Voices of the Unheard: Black Girls and School Discipline

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Alexis Patrice Little, M.S.Ed.

Graduate Program in Educational Studies

The Ohio State University

2020

Dissertation Committee

Karen Stansberry-Beard, Ph.D., Advisor

Ann Allen, Ph.D.

Minjung Kim, Ph.D.

Kisha Radliff, Ph.D.

Abstract

The Guns Free School Act of 1994 led to the overuse of zero tolerance discipline policies and practices in public schools. Policy evaluations, empirical studies, and the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights found pervasive racial and gender disparities in school discipline in the decades following. When disaggregating discipline data for female students by race, Black girls consistently faced the highest rates of exclusionary punishments compared to any other racial group (regardless of other identifiers such as socioeconomic, disability, etc.). Despite this alarming trend, there is comparatively less scholarship and education policy focus on Black girls' educational experiences with school discipline. This sequential explanatory mixed-methods study used school and district-level data to investigate school discipline for female students in elementary, middle, and high-school in a Midwestern state. This study incorporated Black girls' voices to consider solutions by gathering their perspectives concerning current high school experiences related to discipline and effective alternatives and supportive resources for their schools.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my mother and best friend,

Florence Patricia Chance,

thank you for always believing in me.

iv

creating the space for me to collect the qualitative data. The quantitative data collection process was long and, at times, frustrating, but the data contact at the Midwestern Department of Education was beneficial. His patience and willingness to help, moved the data process forward.

Sandy Reed, Meng-Ting Lo, and Susie Mauck were so helpful during the quantitative analysis of my study, we all learned so much during that experience. They guided me through some of the frustrations with the data and, ultimately, this collaboration helped produced an outstanding study. These researchers were very supportive and provided extensive resources, which aided me in becoming an even stronger researcher and scholar.

This study would not be complete without the contributions from the bright, beautiful girls who gave their time to help with the study. I am so grateful that they were committed to the study's goals. They certainly added an essential perspective to this larger academic discussion. It was an absolute pleasure getting to know them, and they were an indispensable element to this study.

I also have to thank my close friends, loved ones, and family for their support. Whether you were there from the very beginning or joined me later in the journey, I appreciate your love and support throughout this whole process. Your faith in me has genuinely given me the strength to persevere. Thank you for your encouragement and love.

To my parents, thank you so much for your love and support. Your commitment to my educational and personal wellbeing shaped me into the woman that I am today. I

Vita

October 15, 1991…………………Born, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

2014……………………………B.A. History, Minor: Chinese
Bowdoin College, Maine

2015……………………………M.S.Ed. Education Policy
University of Pennsylvania

2015-2016..…………………… Researcher
Delaware Education Research & Development Center
University of Delaware

2016-2020……………………...Graduate Research Associate
Ohio Department of Higher Education

Publications

Pollock, L., Mouza, C., Czik, A., Little, A., Coffey, D., & Buttram, J. (2017, March).
From professional development to the classroom: Findings from CS K-12
teachers. In *Proceedings of the 2017 acm sigcse technical symposium on
computer science education* (pp. 477-482).

Fields of Study

Major Field: Educational Studies

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

"Voices of the Unheard: A Mixed Methods Study of Black Girls and

Exclusionary School Discipline Policies" examines how discipline practices involving

student removal disproportionately impact Black girls in Ohio's public high schools. This

chapter presents background information on the policy problem and research questions

guiding this empirical study. Included is a brief history of school discipline in U.S. public

schools, the purpose and significance of the study, along with the researcher's

assumptions. The chapter concludes with key definitions for the terminology utilized

throughout the study. There is a gap in research on how school discipline policies impact

Black girls' intersectional educational experiences. There is also a paucity of

multidisciplinary literature informing policy change outside scholars specializing in

Black women and girls.

The amount of literature is important because multidisciplinary research translate

into evidence, from which evidence-based policy interventions for Black girls (Aston et

al., 2018; Morris 2012) can be realized. Interventions can be used as effective tools to

inform policies that facilitate Black female students' academic identity and emotional

well-being. This study contributes to the burgeoning literature on Black girls' experiences

by examining their intersectional educational experiences in a Midwestern state. In this

study, Black girls are centered as experts who are capable of articulating their needs and

brainstorming effective solutions. In order to address those education policy issues, this mixed-methods study addresses the following quantitative and qualitative inquiries:

Overarching Research Questions

1. What is the current state of public-school discipline policy and its effect on Black girls in Ohio?

2. What do Black girls believe are ways to improve and mitigate the negative effects of school discipline issues at their school?

Quantitative Inquiries: Guiding Hypotheses

1. Studies find that Back girls receive disproportionate exclusionary discipline practices (EDP) when compared to their non-Black female peers (Morris, 2012). When focusing on female students, do the Black female students receive more EPD compared to other racial groups?

2. Contemporary research studies find that the most prevalent type of misbehavior for Black girls is *insubordination or disruptive behavior* (Morris, 2012). So, what types of misbehavior are most common for each racial group?

3. Exclusionary discipline practices (EDP) have a negative correlational relationship to academic achievement (Annamma et al. 2016; Skiba et al., 2014). So what relationship, if any, exists between the rate of disciplinary occurrences and math and reading proficiency rates among female students?

   H_0: There is no significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency.

4. It is likely that a student's race may be a significant predictor for determining the severity level of their punishment (Skiba et al., 2014). So, are race and percentage of Black enrollment significant predictors of students' discipline severity levels for female students?

    H₀: There is no relationship between race and percentage of Black enrollment on the severity level of punishment used in schools.

    H₁: There is a relationship between race and percentage of Black enrollment on the severity level of punishment used in schools.

Qualitative Inquiries: Guiding Questions

1. What are the girls' perceptions and experiences of school discipline?

2. How do the girls imagine effective school discipline, interventions, or levels of support?

This study requires both methodologies. The quantitative component establishes discipline disparities in a Midwestern state, and the qualitative component explores solutions. John Creswell (2003) a leader in mixed methods design, developed different approaches to mixed methodology research including, sequential explanatory design, sequential exploratory design, sequential transformative design, concurrent triangulation design, concurrent nested (embedded) design, and concurrent transformative design. The type of approach is dependent upon the study's purpose. For example, a study equally

prioritizing both qualitative and quantitative analyses equally would require a different design than one prioritizing a particular methodology over another.

This study employs a sequential explanatory mixed methods to explore the impact of exclusionary school discipline policies' impact on Black girls, how those policies are implemented, and Black girls' perspectives on what they believe are effective discipline practices/supportive resources for their schools. Both phases in this research design addressed different (though related) questions in order to answer the primary research questions. This study prioritizes the quantitative methodology as the *guiding* component of the study, while the qualitative analysis is acts as the supporting role. Chapter 3 details justifications for the use of this design in this study.

This study focuses on Black girls' experiences in public schools. Black girls occupy a unique intersectional space as both female *and* Black. This means that Black girls face issues related to both race and gender, but they also have distinct experiences at the intersection of both identities. The scope of this study investigates discipline policies, as they impact Black girls, from various socioeconomic backgrounds. As a result, this study is grounded in critical theories and will contextualize empirical findings using Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality Theory, and Black Feminist Theory. The qualitative component also employs Positive Psychology as a tool to transform the mixed methodological findings into effective policy change and interventions. This component should contribute new scholarship and add to current literature in education policy. The frameworks listed above will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 2.

The ultimate goal of the study is to learn about what works in Black girls' schooling experience, what supportive resources Black girls need, and what they believe are effective discipline practices and supports. Findings from this study will be disseminated to the Midwestern school district, the Midwestern Department of Education, and to the participants in the study. The expectation is that educators and administrators will consider altering their approach to school discipline with consideration for the unique populations they serve.

Background of Study

Throughout U.S. history, public school teachers and administrators have implemented a variety of disciplinary practices to address student misbehavior. From the late-19th century through mid-20th century, removing students from their schooling was generally reserved for severe infractions. As the nation changed and population increased due to factors further discussed in Chapter 2, classroom sizes grew in the mid 20th century, and exclusionary measures were used more extensively (Insley, 2001). The increased use of exclusionary discipline practices, i.e. out-of-school suspension and expulsion was initially met with parental pushback. School administrators responded by implementing more *in-school* punishments. Over time, however, school administrators became more strict (particularly in the 1980-1990s) as the rise in adolescent drug and gun-related crimes escalated. Public school districts began adopting zero-tolerance approaches to address misbehavior in schools. Zero tolerance can be thought of as a "catch-all-phrase meant to denote a practice of not tolerating undesirable behavior by

imposing automatic and often severe penalties for first offenses" (Levesque, 2011). In 1994, the Guns Free School Act passed, which made federal funding contingent on states enacting policies that would:

> (1) impose at least a one-year expulsion penalty on any student who brings a gun to school; and (2) require school officials to refer students found in possession of a firearm on school grounds to the criminal justice or juvenile delinquency systems. (Insley, 2001, p. 1045; U.S.C. § 8921)

Originally the Act applied to objective incidents related to gun, drug, and violent offenses, which were clear and objective. The Act soon extended zero-tolerance punishments to subjective and minor student misbehaviors. This meant that students now received harsh punishments for misbehavior that would have previously resulted in moderate in-school punishments (i.e., detention).

As implementation continued throughout the following decades, the number of out-of-school suspensions increased and scholars noticed the widening of pervasive racial discipline gaps. This discipline gap existed long before the Guns Free School Act (see Figure 1); however, the Act's implementation process exacerbated prevailing issues due to teacher/administrator implicit biases (Staats et al., 2014; Wun, 2014). Scholarship indicates that teachers' racial biases impacted *whom* they punished and the punishment's level of severity (Annamma et. al., 2016). Multiple studies confirm that teachers, regardless of their race, have racial biases, or at least are not completely objective

(Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Skiba et al., 2011) when administering punishments for identical misbehaviors amongst their students.
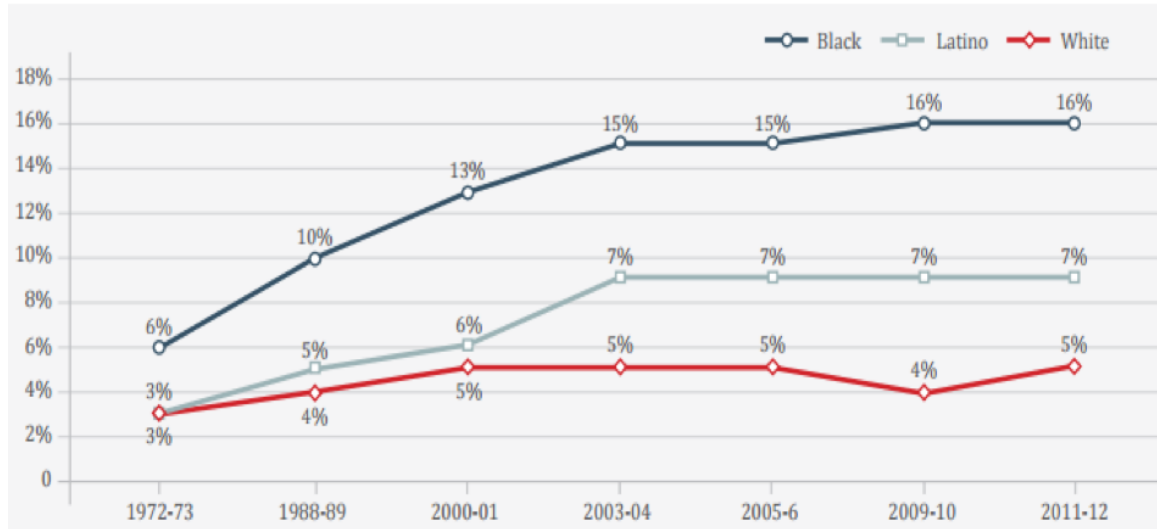
Figure 1. Suspension Rates Over Time by Race/Ethnicity, K-12. Dept. of Education

Teachers are more likely to punish, and punish more harshly, students of color based on associated stereotypes. As a result, the widening school discipline gap is generally attributed to implicit racial biases. Black boys receive the highest numbers of exclusionary punishments when compared to their Black and non-Black similarly situated peers. Consequently, Black boys have been the focal point of academic scholarship and policy activism on how the school discipline gap impacts Black students (Morris & Perry, 2017; Morris 2012). When we consider the challenges associated with race and discipline in its entirety, however, academic discussions *only* prioritizing Black boys miss a crucial part of the narrative, Black girls.

