not as great as the change for alcohol. Drug use was ranked as the fifth most prominent problem in 1990 and the seventh most prominent problem in 2002. In addition, both physical conflict and theft were rated as more problematic by administrators in 2002 than in 1990; each problem changed by two ranks.

Table 2. Ranking of school administrator report of misbehaviour, by school urbanicity

<i>Misbehaviour</i>	<i>School Urbanicity</i>							
	<i>Overall</i>		<i>Urban</i>		<i>Suburban</i>		<i>Rural</i>	
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2002</i>
Tardiness	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
Absenteeism	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2
Alcohol use	3	9	4	9	3	8	3	9
Class cutting	4	3	3	3	4	3	5	3
Drug use	5	7	6	7	5	7	4	7
Physical conflict	6	4	5	4	6	4	7	5
Vandalism	7	8	8	8	7	9	8	8
Robbery/theft	8	6	7	6	8	5	6	6
Verbal abuse of teacher	9	5	10	5	9	6	9	4
Gang activity	10	10	9	10	11	10	12	12
Racial conflict	11	11	11	12	10	11	10	10
Weapon possession	12	12	12	11	12	12	11	1
Physical abuse of teacher	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	1
Racial conflict	.81**		.85**		.84**		.79**	

** $p < .01$

Student misbehaviour reported by administrators was also analyzed according to school urbanicity. The rank correlations between 1990 and 2002 within school locations were high in each school location, ranging from 0.79 to 0.85 (Table 2). For all three locations, tardiness and absenteeism were ranked as the top two problems in both 1990 and 2002, and physical abuse of teachers was ranked as the least common problem. In all three locations, alcohol use was regarded as a less serious problem in 2002 than in 1990. Drug use was also ranked as less serious for all locations in 2002 although the change was not as great as alcohol. The difference was most pronounced for rural schools where it decreased from fourth to seventh in ranking. In all three school locations, verbal abuse of teachers was rated as a more serious problem in 2002 than in 1990. In general, urban, suburban, and rural schools appeared to be similar in the rankings given to 13 problems, and in changes in rankings over the 12-year period.

Teacher and Student Reports of Misbehaviour

Five misbehaviours reported by teachers (tardiness and disruptiveness) and students (fighting, skipping classes, and getting into trouble) were examined. The percent of students exhibiting a high rate of each behavior in 1990 and 2002 are shown in Table 3. There were significant decreases from 1990 to 2002 in student fighting and skipping classes. The percentage of students who were involved in a fight decreased from 17.3 percent to 14.6 percent ($z = 4.23, p < .0001$), and the percent of students who cut/skipped three or more classes decreased from 16.0 percent to 13.7 percent ($z = 2.98, p = .0029$). The change in student tardiness was marginally significant, $z = -2.31, p = .02$; the percentage of students rated by their teachers as tardy increased from 3.7 percent in 1990 to 4.6 percent in 2002. No significant differences between 1990 and 2002 were reported for either students' reports of getting into trouble or teachers' reports of disruptiveness.

Table 3. Reports of student misbehaviour: 1990 and 2002

<i>Misbehaviour</i>	<i>Percent exhibiting high rate of misbehaviour^a</i>	
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2002</i>
Fighting**	17.3	14.6
Cutting/skipping classes**	16.0	13.7
Getting into trouble	12.5	12.1
Tardiness	3.7	4.6
Disruptiveness	6.0	5.5

**Significant difference 1990 to 2002, $p < .01$; a High rate of misbehaviour—ever fought, cut classes 3+ times, got into trouble 3+ times, tardy most or all of the time, disruptive most or all of the time.

Tenth grade students' reports of misbehaviour by other students are shown in Table 4. In both 1990 and 2002, a high percentage of students reported that other students often disrupt class, 71.7 and 75.9 percent, respectively, which was a significant increase over the 12-year period ($z = -5.12$, $p < .0001$). The percentage of students who reported having something stolen decreased significantly from 44.4 to 40.8 between 1990 and 2002 ($z = 4.06$, $p < .0001$). The percentage of tenth grade students who had someone offer to sell them drugs increased significantly from 17.8 percent in 1990 to 25.8 percent in 2002 ($z = -10.10$, $p < .0001$). Reports of being threatened by other students at school remained relatively consistent between 1990 and 2002.