For over 25 years, the U.S. Department of Education's (DOE) educational reports and publicly accessible school discipline records, showed discipline disparities for Black girls in comparison to their non-Black female peers. Black girls have the highest rates of exclusionary punishments compared to any other racial group when disaggregating for female students (even when accounting for students with disabilities). Black girls' cases of out-of-school suspensions are comparable to and in some cases higher than their non-Black male peers (DOE OCR, 2014) (see Figure 2). Additional reports use the Department of Education's publicly accessible data in conjunction with their empirical studies to focus on Black girls experiences. For example, Crenshaw et al.'s 2015 report evaluated the above data to compare the disparities of Black students to their white peers.
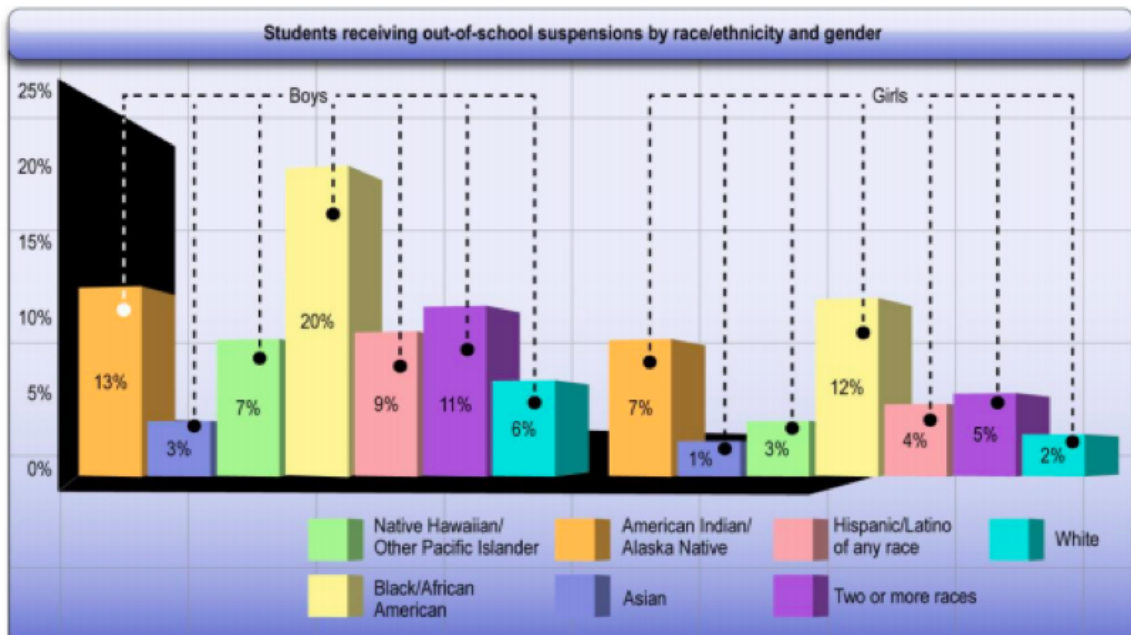
Figure 2. Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspensions by Race & Gender

In the 2011-2012 academic year, both Black boys and girls were disproportionately punished in comparison to their similarly situated peers. When disaggregating for gender, Black girls faced higher rates of disproportionate punishment in comparison to their male peers. Black boys were suspended three times more than their white male peers, and Black girls were suspended six times more than their white female peers (see Figure 3). The number of studies and level of policy focus on Black boys and school discipline left many with the impression that Black boys face harsher conditions than their female counterparts. In addition, there was also a misconception that Black girls did not need attention because they fared better than their male counterparts.
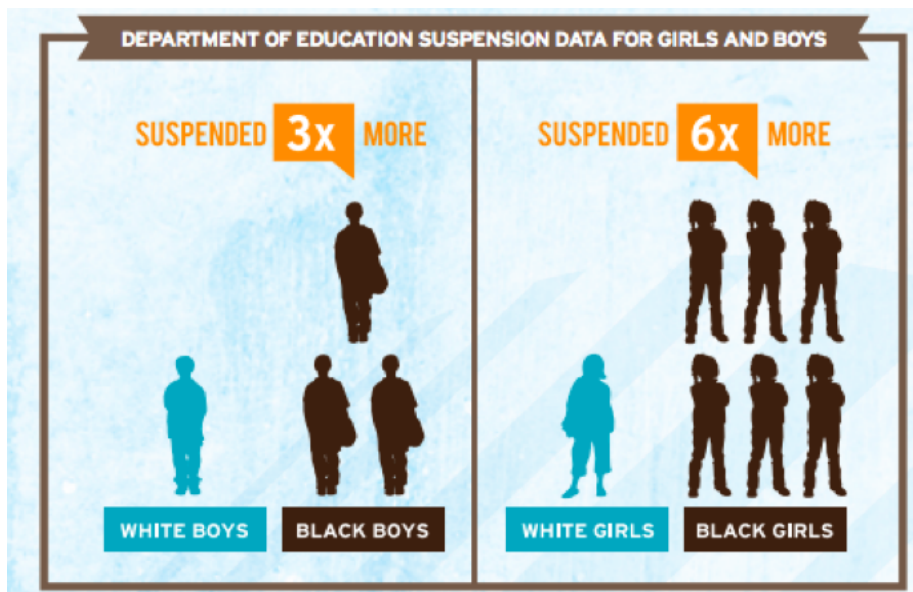
Figure 3. Intra-Gender Comparison of Suspension Rates. School Year 2011-2012

For these reasons and more, Black boys received the majority of research and policy attention while another deeply vulnerable group went overlooked and understudied (Morris, 2012). The DOE's most recent and complete discipline data is from the 2013-2014 academic year, and it is publicly accessible on the DOE's website. Data from that year demonstrates that school Black girls are still disproportionately punished. DOE's 2015-2016 data is currently in the process of being uploaded to the DOE website.

Black girls make up over 3.7 million, or about 8%, of the enrolled students in public schools (Table 1). Black girls were less than 10% of enrolled students and also represented a disproportionate amount of exclusionary punishments. For example, during the 2013-2014 academic year, Black girls, both with and without disabilities, made up 35% of the reported cases expulsions with and without educational services (DOE, 2014). For female students without disabilities, Black girls make up 36% of the reported cases of expulsions with and without educational services (DOE, 2014). For all female students with disabilities, Black girls represent 31% of the reported cases of expulsion with and without educational services.

Table 1 Public School Enrollment Race 2013-2014

Student Race/Ethnicity	N	%
American Indian or Alaska Native	261,126	0.5
Asian	1,174,881	2.4
Hispanic or Latino of any race	6,029,607	12.1
Black or African American	3,782,204	7.6
White	12,172,117	24.4
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	95,440	0.2
Two or more races	748,490	1.5

For *out-of-school suspensions*, this disparity is even more apparent. During the 2013-2014 academic school year 304,565 Black girls without disabilities were reported to have received *one or more* out-of-*school suspension* (see Table 2). Black girls without disabilities represented nearly 50% of the cases of *one or more out-of-school suspension* for female students enrolled 2013-2014 (see Table 2). In 2013-2014, 50% of the cases of *one or more out-of-school suspension* were from Black girls, who only represented 8% percent of the total female public-school enrollment.

Table 2. Female Students Receiving One or More Out-of-School Suspension

Student Race/Ethnicity	N	%
Asian	5,037	0.8%
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	134,414	20.9%
Black or African American	304,565	47.5%
White	166,415	25.9%

These disparities are also reflected for Black girls with and without disabilities (see Table 3). During the 2013-2014 academic year (the latest accessible data from DOE), Black girls, both with and without disabilities, made up about 47% of the reported cases of *one or more out-of-school suspension* for the academic year (see Table 3). For female students without disabilities, Black girls represented around 44% of the reported cases of *one or more out-of-school suspension*. For all female students with disabilities, Black girls represented around 48% of the reported cases of *one or more out-of-school suspension* for the academic year. The literature review, Chapter 2, will go more in-depth

about contemporary literature highlighting Black girls' experiences with school discipline.

Table 3. Black Female Students Receiving One of More Out-of-School Suspension

Disability Assignment	*N*	%
Enrollment	3782204	8%
With and without disability	358909	47%
With disability	304565	48%
Without disability	54154	44%

Significance of the Study: Education Policy

Disparities in school discipline is a major educational policy problem that can impact student outcomes. Despite the numerous studies and evaluations showing zero tolerance's ineffectiveness, this and other similar disciplinary approaches are still implemented throughout the United States. To address this educational policy problem, an appropriate policy framework must be incorporated. As a result, critical policy analysis (CPA) frame will be used to conceptualize the study's findings. In critical frameworks, policy actors, agenda setting, and policy implementation do not follow the traditional designated series of steps. This is in contrast to the rational and markets-based models and frameworks, which seems to prioritize the individual (i.e., individuals making the most cost-effective decision).

Rational and markets-based models are foundational within the field of policy analysis. The foundation of creating policy is comprised of three components including a model of reasoning (rational decision making), a model of society, and a model of policy

making. For rational decision making, "decisions are or should be made into a series of well-defined steps: (1) identify objectives, (2) identify alternative courses of action for achieving objectives, (3) predict the possible consequences of each alternative, (4) evaluate the possible consequences of each alternative, (5) select the alternative that maximizes the attainment of objectives" (Stone, 2012, p 11).

Deborah Stone used the entirety of her book "Policy Paradox," to complicate the rational and market-based models based on her conceptualization of a *polis* model. Stone argues that the very categories in the rational model are "defined in political struggle" (Stone, 10). In this model, policy actors, agenda setting, policy implementation do not follow a series of steps, those steps are impacted other factors. The premise of the rational model seems to prioritize the individual, i.e. individuals making the most cost-effective decision, whereas the polis model exists with the assumption of community. This is "because politics and policy can only happen in communities, community must be the starting point of our polis" (Stone, 2012, p. 20).

Kingdon's foundational book *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies*, is a clear example of rational theory in policy analysis. In terms of the agenda setting process, Kingdon argued that a number of factors play a role in how problems reach prominence such as "time, effort, mobilization of many actors, and the expenditure of political resources to keep an item prominent on an agenda" (1984, p. 104). Indicators, i.e. facts or other ways in which a problem is qualified, determine if it will get on the agenda. Kingdon explained that "decision makers and those close to them use the indicators in

two major ways: to assess the magnitude of a problem and become aware of changes in the problem" (1984, p. 91). He also argued that in some cases indicators alone could bring a problem to recognition in politics. In other words, the decision makers determine the magnitude of the problem. In some cases, Kingdon argued, decision makers are not even necessary if a problem is severe enough - facts and numbers can sometimes speak for themselves.

Kingdon argues that for qualitative, non-numerical or non-quantifiable indicators interpreting the framing of an issue becomes a little more complex. In those cases problems are often not self-evident by indicators (Kingdon, 1984, p. 94). Different interest groups could interpret indicators in a variety of different ways. In addition, particular events and crises prioritizes certain issues over others. Those issues can be used as fodder to accelerate a particular issue.

On a state and local level, unpredictable and devastating events will take prominence. But it becomes a little more complicated when there is a crisis in a particular part of the country and how the larger, national, agenda setting addresses those issues. Kingdon writes that for some problems there is "a short period of awareness and optimizing that gives way to a realization of the financial and social costs of action" (1984, p. 104). For example, Flint Michigan's local government would identify the tainted water supply as a prominent issue, but on a national level, Flint Michigan's water supply is not the most impending issue. Despite the fact that American citizens in Flint still live with unusable water, this issue is no longer publicized and, arguably, this issue

14

has been largely been forgotten and pushed to lower prominence. The same could be said

for Hurricane Katrina and the areas that have still not recovered from the devastating

storm years prior.

The policy process is composed of a series of moving parts that are impacted by

different factors, such as time, the particular political climate, the level of risk for a

particular problem, the diffuse or concentrated framing of a particular policy issue

(Kingdon, 1984). The policy process typically begins by defining the problem. In this

study, the quantitative analysis defined the school discipline problem in a Midwestern

state. The issue is, "a disparity between social goals and the current state of affairs"

(Stone, 2012, p. 15). However, Stone (2012) argued that a *need* often does not become a

policy concern until citizens demand their government's intervention. How the problem

is defined will determine the allies and aligned interest groups, it will also determine the

priority of that particular issue, and whether or not it will have longevity (Fowler, 2000;

Kingdon, 1984; Stone, 2012). The policy process is an important tool for considering this

problem, including problem identification, agenda setting, policy making, budgeting,

implementation, and evaluation (Honig, 2006). Those components do not always occur in

a linear progression, it is dependent upon the policy problem (Theodoulou & Cahn,

2013).

The complexity of this education policy issue and the ultimate goal of finding

solutions, informs the policy model used in the study. This study uses the CPA

framework and focuses on the implementation phase as a means of addressing the policy

issue. The implementation phase will be used to investigate subjective punishments, as it is the biggest contributor to racial and gender disparities in school discipline for Black girls. It will also be considered as a tool to mitigate school discipline issues by contemplating alternatives to current school discipline practices.

This study is comprised of five chapters. Chapter 1 provided background on the education policy problem, presented the problem statement, research questions, justification for theoretical frameworks in this study, and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 offers a review of literature on the school discipline gap, contributors to the gap (such as implicit bias, adultification, etc.), and literature about Black girls' experiences with school discipline. Chapter 3 explains the study's research design, research questions, setting, participants, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 3 also provides information for both qualitative and quantitative components of the study. Chapter 4 presents a discussion on the study's mixed methods findings organized by the research questions and hypotheses. Chapter 5 will summarize and discuss findings, tie in the associated conclusions, and discuss areas for future research.

Assumptions

This study is anchored in the belief that Black girls are crucial policy actors because they are experts in their own experiences. In addition, this study is predicated on the following assumptions (Morris & Perry, 2017; Morris, 2012; Wun, 2014):

1. Black girls' educational experiences are unique and necessitate nuanced exploration.

2.   School discipline disparities, along the lines of race and gender, can be mitigated.

3.   Black girls' are experts in their own experiences and, therefore, are key to mitigating the issue.

4.   Policy processes are effective tools to explore education policy issues and will be an important framework for effecting implementation changes in school discipline.

Definition of Terms

The following section presents key terminology used throughout the document to facilitate a meaningful scholarly discourse about Black girls and school discipline.

Zero Tolerance Policy: This refers to the school discipline policy that emerged shortly after the Guns Free School Act of 1994. This Act required schools to implement harsh *standard* punishments for violence and gun-, drug-related offenses specified in the policy. Zero tolerance discipline methods eventually expanded to moderate, minor, and subjective offenses.

Exclusionary Discipline: This refers to school discipline practices that remove students from the classroom or school building as a form of punishment (Levesque, 2011). This could be in the form of *in-school suspensions*, *out-of-school suspensions*, and *expulsions* (see definitions below). These types of punishments are commonly administered as zero-tolerance discipline practices.

In-school suspension: This type of school discipline removes students from the classroom and into another designated area in the school for supervised learning, typically in-school suspensions last 1-5 school days (Staats & Contractor, 2014). In Ohio, "the superintendent or principal shall ensure the pupil is serving the suspension in a supervised learning environment" (ORC 3313.66).

Out-of-school suspension: This form of school discipline temporarily removes students from the classroom and school building for a designated amount of days, typically 1 to 14 days, often 3 to 5 days of this punishment includes at the student's home or an alternative

learning environment (Staats & Contractor, 2014). Ohio school discipline policy on out-of-school suspension holds:

> The board of education of a city, exempted village, or local school district may adopt a policy granting assistant principals and other administrators the authority to suspend a pupil from school for a period of time as specified in the policy of the board of education, not to exceed ten school days (OCR 3313.66).

Expulsion: This is a form of school discipline that removes a student from school for an extended amount of time or permanently. In Ohio, the superintendent of schools of a city, exempted village, or local school district may expel a pupil from school for one year or permanently. This punishment is reserved for bringing firearms to school and very serious offenses. Students commit those serious infractions at interscholastic competitions, extracurricular events, or any other school program or activity that is located in a school or on property that is owned or controlled by the district are also subject to punishment. The superintendent may reduce this disciplinary action on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the policy adopted by the board under section 3313.661 of the Revised Code.

Objective Offense: This type of school discipline infraction is specified in school discipline policy, e.g., smoking, possession of a firearm, sexual assault, and violence (Skiba et al., 2014). Zero-tolerance disciplinary practices are commonly assigned punishments for these offenses.

Subjective Offense *(also described as discretionary offenses)*: This type of school discipline infractions is often less serious and requires judgment on the part of the teacher, or education personnel. This discretion is inherently subjective because each education personnel will vary in determining what infraction is worthy of punishment and how they choose to address said behavior. These types of offenses are often specified in school discipline policy as well, e.g., disruptive behavior, dress code violation; however, the implementation varies.

Implicit Bias: Implicit biases are the subconscious processes that impact how people make decisions. Implicit biases can be both negative and positive, and everyone is susceptible to implicit bias regardless of race or gender (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016; Skiba et al., 2014; Staats et al., 2016). Implicit biases span a variety of areas including, gender, socioeconomic level, race, education level, etc. Implicit bias manifests in public school discipline via subjective offenses. Studies show that educators' subconscious gender and racial biases impact their decisions regarding whom they decide to discipline and how harshly (Morris, 2012).

Adultification: This term refers to the phenomenon in which Black youth, in this case, Black girls, are considered more developmentally mature than their actual age. In practice, this means that educators punish Black girls as they would an adult and perceive them to be less innocent than their non-Black peers (Epstein et al., 2017).

  Chapter 1 provided an overview of the dissertation's structure, research questions, background on the study, and explained the research design. Research concerning Black

girls experiences with school discipline policies and its' effectiveness for this demographic needs to grow. This study will contribute to this topic by investigating impacts of this policy for Black girls', how Black girls believe the problem could be mitigated at their schools, and how the *implementation* component of the policy process could be key in creating positive policy change. In addition, this chapter stated the researchers' assumptions and defined the terminology key to understanding content of this study. The next chapter will go into more depth about the literature surrounding the educational policy issue, frameworks used to conceptualize the problem and study's findings, and where this study fits in the current conversation about Black girls and school discipline.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The study examines the current state of school discipline for Black girls in Ohio and examines what Black girls believe are effective ways to mitigate school discipline issues. Chapter 2 contextualizes those overarching study questions by providing a review of literature, an overview of U.S. public school discipline, the Guns Free School Act of 1994, the implementation of zero tolerance policies and approaches to discipline, impacts of exclusionary punishments, an overview of the U.S. school discipline gap, and justifications for theoretical frameworks that will be used in the study. Chapter 2 also explores scholarship on discretionary and subjective disciplinary offenses, implicit bias, adultification, cultural misreading, trauma, *in loco parenti*, and how they impact Black girls' educational experiences.

Brief Historical Overview

Throughout U.S. public school history, teachers and administrators utilized various disciplinary practices to address student misbehavior. Throughout the late-19th through mid-20th centuries, teachers wielded more agency and discretion in their classrooms. Educators exercised autonomy, and their freedom was protected under the legal requirement to act in place of the parent, or *in loco parentis,* while students were under their supervision (Insley, 2001). Early exclusionary punishments were reserved for

22

severe infractions. Instead of sending students out of the class or school building, teachers and administrators implemented in-class and in-school punishments to address misbehavior. Teachers often had the flexibility to provide more individual attention because classroom sizes were smaller than the average classroom size today, (Insley, 2001).

In the 1950s-1970s, U.S. societal changes impacted public schooling: Brown v. Board (1954), bussing, integration, a sharp increase in population (baby-boomers), Civil Rights movement, Vietnam War, etc. With the surge in population, classrooms began to grow, making it more difficult for teachers to address students' needs (including discipline) individually. In turn, the amount of out-of-school suspensions began to increase. Parents responded with resistance, in some cases they even turned to the justice system (Nance, 2015). There was also a rise in adolescent crime, drug use, and gun violence in the late-1980s through early-1990s. So public school personnel and parents supported stringent punishments in hopes to deter crime in schools. Those factors led to the creation and widespread acceptance of the Guns Free School Act in 1994. Which required:

> Each State receiving Federal funds under any title of this Act shall have in effect a State law requiring local educational agencies to expel from school for a period of not less than 1 year a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to a school, or to have possessed a firearm at a school, under the jurisdiction of local educational agencies in that State, except that such State law shall allow the chief

23

administering officer of a local educational agency to modify such expulsion

requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis if such modification is in

writing. (20 U.S.C. §§ 8921-23, 1994; SEC. 4141. GUN-FREE

REQUIREMENTS. (b) 1)

Just five years later, in 1999, two white male students orchestrated a mass shooting,

killing 13 of their peers in the "Columbine Massacre" at Columbine High School

shooting in Littleton, Colorado. Shockwaves permeated throughout the nation, which

pivoted toward the next step, figuring out ways to protect students in the public-school

system. Addington (2019) held that in the upcoming years after the massacre, there were

two major changes in school discipline policy, (1) the use of security personnel,

particularly police, in schools and (2) the reliance on exclusionary discipline in the form

of zero-tolerance and related policies (p. 2). Although the changes in policy were not

implemented to only address school shootings, the Columbine Massacre fostered a

general climate of fear. Fear was additionally provoked by the media outlets' continuous

coverage of shootings and happenings after the massacre (Addington, 2019). Federal

agencies responded by promoting the use of school resource officers (SROs) who were

specially trained law enforcement personnel designated for placement in schools.

Addington (2019) noted that federal support manifested through related policy initiatives

and "hundreds of millions of dollars in Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)

grants from the U.S. Department of Justice" (p.3).

In response to growing societal concern regarding safety in public schools, "disciplinary policies fashioned after the "zero tolerance" model have become commonplace" (Martin & Smith, 2017, p. 2). The adoption of the Guns Free School Act of 1994 coupled with the increased cases of violent crimes in public schools, motivated education administrators, policymakers, and teachers to tighten their grip on "no-excuse" zero tolerance models for their schools beyond the extreme cases. Zero tolerance policies were also touted as a win-win for teachers and students. Misbehaving students were removed so that teachers can teach their class. But literature does not validate that assumption; in fact, scholars suggests that zero tolerance disciplinary practices impede learning for the student and class (Insley, 2001). Even in schools where exclusionary punishments may not have disparate effects, it did not facilitate learning either. "In general, rates of suspension and expulsion appear unrelated to overall school success for schools with similar characteristics, levels of funding, and student populations" (Kang et al., 2013, p. 4).

The threat of losing funds for non-compliance incentivized public schools to implement exclusionary punishments: "Non-compliance with the requirements of the Act subjected states to reduction or elimination of federal funding. By 1995, all 50 states came into compliance with the Gun-Free Schools Act" (Gorman & Pauken, 2003, p. 25). Zero-tolerance in public school discipline reflected the Reagan Administration's harsh approach to criminal justice (for drug- and gun-related offenses) throughout the 1980s. The *War on Drugs,* termed in 1971, was a targeted attack on drug users by law

enforcement in an attempt to mitigate drug-related offenses in the country. The growing rate of incarceration due to the criminalization of drug addiction led United States Criminal Justice system to slowly withdraw the implementation of its zero-tolerance policies. "Despite this change at the federal level, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, the zero-tolerance mentality had shifted to the schools" (Gorman & Pauken, 2003, p. 25).