Table 4. Student reports of other student misbehaviour: 1990 and 2002

<i>Misbehaviour</i>	<i>Percent experiencing other student misbehaviour</i>	
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2002</i>
Other students often disrupt class ^{a**}	71.7	75.9
Had something stolen ^{b**}	44.4	40.8
Someone offered to sell drugs ^{b**}	17.8	25.8
Someone threatened to hurt student ^b	23.9	24.6

**Significant difference 1990 to 2002, $p < .01$; ^aAgree or agree strongly;

^bOccurred one or more times in first half of school year.

Discussion

This study examined misbehaviour from the perspective of administrators, teachers, and students in 1990 and 2002. Significant events such as high-profile school shootings prompted violence and discipline to become significant themes across the nation. Although most schools do not experience high levels of serious violence, misbehaviour is a common occurrence in most schools. The purpose of the study was to compare the type and extent of misbehaviour among high school students during this time period. According to school administrators, tardiness and absenteeism were regarded as the most problematic issues in their schools, while weapon possession and physical abuse of teachers were the least problematic. These rankings were similar over time and between school locations. However, some changes were observed between 1990 and 2002; these included an increase in the prevalence of verbal abuse of teachers, and a decrease in student alcohol and drug use. This decreasing trend of drug problems at school is consistent with national reports which show a gradual decline in marijuana and alcohol use among high school students over the past 10 years (Johnston et al., 2007).

According to teachers, about 6% of students were perceived as disruptive in the classroom and 5% were perceived to be frequently tardy. These perceptions did not differ significantly between 1990 and 2002. Furthermore, a large percentage of students indicated that other students often disrupt the class. Although teacher ratings of disruptiveness did not change over time, student ratings increased between 1990 and 2002. This may suggest that increases in disruptive behavior among certain students were not as salient to teachers and did not interfere with classroom practices.

Several other discrepancies were found between students' perspectives of misbehaviour and those of their principals. Contrary to student reports of less fighting and less cutting/skipping classes, administrator rankings of these misbehaviours indicate high school administrators found them to be somewhat more prevalent in 2002 than in 1990. In addition, student reports of theft and fighting were both lower in 2002 than

in 1990. In contrast, principals rankings of theft increased from 8 to 6, and rankings of physical conflict among students increased from 6 to 4 during this same time period.

Finally, the percentage of students reporting that someone had offered to sell them drugs increased over time, yet the ranking of administrator reports of drug problems decreased. Drug use among high school students should be examined further to understand fully the nature of trends in use among high school students and why drug availability has increased while drug use did not. The recent Monitoring the Future survey revealed a complex relationship between marijuana use and availability among 12th graders (Johnston et al., 2007). For example, trends in marijuana use since 1976 showed that use declined through the 1980s, increased steadily in the 1990s, and then declined somewhat since 2000. On the other hand, trends in marijuana availability were more consistent across time. Discrepancies between student and administrator reports should be explored further to determine whether trends are more consistent in subgroups based on characteristics of students and schools.

Misbehaviour at school is harmful to the individual when it interferes with learning in school and it is harmful to other students if they feel threatened or uncomfortable because of the misbehaviour of those around them. Some problems continue to occur commonly, for example, classroom disruptions and class cutting. It would be valuable to determine manipulable school factors that impact student behavior in order to prevent these from impeding student learning. For example, student misbehaviour may be related to the degree to which students feel a sense of belonging in school, the degree to which disciplinary practices are viewed as fair and just, the level of teacher support, and the relevance of the curriculum for meeting student needs. Schools are a key site for preventive intervention because schools bring adolescents together during the ages when milder forms of misbehaviour can escalate into more serious acts (Hawkins, Farrington, and Catalano, 1998; Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 2002). Thus, if the amounts or patterns of misbehaviour have changed, then school policies for responding to misbehaviour may also need to be re-examined.

Research on the effectiveness of interventions is needed to ensure funding is targeted to programs that have the greatest impact on student misbehaviour. A range of prevention programs has been attempted, from those that emphasize the individual's social and cognitive processing skills and social behavior, to those that emphasize the school's role in promoting academics and maintaining a supportive environment (Hawkins, Farrington & Catalano, 1998; Samples & Aber, 1998). Evaluations of the interventions show mixed results, even within a problem area. Some appear to work, individually or in combination with others, while some are consistently ineffective (Dryfoos 1996; Gottfredson, Gottfredson & Czeh 2000; Gottfredson et al. 2004; NIDA 2001; Samples & Aber 1998; Wilson, Gottfredson & Najaka 2001). Through successful intervention and prevention, student forms of misbehaviour can be diverted or reduced.

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