Four years after the zero-tolerance in Act was fully implemented in public schools, studies indicated that a significant number of students were being removed from school for non-serious offenses. For example, in 1998, "over 3 million students were suspended for offenses that were overwhelmingly defined as moderate and non-serious" (Insley, 2001, p.1054). In addition to the alarming rates of student removal, many states did not mandate alternative education for students removed from school. In 2014, 30 states indicated *alternative education* in their discipline policy but did not require or ensure that students received it. Those discipline policies generally read that districts were *allowed* or *not prohibited* to provide alternative education for students removed from school. "Though these policies reflect the discourse of equity by addressing student needs, the phrasing of these policies continues to reflect the discourse of safety by putting educators in a position of ultimate authority over students' fates" (Kennedy-Lewis, 2014, p. 177). Under section 3313.533 of the Revised Code (Part B), Ohio requires the big eight school districts (Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown) to:

Establish at least one alternative school to meet the educational needs of students

with severe discipline problems, including, but not limited to, excessive

disruption in the classroom and multiple suspensions or expulsions. Any other

school district that attains after that date a significantly substandard graduation

rate, as defined by the department of education, shall also establish such an

alternative school under that section. (Amended by 132nd General Assembly File

No. TBD, HB 318, §1, eff. 11/2/2018; Amended by 131st General Assembly File

No. TBD, HB 410, §1, eff. 4/6/2017. Effective Date: 07-01-1998.)

Even though Ohio requires districts to provide alternative education, Ohio also gives

school districts the autonomy to punish students for discretionary offenses such as

excessive disruption in the classroom. Zero-tolerance-approaches to non-serious and

discretionary disciplinary infractions were often justified using the broken window

ideology penned by James Wilson and George Kelling (1982), "consider a building with

a few broken windows. If the windows are not repaired, the tendency is for vandals to

break a few more windows." In the case of public-school discipline, if teachers allowed

minor behaviors then students would feel more empowered to commit more serious

infractions. In turn, teachers would harshly punish minor misbehaviors to make a point

that misconduct on any level is unacceptable.

Expelled fifth grader Shanon Borchardt Coslett is waiting to see whether the

school board will let her back into classes this week. The honor roll student was

expelled after she picked up her mother's lunch box by mistake and brought a

paring knife to school. Shanon, 10, reported her find to a teacher at Twin Peaks

Charter Academy [in Longmont, Colorado]. Administrators said they had no

choice; the law required them to expel the girl. (Cerrone, 1999, p. 132)

Originally zero-tolerance policies were relegated to drug- and gun-offenses as well as

gang participation/affiliation and violence. However, as early as 1993, school boards

began broadening the expansion of zero tolerance policies to include "not only drugs and

weapons but also tobacco-related offenses and school disruption" (Skiba & Peterson,

1999, p.373).

For example, November 2018, the state of Ohio revised its definition of zero-

tolerance (OCR code 3313.534) as a "policy of zero tolerance for violent, disruptive or

inappropriate behavior." Ohio's public-school discipline policies are reflective of the

general implementation shift in exclusionary punishments.

> (A) The board of education of each city exempted village, and local school district
>
> shall adopt a *policy of zero tolerance for violent, disruptive, or inappropriate*
>
> *behavior and establish strategies to address such behavior that range from*
>
> *prevention to intervention*. A policy adopted pursuant to this section shall comply
>
> with the requirements of sections 3313.668 and 3319.46 of the Revised Code.

The inclusion of non-violent and minor offenses was the largest contributor to the

policy's non-standardization as well as creating opportunities ripe for bias. The one-size-

fits-all approach was positioned as a tool to mitigate discrimination by removing the need

for teachers to depend on context or subjectivity in making decisions about punishment.

"Though zero tolerance legislation does not discriminate against groups of students according to race or class, its implementation leads to disparate outcomes among these groups, reflecting the existence of inequities" (Kennedy-Lewis, 2014, p. 186). Racial disparities in school discipline existed long before the passing of Guns Free School Act of 1994. After Brown v. Board of Education mandated public school desegregation, racial disparities in discipline were tracked. The Children's Defense Fund created a study in 1975 using DOE data finding that "black students were suspended two times more often than their white counterparts at the elementary school, middle school, and high school levels" (Fund, 1975, p. 9; George, 2015, p. 101).

Overview of U.S. Public School Discipline

During the expansion of U.S. public schooling, the national purpose of education and school discipline varied. Those shifts occurred simultaneously with cultural and societal shifts in the country. A century ago corporal punishment was a widely accepted form of discipline. In 1977 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that corporal punishment was constitutional in the Ingram v. White decision. After that decision, states were given the freedom to choose whether public schools could administer corporal punishment. Most states eventually decided to eliminate physical discipline, although Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming still allow corporal punishment in its' public schools (Center for Effective Discipline, 2015).

Figure 4 illustrates the likelihood of a discipline model's implementation in a given school or district. This figure presents common school discipline models that have been utilized throughout the history of public schooling in the United States: punitive, restorative, and treatment. The size of the circle indicates the level of effectiveness and feasibility of implementation (based upon the literature discussed in this chapter). The feasibility of implementation is also indicated by the latch and the door at the bottom of the funnel. The feasibility of implementing a particular discipline model is determined by various school and district-level factors such funding, training, time, teacher buy-in etc..
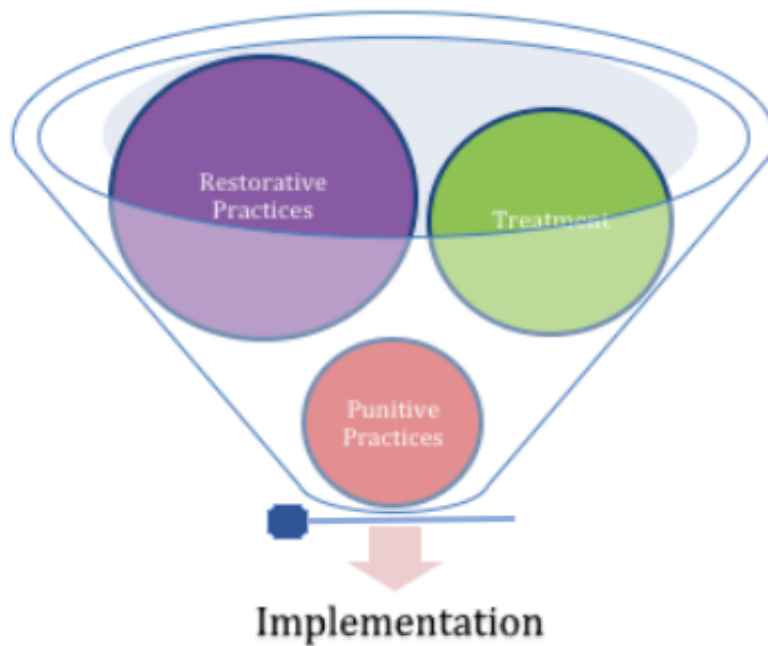
Figure 4. Discipline Types and Likelihood of Implementation

For example, punitive discipline is the least effective model but requires comparatively less resources to implement than the other two models; therefore it has a

higher likelihood of implementation. Those factors are represented by the circle's small size. As such, the door will open and the circle will be able to leave the funnel. On the other hand, restorative discipline models are less likely to be implemented. The amount of training and buy-in required to properly implement, unfortunately minimizes the likelihood of its implementation. So, despite its effectiveness, the lack of feasibility increases the size of the circle. Not only will the door not open in this figure, but the circle will not be able to leave the funnel. One the following page, Table 4 illustrates a few prominent types of punishments that align with Figure 4's classifications and provides descriptions of general impacts.

Over the past three decades, public schools have *overly* utilized punitive punishment, via zero tolerance policies. According to the U.S. Department of Education's nationally accessible school discipline records, show that public schools are most likely to administer punitive discipline. For example, scholars consistently find that restorative practices are most effective for students disproportionately impacted by zero tolerance policies. Although preliminary results show benefits of restorative practices, it does not receive the same level of support and resources as traditional punitive measures.

For discipline policy implementation, feasibility often trumps effectiveness (Stone, 2005). The context of a student body and school environment should determine the particular model of school discipline. The decision to implement discipline policies depends on a variety of factors such as teacher/faculty buy-in, cost, training, etc. (Insley, 2001). With the punitive model, removing a student does not require additional resources

31

and can instantly address student misbehavior. Sometimes discipline practices with the

most potential are difficult to implement into schools.

Table 4. Types of Punitive Disciplinary Practices, Description, and Impacts

Punitive Techniques	Corporal Punishment	Zero Tolerance
Punitive discipline techniques include following up a student's misbehavior with a negative action (physical, exclusionary discipline, etc.)	A type of punitive technique where a teacher or administrator intentionally inflicts pain, discomfort, or physical force with the intention of dissuading the child from misbehavior (NASP, 2014). At this point there is no policy banning this form of punishment in all U.S. states; In 2014, 19 States still have corporal punishment as an acceptable form of discipline.	This is a type of punitive punishment. "Zero tolerance policies employed in schools throughout the United States are predetermined, non-discretionary, disciplinary consequences for certain actions" (Insley, 2001, p. 1043).
Impacts		
Scholarship has shown that punitive techniques are ineffective and have negative impacts on students, some more than others. In addition, it is a fear-based strategy to dissuade bad behavior (not necessarily to encourage positive behavior). Punitive measures do not address the victim/or person negatively impacted in the issue.		

Table 4 does not include every possible discipline and alternative. It represents discipline

approaches that are commonly implemented in public schools and alternative strategies

currently being evaluated. Just as with criminal justice, school discipline could be

considered punitive or restorative (see Table 5). The *purpose* of discipline often

determines the disciplinary practices used in public schools (Insley, 2001). For example,

districts that believe discipline should treat students' needs may implement practices that provide medical and social interventions.

Table 5. Restorative Disciplinary Model, Description, and Impacts

Restorative Practices	Impacts
Restorative justice is a community centered approach to discipline that includes several key steps including interpersonal relationships, personal dignity, mutual respect and understanding, restorative conferencing, and restitution (Adelman & Taylor, 2006)	Scholarship has shown that punitive techniques are ineffective and have negative impacts on students, some more than others. In addition, it is a fear-based strategy to dissuade bad behavior (not necessarily to encourage positive behavior). Punitive measures do not address the victim/or person negatively impacted in the issue.

School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) would be a disciplinary practice within that treatment model, and is indicated in Table 6. However, PBIS still does not address the needs of victims. Victims are left out of the conversation, not actively engaged, and may not receive a follow-up (Okonofua et al., 2016). Addington (2019) argued despite PBIS' success in some areas, but it did not directly tackle racial and gender disparities. Even in some newer iterations of PBIS that have adaptations for race or gender, there is a lack of an intersectional approach, both race *and* gender. She argues that intersectional "adaptations could be complemented and reinforced by broader changes to develop a respectful learning environment that incorporates a range of voices in educational materials, such as examples of Black women leaders and scholars" (Addington, 2019, p.12).

Table 6. Treatment Disciplinary Practices, Descriptions, and Impacts

Replacement Techniques	Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
Punitive discipline techniques include following up a student's misbehavior with a negative action (physical, exclusionary discipline, etc.)	SEL works to fill in the gap from the approach above by helping students develop self-discipline by "to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (CAESL, 2014).	Similar to the replacement techniques positive skills and behaviors are modelled by teachers and positive behavior in turn is rewarded. Where this approach differs is that students are also offered a series of supports for prevention, and interventions/intensive tailored supports for at-risk students as well as data-based decision making. (Losen, 2011)
	Impacts	
This technique is better than punitive measure, but this technique alone does not provide skills to teach students self-discipline or independently guided behavior (Bear, 2010, p. 1).	Evaluative studies focusing on schools that implement SEL practices find that they tend to be safer because socially emotionally competent students tend to have less issues with conduct. SEL could improve the effectiveness with other techniques (i.e. PBIS, restorative practices etc.) (Durlak et al., 2011).	Studies show favorable outcomes for schools implementing SWPBIS in the form of significantly lower rates of discipline referrals and suspensions, as well as increased academic achievement, lower dropout rates, higher teacher retention, and improved school culture. (Losen, 2011)

Punitive punishment, the most popular method used in public schools, is ideal if students are seen as rational beings/adults who consider the costs and benefits of misbehavior before committing the infraction. Kennedy-Lewis (2014) examines policy language for school discipline policies. Some state's discipline policies include words like *incorrigible* and *willful,* which suggests a level of development where students are considering the choices and make conscious decisions to misbehave in the classroom. Kennedy-Lewis explains that current discipline measures are not in line with how developmental scientists understand decision-making for early adolescent youth, nor is it how their brains develop and function.

> The portrayal of an adolescent especially an early adolescent, as making choices in the same way that would be considered 'rational' for adults – who arguably do not make utilitarian-based decisions either – contradicts current understanding of how adolescents' brains develop and function. (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006, p. 176)

Moreover, punitive punishment does not seek to correct the behavior. The goal of punitive punishment is to dissuade student misbehavior through the use of fear-based tactics. Restoration and reintegration into the educational environment are not apparent goals or least not effectively accomplished through that approach.

Exclusionary Discipline

After the Act of 1994 passed, academic evaluations on zero tolerance policies and approaches to discipline confirmed the method's ineffectiveness. Skiba et al.'s (2014)

35

study found significant relationships between students who experienced exclusionary punishments and lower-academic achievement, increased risk of negative behavior over time, increased the chance of dropping out of high school (or not completing within four years) and tripled the likelihood of interaction with juvenile justice in the following year. Students removed from school are often unable to obtain missed schoolwork falling so far behind that it may seem impossible to catch up or learn the missed material. Often, students removed from school for behavior infractions are those who cannot afford to fall behind in schoolwork and "when combined with the natural feelings of alienation, increases the likelihood that they will drop out of school" (Insley, 2001, p. 1064). The frustration of being in that position might be the last straw that finally leads students to give up on school (Blomberg, 2004; Connecticut State Board of Education, 2007).

Removing students from the school environment and disconnecting them from the classroom and the educational community might reinforce negative behavior (Allman, & Slate, 2011). In addition to the academic and behavioral impacts on students, exclusionary punishments are also associated with impacts on students' general well-being. Studies suggest that when children are out of school, they are more likely to engage in fights, use weapons, as well as use/possession of drugs (Insley, 2001; Morris, 2015). Harsher punishments often intensify a student's adversarial feelings toward adults and negatively impact a student's motivation to return to school or to learn. When students fear zero tolerance punishments, they may be less willing to confide in teachers, school counselors, or other adults at school because they believe adults will punish them

before helping them. "Zero tolerance policies do not account for such developmental differences in maturity and can often be harmful to child development, for example, by hindering positive adult-child relationships and interactions" (Levesque, 2011, p. 3106).

That Act intended to create safer schools, but in practice, this policy made vulnerable groups more susceptible to punitive punishments. Evaluations of zero tolerance and exclusionary punishments show negative short and long-term effects, lack of necessary supports for students, and, most importantly, contributes to the systematic removing students from school (Insley, 2001)."Findings consistently reveal the overrepresentation of African-American students in suspensions and expulsions, despite lack of data supporting that African-American students exhibit higher rates of disruptive or violent behavior warranting higher rates of discipline" (Levesque, R. J., 2011, p. 3106). Teachers' and administrators' implicit racial biases play a significant role in how educators administer punishment and the severity of the punishment.

Cases of exclusionary punishment are increasing, particularly for Black students (Skiba et al. 2014). problem becomes more cumbersome because zero-tolerance "is not restricted to serious or dangerous behavior, but rather appears to be most commonly used for more interactive day-to-day disruptions, especially defiance and noncompliance" (Skiba 2014, p. 614). Teachers have the discretion to use exclusionary punishments for interactive day-to-day disruptions, and scholarship shows that teachers' racial and gender biases influence discipline decisions (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Skiba et al., 2011). In other words, teachers are more likely to punish, and punish more harshly, Black students

for certain behaviors in comparison to their white counterparts, which is reflective in the state and national school discipline records. Subjectivity is the biggest contributor to disproportionalities in school discipline for Black students. The Civil Rights Data Collection (2014) found that "while Black students represent 16% of student enrollment, they represent 27% of students referred to law enforcement and 31% of students subjected to a school-related arrest" (p. 1).

As previously noted, the rise of exclusionary and zero tolerance punishments in schools also led to increases in police presence at schools. However, increased police presence did not mean an increased sense of safety for all students. Students from marginalized groups began to view school as oppressive "militarized spaces" (Insley, 2001, p. 1046). School personnel's ability to refer students to police and juvenile justice increased students' likelihood of receiving misdemeanors, felonies, and ultimately entering the prison pipeline. According to the Advancement Project (2010), "arrests in school represent the most direct route into the school-to-prison pipeline, but out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to alternative schools also push students out of school and closer to a future in the juvenile and criminal justice systems" (p. 5).

Even when school and student-level characteristics are controlled for "students who are suspended or expelled for non-dangerous behaviors are substantially more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system" (McIntosh et al., K., 2014, p. 1). Empirical studies, addressed throughout this chapter, consistently found that schools with higher proportions of Black students are more likely to use punitive measures instead of

supportive interventions (McIntosh et al., 2014). In a nationally representative sample, Welch and Payne (2010) found that schools with higher Black enrollments were more likely to have higher rates of exclusionary discipline, court action, and zero tolerance policies, even after controlling for school levels of misbehavior and delinquency.

Zero tolerance and exclusionary punishment promises of deterring students from future misbehavior continues to be unmet. "Instead, findings continually expose the unintended, yet harmful and detrimental consequences to civil rights and liberties, educational opportunities, and child development such policies foster" (Levesque, 2011, p. 3106). The National Center for Education Statistics 2009 report concluded that the number of reported cases of violence, insubordination, physical aggression, and possession of drugs and weapons did not have any significant changes since the 2003-2004 school year.

Zero Tolerance and No Child Left Behind

Scholarship over the last two decades analyzed the effectiveness of exclusionary and zero tolerance policies by investigating student and school academic outcomes, recidivism to misbehavior and exclusionary punishment, and other identifiers (Annamma et al., 2016; Insley, 2001; Morris 2015; Skiba, 2014). The school discipline gap facilitates the systematic removal of students from historically marginalized groups (Morris, 2015). Despite the growing resistance to zero tolerance and exclusionary punishments, those structures remained strong because of federal mandates (Hewitt, 2011). Zero tolerance policies were incorporated into No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act,

passed in 2001, zero tolerance policies into its education reform in 2002 (Hewitt, 2011).

NCLB's academic focus encouraged educators to remove persistently disruptive students from the classroom (Allman & Slate, 2011). Public schools were required to "adopt a zero-tolerance policy that empowered teachers to remove violent or persistently disruptive students from the classroom" (Allman & Slate, 2011, p. 4; NASP, 2007). However, NCLB did not include a protocol for teachers, schools, and districts to create zero tolerance policies. So zero-tolerance continued to persist meaning that the issues previously embedded within zero-tolerance also persisted. In practice, this meant that there was no standard or protocol for implementing zero tolerance.

A 2013 policy analysis of zero tolerance policies found that "only five percent of serious disciplinary actions nationally in recent years involve possession of a weapon; in some states, the proportion is even lower" (Kang-Brown et al., 2013, p. 4). In November 2018, the state of Ohio revised its definition of zero-tolerance (OCR code 3313.534) as a "policy of zero tolerance for violent, disruptive or inappropriate behavior." Ohio's public-school discipline policies are reflective of the general shift from exclusionary punishments utilized for examples show how over time schools departed from the original intent of zero tolerance, (which was to have a *no excuse* response for *serious* and *severe* behavioral issues). Moreover, incidents that are determined at the discretion of the teacher leads to non-standardized discipline policy implementation in classrooms, school building, districts, and even nationally.

The Center of Youth Justice (2013) found that some schools punished major and minor offenses with the same severity, whereas other schools relegated exclusionary punishment for serious offenses. Meaning that across schools, a standard protocol does not exist for disciplining students for non-serious offenses and there are major inconsistencies in how they administer discipline. Without a protocol for creating and implementing zero tolerance policies, consistency across and within schools is impossible. A teacher in one class may not remove a student for a certain behavioral issue, while another teacher may decide to remove the student. As a result, the rate at which discretionary offenses are administered can vary within one school as well as throughout different schools within the same district (even the case for schools with similar student populations) (CYJ, 2013). Discretionary offenses create an environment for teachers to make decisions largely based on their implicit racial and/or gender biases.

Implicit Bias

"The science of implicit cognition suggests that actors do not always have conscious, intentional control over the processes of social perception, impression formation, and judgment that motivate their actions" (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006, p. 946). Greenwald and Krieger (2006) explained the issue of implicit cognition in the human mind. Their article is important because it also addresses how different components of human cognition. For example, the article examined implicit memory and how it impacts the ways in which human remember things that did not happen. "Even when a person cannot voluntarily ("explicitly") retrieve a memory, that person's behavior may reveal that some

previous experience has left a memory record" (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006, p. 947). The article went to cite studies explaining high rates of incorrect eye-witness accounts in the legal system.

Authors tied in different concepts' and complex roles such as *attitude, "*the tendency to like or dislike, or to act favorable or unfavorable toward someone or something" (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006, p. 948), and *social stereotype*, "a mental association between a social group or category and a trait" (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006, p. 950), in influencing human implicit cognition. The article reviewed previous studies on those topics, and the authors explored how those concepts impact human cognition and decisions. Those concepts do not work independently of one another. For example, *social stereotypes* can impact whether a person has a favorable or unfavorable *attitude* about a certain person, situation, thing, or policies (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Within those concepts of attitude and stereotypes, there are also implicit versions. "An implicit attitude can be thought of as an existing attitude projected onto a novel object" (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 5). An implicit stereotype "is the introspectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) traces of past experience that mediate attributions of qualities to members of a social category" (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 15).

Before understanding the subset of bias, it is crucial to understand the meaning of bias. Greenwald and Krieger (2006) defined bias "sometimes referred to as response bias, denotes a displacement of people's responses along a continuum of possible judgments" (Greenwald and Krieger, 2006, p. 950). There is a common misconception that not

42

everyone has biases, or that only racist or bad people have biases. Every human being has biases about something. Having biases is not inherently bad- it is human. "In this view, bias is a problem only when it is directed against some group. Thus it may be considered acceptable to be biased in favor of one's siblings, children, schoolmates, and friends" (Greenwald and Krieger, 2006, p. 951). People in a family may have a positive bias towards other family members. Most parents would have a positive bias towards their children in comparison to children who are not their own. Positive bias is defined as an ingroup bias which "designates favoritism toward groups to which one belongs" (Greenwald and Krieger, 2006, p. 951). It is not morally or legally wrong to have a favorable disposition towards your family members or your child, but problem arise when power is introduced. "In some circumstances, this relative favoring of the ingroup puts members of other groups at a discriminatory disadvantage, as when one allows favoritism toward a family member or friend to influence a hiring, job assignment, rental, or admissions decision (p. 952)."

Just as with *attitudes* and *stereotypes, biases* have an implicit component as well. *Implicit biases* are extremely important in their study. Contemporary scholarship posits that when educators punish students for discretionary offenses (i.e., insubordination, causing a disruption, etc.) they utilize implicit biases in choosing who they punish and the level of the punishment's severity. Implicit biases are discriminatory biases that founded on negative or positive implicit stereotypes and implicit attitudes. Both authors study used the Implicit Association Tests (and previous studies using IAT) to measure if

43

implicit biases were present and how it impacted decisions: "(1) Implicit biases are predictive of discriminatory behavior and (2) implicit-bias measures do a significantly better job than explicit measures in predicting behavioral indicators of discrimination" (Banaji & Greenwald, 2002; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006, p. 966).

Majority of offenses contributing disparities are cases of subjective misbehavior (Insley, 2001). This means that subjective offenses require teachers to use their discretion (which is informed by their previous work and life experiences) in deciding who to judge and how severely (Okonofua et al., 2016). Scholarship shows that is likely not the case. Most teachers surveyed do not consciously espouse such rhetoric (Monroe, 2005). "When racially neutral causes and explicit bias can be rejected as causal explanations for racially disparate outcomes, implicit race bias must be regarded as a probable, even if not definitively established cause" (Greenwald and Krieger, 2006, p. 967).

Implicit biases described as unconscious beliefs, and explicit racial biases are based on stereotypes and attitudes (Banaji & Greenwald, 2002). Those types of stereotypes, both positive and negative, influence *who* teachers decide to discipline and how harshly they punish them. Monroe (2005) explained that "many teachers, consciously or unconsciously . . . believe that Black students are more likely to misbehave than youths of other races" (p. 47). The zero-tolerance punishment system is broken. The methods of punishment produce so many negative outcomes that it greatly outweighs any positives. Moreover, implicit and explicit biases impact how educators and administrators administer punishment (Kennedy-Lewis, 2014). Those biases

disproportionately target students who need the most support. Kennedy-Lewis (2014) argues that language in zero tolerance policies "portray students as fundamentally flawed when they commit disciplinary offenses, no attention is given to the subjective nature of educators' judgments regarding the commission of many offenses" (p. 176).

J.P. Nance (2015) conducted an empirical examination of implicit bias in "Over-Disciplining Students, Racial Bias, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline." Nance explained the concept of implicit bias, how those biases impact students, the severity of the punishments, and the larger impacts of overrepresentation. In fact, Nance argued that not only are schools now over utilizing exclusionary methods as well as law enforcement within schools, teachers' biases are also responsible for the over-representation of Black students in the school discipline records. As the schools are ramping up severe punishments, teachers' implicit biases target Black students and make them the biggest victims of this mode of discipline (Nance, 2015). The emerging paradox in the research thus far is that the very people who are supposed to ensure the well-being of their students are responsible for their demise. Teachers have historically been entrusted as *in loco parentis* while students are in schools:

> This doctrine holds that educators must, by law, act in the place of the parent when the child is at school. Importantly, this doctrine places responsibility upon teachers to act in the best interests of the child when teaching, including with respect to any incidents of indiscipline. (MacAllister, 2016, p. 33)

As a society, our assumption is that teachers have the best intentions for their students, so the countless studies cause a degree of cognitive dissonance. Nance holds that teachers do have the best interests of their students at heart, and so implicit biases can be a reasonable explanation. He explains that implicit biases are not part of a conscious thought process "and often in ways that a person would not explicitly endorse if the person was consciously aware of the biases. . .. stereotypes and attitudes are types of schemas, which essentially are shortcuts created in our minds to help us navigate efficiently in a complex world" (Nance, 2016, p.1073). Everyone has biases, but problems arises when those biases inform decision-making, especially decisions made with adverse impact on students or groups of students.

In the classroom, teachers are often faced with making quick and high-stake decisions, and "those stereotypes and attitudes bias our perceptions, judgments, and ultimately our decisions without our awareness or intent" (p. 1073). Meaning that teachers, regardless of racial background, may not actively entertain stereotypes about their Black students, but their immediate environment creates *unconscious forms of racial biases,* and it impacts teachers' perceptions and decisions to discipline. "One can simultaneously possess two attitudes that are mutually inconsistent but remain isolated from each other, so that the person experiencing the dissociation does not become aware of the inconsistency" (Banaji & Greenwald, 2002 p. 96)

In "Parsing disciplinary disproportionality: Contributions of an infraction, student, and school characteristics to out-of-school suspension and expulsion" (2014), Skiba et al.

used hierarchical linear modeling to examine different factors that contribute to racial disproportionality for exclusionary punishment in schools. This study analyzed how race, gender, and socio-economic status (SES) (at the student-level) and mean school achievement, percentage Black enrollment, and principal perspectives (at the school-level) related to the likelihood of receiving exclusionary punishments. The study utilized school discipline records for all public schools (including charters) for a mid-Western state from 2007-2008. The population of Latino students was small in their database, so for the sake of their study, they decided to focus only on Black and white students (Skiba et al., 2014). Their sample of data only included students who received an in-/out-of-school suspension or expulsion. Their student-level data was obtained from an "extant state database," and the school-level data was obtained from the Department of Education. Incident data was combined with student-level data using a common identifier, and the two datasets were paired with the school database by using the common identifier amongst all three databases. Only the data that were completed at all three levels were included in the study.

Their study utilizes a multinomial logit HLM to investigate the impact of behavioral, school, and student characteristics on the disparity of in/out-of-school suspension and expulsion (disciplinary outcome). Skiba et al. (2014) chose a multinomial model because of the three types of disciplinary outcomes. In this type of model, "a reference level for the dependent variable must be defined, and regression coefficients indicate changes in odds relative to this reference level" (p. 651). Skiba et al.

characterized their outcome variable (increases in severity of school discipline), in-school suspensions were assigned as the reference level. As a result their models would be assessing the severity of punishment at the office level, by examining the contributing factors that would contribute to the odds of an out-of-school suspension or an expulsion, in comparison to an in-school suspension.

Skiba et al.'s (2014) study used a sequential logistic regression approach in their modeling of predictor contributions (type of infraction, student characteristics, and school characteristics) to severity of punishment: "Model 1 consisted of a block of infraction type and student-level variables, while Model 2 included these two levels of variables while adding a block of school-level variables" (p. 651). Infraction type included the type and frequency of infraction leading to punishment, which were grouped into four categories: Use/Possession, Fighting/battery, Moderate infractions, and Defiance/Disruption. The student characteristics were as follows: Gender (reference was female), Eligibility for free and reduced lunch (reference was paid lunch), and Race (reference was white). The school characteristics included: Percentage of enrolled African American students, average years of teacher experience, percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, percentage of students passing math and English on the state accountability exam, and principal perspective on school discipline.

Okonofua et al.'s (2016), "A vicious cycle: A social–psychological account of extreme racial disparities in school discipline," was a comparative analysis consisting of two studies on teacher bias. The first study examined a racially diverse group of teachers'

48

and their perceptions and discipline methods for a fictitious student; the student

misbehaved twice, and both infractions were unrelated. The teachers were asked to

imagine working in the school, and they were asked a series of questions as to how they

would discipline the child. Okonofua et al. kept the discipline scenarios identical, but

they manipulated the student's name. The first study found that teachers were more likely

to review the records for students with "stereotypically Black names (e.g., Deshawn or

Darnell)" as opposed to "students who bore a stereotypically White name (e.g., Jake or

Greg)" (2016, p. 385). Moreover, they found that teachers escalated their response for

second infractions, or rated incidents as more troubling and "warranting of discipline if

the student was Black or misbehaved multiple times" (p. 380). When there was only one

offense, a student's race was not a significant factor.

The second study examined whether teachers believed a student's behavior

indicated a pattern or was simply an isolated incident. Researchers utilized a similar

research design and found that teachers would mark misbehavior as a pattern, as more

troubling, and a predictor of future exclusionary punishments, if there were multiple

offenses *or* if the student was Black. Okonofua et al. (2016) suggested the influence of

implicit bias because they explained, "explicit bias did not predict findings, and our

effects persisted while controlling for it" (p. 376). This contributes to the vicious cycle of

teachers removing students from the classroom and school building, and students

becoming disconnected from school (see Figure 5).

Student Behavior: Disengagement, negative behaviors toward peers and teachers

Racially stigmatized student's worries and construal: "Do I belong in school? When the teacher disciplines me, does it mean she disrespects me?"

Teacher's worries and construal: "Will this student hinder my management of class? Is this student a troublemaker?"

Teacher behavior: Harsh treatment of racially stigmatized students

Figure 5. Okonofua et al.'s (2016) Vicious Discipline Cycle

As teachers become more retributive in punishing children from racially stigmatized groups over time, students may become especially sensitive and reactive to such mistreatment. ...These studies suggest how the experience of racial stigmatization can give rise to a lack of trust in teachers and an alienation from school that undermines teacher-student relationships and classroom behaviors into the future. (Okonofua et al. (2016, p. 387)

Authors proposed that both students and teachers come into school with good intentions, a desire to learn, and to cultivate healthy relationships in the classroom. But they explain that this can be troubled when "when a social climate permeated by negative stereotypes gives rise to stereotyping, threat, and mistrust" (p. 393). They challenged scholars to conduct more research about the dynamics of teacher-student relationships

50

and the development of those relationships over time; so it might provide "new approaches to mitigate extreme levels of discipline citations among racially stigmatized children" (p. 393). Providing teachers and administrators with additional resources in the form of restorative practices and interventions adds supports, so the weight of discipline does not fall entirely on the teacher. If there are other measures in place, Black girls who misbehave might be connected to resources and interventions based on their need (Okonofua et al., 2016). Those measures would mitigate the effects of *pushout* because more channels would be set up so that a child is not removed based on the subjective perspective of one party.

Their findings were consistent with scholarship about disparities in school discipline. More specifically, Skiba et al.'s (2014) HLM analysis found that the rate of exclusionary punishment was affected by the following factors: "severity of infraction; race, gender, and to a degree SES (at the individual level), percentage Black enrollment, school achievement level, and principal perspectives on discipline all made a contribution to the probability of out-of-school suspension or expulsion" (2014, p. 664). The most notable part of this article was its focus on the principal or the leadership within the school to mitigate discipline disparities in school. In their study, principals committed to keeping students in the school building had less cases of exclusionary punishments. In other words, school leadership is an underused tool in mitigating disparities in school punishments.

Across the country, we see black girls being placed in handcuffs for having

tantrums in kindergarten classrooms, thrown out of class for asking questions,

sent home from school for arriving in shorts on a hot day, labeled as "truant" if

they are being commercially sexually exploited [sex trafficking], and labeled as

"defiant" if they speak up in the face of what they [identify] to be injustice. We

also see black girls criminalized (arrested on campus or referred to law

enforcement) instead of engaged as children and teens whose mistakes could be

addressed through non-punitive restorative approaches. (Anderson, 2016)

The excerpt above was from Monique Morris' interview with Melinda Anderson of *The Atlantic* about her book *Pushout* (Anderson, 2016). This quote encapsulates many of the themes present in Black girls' narratives of their specific experiences in her book. Within this last decade, scholarship focusing on Black girls and school discipline has slowly gained traction. This sudden growth could, in part, be explained as a response to incomplete academic and policy conversations about school discipline for Black students. It also could be an expansion of the slow-growing scholarship on Black girls educational experiences in schools (Anderson, 2016).

One of the earliest education pieces with a "Black girls" title specification was Lightfoot's (1976) "Socialization and education of young Black girls in school." In this article, she writes that "one of the great struggles that arise when documenting the early [educational] experience of Black girls in school is that they have not been the focus on the agenda of social science research" (p. 239). During that time, there were not any

52

Black girl-specific resources exploring their unique experiences in schools. Lightfoot spoke about the intersection of identities of Black female students and the role of Black women's stereotype in informing how teachers interact with Black girls and even how young Black girls viewed themselves.

Lightfoot also held that "minority women researchers, who are closest to the experience of young Black girls, have the greatest potential for accomplishing this inquiry" (p. 260). The literature review on the theoretical frameworks, namely intersectionality, expounds upon this idea, that the researcher's positionality could positively impact the of Black girls. The ending of the piece was a call to action for policymakers and other academicians to take the helm to continue work on Black girls. She advised that future studies should use a positive frame with the belief that Black girls have potential and strengths. Lightfoot believed that "social science must not remain preoccupied with their deprivation, their deviance, and their strangeness, but rather seen to understand the social meaning of their cultural perspective (p. 260)."

Ten years later, Scott-Jones & Clark (1986) wrote "The school experiences of black girls: The interaction of gender, race, and socioeconomic status." That ten-year period did not see an upsurge in other education Black girl studies. Consequently, sources used in Scott-Jones & Clark article were limited due to the availability of literature. For example, studies on education issues with a focus on race still seemed to be a consolidated, both male and female students' experiences. "The school experiences of black girls: The interaction of gender, race, and socioeconomic status" used existing

53

literature to investigate Black girls academic, social, and emotional experiences in schools (Scott-Jones & Clark, 1986).

Authors used data from previous academic studies to parse out Black girls' mathematic/science and verbal skills, career expectations/aspirations and motivations, educational and occupational attainment, and other related categories. The article's biggest limitation was the use of unnuanced data about "Black students." U.S. national assessments and a few education available studies disaggregated findings by gender and race. Scott-Jones & Clark highlighted related studies, surveys, and found differences along socioeconomic lines, race, gender, and at points the combination of both. "In an ethnographic study of first-graders, Linda Grant found that teachers were more likely to perceive black female students as socially mature and white female students as intellectually competent" (p. 524).

This perception that Black girls are more socially mature than their peers is explored in contemporary literature as *adultification* (Epstein et al., 2017). At the conclusion authors urged scholars and policymakers to investigate and address racial *and* gender inequities. In the case of Black girls, they argued that issues related to race and social class are "at least as important as attending to inequities fostered by sex bias. . . . attending to sex equity would probably enhance the educational attainment of blacks of both sexes" (p. 526). In the late-1980s lawyer and legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw, developed a framework for this issue. Coming from a Black feminist lens, Crenshaw created a critical framework, Intersectionality, by using perspectives from previous

54

research, legal cases, precedents, as well as the work and experiences of Black female scholars and activists throughout U.S. history. This the framework *intersectionality* will be discussed in more detail later in the paper.

Throughout the following two decades, more scholarship was produced focusing on Black girls' educational experiences in schools. From 1990-2010 the educational conversation shifted to discipline in public schools. The Guns Free School Act of 1994 ushered a wave of zero tolerance practices, exclusionary discipline, and police presence in schools. Understandingly, academic and policy conversation explored the merit of those policies. Similar to historic patterns, when discipline data was disaggregated by race, Black girls were either grouped with Black boys, left out of the discussion, or included as a byline in a couple sentences. Black boys became the central point of discussion because more black boys were facing school discipline than any other group (regardless of predictor variables, race, gender, class, etc.). Black girls', again, were overlooked as Black boys became the central focus of academic and discipline policy discussions. Within this past decade (2010-2020), influential Black female scholars, such as? have investigated the issues associated with Black girls and school discipline. This decade has seen the largest growth in literature, empirical studies, and policy interest on this topic. It is important to note that despite the surge in interest within the past decade, key scholars have long committed to the study of Black women and girls (Patricia Hill-Collins, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Monique Morris, etc.).

In 2012, Monique Morris produced a report for African American Policy Forum entitled "Race, Gender, and the School to Prison Pipeline: Expanding Our Discussion to Include Black Girls." This report included a letter of support from Kimberlé Crenshaw, who, at the time, was the executive director of the African American Policy Forum. In addition, she is legal scholar, noted contributing scholar in critical race theory, and she also was the pioneering scholar who framed the ideas of intersectionality theory. This report explored the School to Prison pipeline.

> School-to-prison pipeline refers to the collection of policies, practices, conditions, and prevailing consciousness that facilitate both the criminalization within educational environments and the processes by which this criminalization results in the incarceration of youth and young adults. The pipeline analogy has become the dominant frame by which to discuss the lived experiences of boys and girls, disproportionately Black (Morris, 2012, p. 2).

The beginning of the report considered how schools facilitated and perpetuate disparities and posited that "these institutions impose a context and proposition of power that inform socio-spatial designations for children." (p. 8). In addition, Morris considered then-current cases of Black girls who were handcuffed and arrested for misbehavior that did not fit the crime. The overly *mature* and over-sexualized stereotypes about Black girls contribute the most to their disparities in school discipline.

Morris argued that scholarship not investigating the S2P pipeline with an intersectionality lens overlooks the larger story for Black girls. At that time, academic

conversations exploring the unique interaction of race and gender was largely absent in discourse about school discipline in public school. Centering of *only* Black males had practical implications. "Without a philanthropic investment in the status of Black girls that is comparable to that of Black boys, the historical framework associated with the invisibility of Black females persists, in which 'all the women are white, all the Blacks are men, but some of us are brave' (Hull, Bell-Scott, & Smith, 1982) (p. 9)."

Understanding Black girls' unique set of challenges can shed light on how racial stereotypes impact them differently. Black girls are often suspended for being "disruptive" or "defiant" if they ask questions or otherwise engage in activities that adults consider affronts to their authority (Morris, 2012). Studying the experiences of Black girls discuss how implicit bias and racial stereotypes contribute to disproportionalities in discipline administration. Recent scholarship addresses how colorism and adultification also play a role in perpetuating disparities in school discipline. Black girls are perceived by their teachers as less innocent and more adult in comparison to their similarly situated female peers. Monique Morris describes the school-to-confinement-pipeline in her book, *Pushout* (2015). The school-to-prison pipeline is used to describe the effects of systematic exclusionary punishments for Black students. However, that issue plays out differently when disparities are examined at the intersection of race and gender.

Contemporary literature explains that for Black girls, the disparities in school punishments create a school-to-confinement pathway (Morris, 2015). Morris believes that in order to examine the totality of criminalization, scholars must not *only* focus on prison.

57

The school-to-prison pipeline of more accurate in the stories of Black boys and men (because they are the largest population in that system). Black girls are also pushed into residential placements, juvenile detention facilities, probation, and house arrest with GPS trackers. Morris explains that "when we talk about confinement, we open the door for us to really examine the full continuum, of the criminal and juvenile legal system in a way that it's interacting with the lives of our girls and other children along the gender continuum when they are experiencing school pushout" (Gonzales, 2016).

Monique Morris' (2015) book entitled, *Pushout,* was the first book completely dedicated to the experiences of Black girls and school discipline, and so this chapter will pay special attention in this section. Morris (2015) surveyed contemporary statistics, history, scholarship, and government-sponsored reports about Black women and girls, into her interviews with Black girls in public schools throughout the U.S. Morris held that far too many Black girls were being criminalized and physically/mentally harmed by beliefs, policies, and actions that dehumanize both their learning and their humanity leading them to conditions that push them out of school and render them vulnerable to even more harm. The policy and academic focuses are primarily on Black boys and men when it relates to police violence and disparities in schools. However, Black women are also directly impacted by criminalizing policies that render them vulnerable to "abuse, exploitation, dehumanization, and even death" (Morris, 2015, p. 2).

Pushout (2015) investigated race and gender inequalities that persisted after Brown v. Board of Education and advocated efforts moving beyond "deliberate speed."

Black girls are disproportionately criminalized and victimized due to race- and gender-based beliefs, policies, and actions held by society and educational/institutional personnel. Those biases influence their interactions with Black girls in ways that dehumanize "both their learning and their humanity leading them to conditions that push them out of school and render them vulnerable to even more harm" (Morris, 2015, p. 2). Black women and girls are impacted by similar issues as their male counterparts, but the academic and policy conversations historically overlooked this demographic.

In addition, because Black girls exist at the intersection of both race and sex, they face additional nuanced issues that often are overlooked. For example, Morris (2015) found that the Los Angeles Probation Department 2015 found that 92% of girls being sex trafficked are Black. The in the LA area, sex-trafficking was a major issue for Black women and girls. Moreover, girls involved in sex trafficking/prostitution often ended up dropping out of schools. They did not receive support from the legal system and were often imprisoned/confined as unwilling participants in sex trafficking. Black girls do not receive as much legal support or compassion in this area because "Black girls are often seen as 'choosers' of this life because of the oversexualized stereotype" (p. 115). When Black girls are held in juvenile facilities, the educational resources are low-quality, and they fall behind in their schoolwork.

Morris (2015) utilized sources from publicly accessible national juvenile justice and education databases and incorporated her unique contribution through her observations and interviews. Many of the figures and statistics she used to bolster her

arguments were not new and not necessarily groundbreaking. She also did not put forth a

new framework to contextualize the scholarship and data surrounding Black girls; in fact,

she borrowed from key Black feminist scholars. Morris used her book to explore

disparities and its implications through the lens of Black girls in public schools.

Morris seamlessly connected Black girls in LA into the larger issue surrounding

race and gendered inequalities after Brown V. Board. *Pushout* added to scholarship in its

focus on the Juvenile Court and alternative schools as well as commentary about sexual

violence and trafficking and its contribution to the school-to-confinement pathways.

Morris (2015) provided a concise historical analysis of education's centrality in the lives

of Black girls/women and the consistent displacement of Black women into inappropriate

institutions (e.g., victims of sex trafficking being imprisoned for prostitution). *Pushout*

situated inequalities facing Black girls in U.S. schools. Major themes included: sexual

assault, sex-trafficking, teacher-student dynamics, dress codes, over-sexualization of

Black girls, and the unequal treatment of Black girls in comparison to their peers.

Not only did *Pushout* (2015) contribute to the burgeoning topic surrounding

Black girls and their educational experiences, it successfully used Black girls voices to

tell this larger story (Morris, 2015). The narratives Morris introduced throughout *Pushout*

highlighted some important needs for Black girls found, in some form, in each of the

highlighted throughout her book had several themes. All of the Black girls in her book

needed some form of protection from victimization and violence at school (and/or home),

proactive discussions in school about healthy intimate relationships, strong student-

teacher relationships, school-based wraparound services, focus on learning deemphasis on punitive discipline in schools, and consistent credit recovery between alternative schools and traditional district or community schools (Morris, 2015).

Morris' recommendation section included steps that could improve the experiences of Black girls in public schools, and perhaps, help keep them out of the school-to-confinement pathways system (Morris, 2015). For example, recommendations geared directly towards improving the quality of life for Black girls included making juvenile detention centers rehabilitative, establishing quality school credit recovery programs in juvenile justice centers, creating spaces (particularly in schools) where Black girls can share their experiences, school-to-career programs, and counseling resources.

Most Black girls may not end up in prison but are confined to facilities such as training schools, residential houses, and correctional facilities (Morris, 2015). When Black girls' and boys' experiences are conflated as equal, there are ramifications. One of the most popular topics related to Black girls and disproportionate punishments deals with gender performance and cultural misreading from teachers (Harrison, 2017, p.1036; Morris, 2015; Morris, 2012). Many teachers, despite their good intentions, do not understand how the intersection of race and gender impacts the lives of their students. Moreover, many are unaware of or even resistant to the fact that their biases are influenced by those same factors (Annamma, 2016). So this means that when a Black girl does something that is typical of adolescents, it will be perceived as more severe by

teachers. It is extremely important to emphasize that Black girls are overrepresented for subjective offenses.

> Black girls are disciplined for behaviors such as disruption, profanity, defiance, and fighting. Many of these infractions are subjective, and violation is determined by the opinions of schoolteachers and administrators. (Wun, 2016, p. 3)

Those opinions are informed by centuries-old stereotypes that Black women are lewd, loud, provocative, loose, unfeminine, and lascivious (Wun, 2016). Those stereotypical traits are inherently at odds with patriarchal ideals of white womanhood. Even if girls do not fulfill stereotypes, normal adolescent actions may be perceived to be more serious due to bias. Those stereotypes and biases work hand in hand when teachers have to make split-second decisions about whom to discipline and the severity. Teachers and administrators take on the legal role of in loco parentis when students are in their care. This means that teachers are supposed to protect students from foreseeable harm and fill the capacity as a *well-advised* parent. According to U.S. education law,

> A second element of in loco parentis defines a duty that educators owe to their students. Under tort principles of negligence, educators owe students a duty to anticipate foreseeable dangers and to take reasonable steps to protect those students from that danger. To this end, educators owe the same degree of care and supervision to their students that reasonable and prudent parents would employ in the same circumstances for their children.

Martin and Smith's (2017) work highlights the gap in research for studying Black girls and subjective discipline using longitudinal data. Their study utilizes the 2002 Education Longitudinal Study (ELS), which was the most updated version at the time of their study (ELS, 2002). Martin and Smith conducted a logistic regression analysis and a hierarchical regression analysis to compare tenth grade African American girls to White girls. They examined whether being retained a grade level, teacher reports of problem behavior, and whether a student graduated in the four years following their 10-grade year to determine "if subjective discipline and social control of Black girls leads to eventual school dropout" (Martin and Smith, 2017, p. 63). The primary objective was to determine if *pushout* (coined by Monique Morris in 2012) was a phenomenon in the ELS national database. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) collected a list of all schools in the U.S. that included the 10th-grade level and created a random sample of 800 schools for the study; of that sample, up to 30 students were selected for their full study.

Covariates in their study were compiled into the following domains: (1) parent/family covariates, (2) school covariates, and (3) teacher covariates. The parental/family domain was composed of a composite of parent's self-reported behavioral problems and different identifiers of parents' background and socioeconomic status. The school components were a composite of items measuring school problem/climate and the teacher domain related to their quality as an educator. For their analyses, they started with an overall comparison between Black and white female students. Next Martin and Smith added then "added alternate explanations in the following order: parent report of school

problems, socioeconomic status, school quality problems as reported by an external observer, and teacher quality elements" (Martin and Smith, 2017, p. 67). The models were adjusted so that only significant covariates were retained. They explained that in each step, they examined the change in significance of variance explained as well as the general differences in their comparison of Black and white female students.

In order to observe retention and completion of high school education Martin and Smith added the "full set of covariate measures, then added whether or not the student had been retained a grade up through 10th-grade" and then they added teachers' reports of problem behavior (Martin & Smith, 2017, p. 66). Authors noted that for this component of the analysis they were concerned with the degree of reduction in the difference in rates between Black girls "and white girls, as well as the impact of the additional components on the overall model" (Martin and Smith, 2017, p. 66). The results of their analysis concluded that Black girls were more likely to be held back a grade even when holding for various factors. Martin and Smith's analysis of teachers' reports on student behavior were also analyzed in conjunction with alternative explanations. Each of the variables included in this analysis was significant, so they primarily focused on the comparison between Black and white girls. Authors found that even holding for parents self-reported levels of problem behavior for children, teachers were still more like report problem behaviors for Black girls. They also were surprised school and teacher domains did not impact their results, as literature would indicate. In fact, those measures

"increased the difference in problem behaviors reported by teachers for these two groups of girls" (Martin and Smith, 2017, p. 68).

Their analysis of graduation rates showed that Black girls did not graduate from high school within the following four years of 10th-grade at nearly three times the rate of white girls. In the following models, background factors were added and reduced the difference between Black and white girls to insignificance. Based on their compiled results, Martin and Smith explained that the**:**

> Pattern of characteristics that contribute to African American girls being held back more and experiencing higher levels of teacher-reported problems in their 10th-grade classrooms completely accounted for an overall 300% difference in these students dropping out of high school. It is, in essence, the definition of being pushed out of school. (Martin and Smith, 2017, p. 69)

Quantitative studies conducted within the last couple years have incorporated theoretical frameworks to contextualize their results. They referenced Monique Morris' book to justify selecting an intersectional feminist critical race lens: According to Martin and Smith (2017):

> Black girls are routinely expected to reconcile their status as Black and female and poor, a status that has left them with a mark of double jeopardy that fuels intense discrimination and personal vulnerability. ...Our intersectional feminist critical race lens necessitates a critique of the institutions that ignore, seek to

correct, discipline, and criminalize African American girl aesthetics and identities.

(p. 65)

Ultimately their research confirms contemporary scholarship suggesting that Black girls, holding for other factors, have a significantly higher risk of receiving differential treatment and pushout than their similarly situated female peers. Blake et al.'s (2017) "The role of colorism in explaining African American females' suspension risk" is a recent piece which expands the discussion about Black girls by incorporating colorist frameworks into the discussion. Blake et. al. holds that "within a colorist framework, individuals with lighter skin who share more phenotypic characteristics with Whites are perceived as having greater social capital and, in turn, receive more social privileges than those who possess darker skin and more Afrocentric features" (Blake et al., 2017, p. 120).

This piece starts out explaining the disparities by utilizing national database records on school discipline to highlight the disparities among Black girls for school discipline. The sections of this piece contributing to perspectives centers on adultification and colorism (Blake et al., 2017). Authors used an extensive database from the Waves 1 and 2 Longitudinal Database as well as the Add Health database. Blake et al. included the following measures: School suspension, Behavioral functioning, Academic functioning, school climate, student skin tone/race-ethnicity, parent education level, school size, school type, school community setting, school educational level, strictness of school discipline policies, and diversity of school composition. Given that the outcomes of the study were dichotomous, Blake et al. utilized a design-based approach because it

66

"provides a population-averaged interpretation of the regression coefficients and is more robust to model assumption violations" (Blake et al., 2017, p. 125). The analysis controlled for "school structural characteristics, school discipline policies, student academic and behavioral functioning and discipline history, parental educational level, and school climate" (Blake et al., 2017, p. 126). Blake et al. studied skin color and race's effects on students in terms of disparate school discipline. For example, they argued that,

> The significance of colorism in understanding the inequitable school discipline experiences of African American youth is underscored by findings that suggest that skin tone and Afrocentric features influence disproportionate minority contact with law enforcement, criminal convictions and sentencing lengths for adults, as well as the formation of negative stereotypes about African American people. (Blake et. al., 2017, p. 121).

They utilized Wave 1 and 2 database to answer this question because it included information on school behavior, behavioral functioning, academic functioning, school climate, students' skin tone/race/ethnicity, etc. Their quantitative multilevel analysis confirmed the assertion in contemporary scholarship. Their study also confirmed scholarship, suggesting that colorism and racism play a factor in the school discipline gap. Blake et al. found that "African American females with the darkest skin complexion were most at-risk for school suspension relative to White females. Their findings in conjunction with previous research in this area, provides preliminary evidence for how discipline sanctions are influenced by bias across and within racial/ethnic groups" (Blake

et al., 2017, p. 127). The article (Blake et al., 2017) explains adultification and situates it within contemporary research. They explain:

> Adultification can be viewed as both a socialization process, fostering opportunities for risk and resilience, and a social stereotype that shapes the ways in which Black children are perceived and subsequently treated by adults. As a socialization process, adultification involves exposing children, primarily children from low resource and culturally diverse families, to adult themes before societal standards assume it is developmentally appropriate to do so. (p. 119)

Blake et al. highlight educators' focus on Black girls social mores. Black girls are perceived by their teachers as less innocent and more adult in comparison to their similarly situated female peers (Blake et al., 2017). For Black children, perceptions that they are less innocent and older in comparison to their peers, allows adults to view (and treat) them as more threatening. Authors proposed that the "combined effect of adultifying African American girls' behavior and the over surveillance of African American girls' decorum in schools is associated with African American females' elevated risk for school suspension" (p. 120). That study explored beyond implicit bias and stereotypes towards adultification and colorism.

Morris and Perry's (2017) study utilizes a longitudinal data set to explore interactions between race and gender on office referrals for Black girls. The results found that the gap between Black and white girls are bigger than Black and white boys. In addition, Black girls receive a disparate amount of office referrals for disruptive behavior,

68

dress code violations, disobedience, and aggressive behavior. Their study draws on the

Kentucky School Discipline Study (KSDS), but each member of the team collected

information on school discipline directly from the schools. Their sample included girls

enrolled in public school in 6th-12th grade who were enrolled August 2007-June 2011.

This study comprised of a series of multilevel modeling to examine the association

between gender, race, ethnicity, and office referrals for various types of infractions. The

multilevel mixed logistic regression models had "a three-level structure: Level 1

observation over time are nested in Level 2 individual students, which are nested in Level

3 schools" (p. 132).

Ultimately their studies confirmed contemporary research that Black girls are

disproportionately targeted for subjective offenses: "Overall, boys are more likely to

receive an office referral, but when race is taken into account, black girls have the same

probability of receiving an office referral as do white boys and a higher probability than

Asian and Latino boys. Consistent with other research (Blake et al. 2011), we find that

black girls are disciplined primarily for less serious but more ambiguous offenses, such as

disruptive behavior, dress code violations, disobedience, and aggressive behavior.

Comparing the effects of race across gender groups reveals that the gap between black

girls and white girls is significantly larger for these subjective offenses than is the gap

between black boys and white boys (p. 144).

The scholars in this quantitative study utilized intersectionality theory to

contextualize their results, "Race and gender are not simply discrete variables that can be

taken apart and added together. Instead, the meanings and effects of race occur only through gender, and in turn, the meanings and effects of gender occur only through race (p. 128)." And they believe that their paper is moving intersectionality in a new direction by incorporating it into multilevel quantitative data. Both Morris & Perry (2017) and Martin & Smith (2017) represent moves in the right direction by including theoretical frameworks into quantitative studies. Also, both studies used similar longitudinal datasets (although Morris & Perry's dataset was more comprehensive) and came to the same conclusion in contemporary scholarship. This is more evidence proving that the assertions made about disparate administration of subjective punishment are based in robust scholarship. The review of literature has established the current phenomenon in school discipline facing Black girls. The next part of this paper will examine conceptual frameworks commonly utilized in the study of school discipline, implicit biases, and Black girls.

Restorative Justice

One of the major pushbacks against non-punitive interventions is that student misbehavior is perceived to be rewarded and some teachers feel that dangerous students are being kept in their classes (Sperry, 2015). In those cases, educators are often framed as victims, and students are the *willfully wrongful* perpetrators.

>Interventions that address teachers do not imply that teachers should ignore students' misbehavior or the disproportionate misbehavior of Black students, if this is the case. Rather, they aim to help teachers interact with children in ways

that help those children become the kinds of students teachers want their students

to be. (Okonofua et al., 2016, p. 389)

The fact of the matter is that students misbehave, regardless of their gender, racial,

sexual, or ethnic identity. This paper does not make the argument that students from

marginalized backgrounds should be more (or less) responsible for their actions than their

peers. However, this study explains that those identity markers *can* impact the level of

severity educators' use to address certain students' misbehavior (Okonofua et al., 2016).

The punishment should match the offense. Moreover, educators/administrators should

first be concerned with *why* the misbehavior occurs, only then can they provide

appropriate punishment/interventions. Teachers and administrators are not villains nor are

Black girls helpless victims. The study is concerned with *why* the school discipline gap

persists for Black girls, how discipline disparities impacts Black girls and educational

personnel, and how to find alternatives. Students also should not be expected to accept or

ignore racial/gender biases among teachers. "Instead, they aim to help students respond to

teachers in terms of the kinds of relationships they hope to form with teachers, not the

kinds of relationships they fear" (Okonofua et al., 2016, p. 389).

Some educational leaders throughout the U.S. have also identified issues in school

discipline and have committed to discontinue punitive discipline and implement

restorative justice practices. Scholars have started conducting smaller studies at schools

implementing restorative justice practices. Although more extensive research studies are

still underway, preliminary research overwhelmingly shows that restorative measures

significantly decrease the number of exclusionary punishments- particularly for Black students (Augustine et al., 2018). Despite the positive impacts for Black students, Payne & Welch's (2015) study found that the schools with higher percentages of Black students were less likely to utilize restorative justice.

The objectives of this discipline method are to build relationships, rehabilitate, and foster accountability. The restorative programs focus heavily on relationships and repairing the harm caused by acts of misbehavior, delinquency, and crime (Payne & Welch, 2017). Where zero tolerance removes the "problem" student from a school, restorative justice practices challenge students to think about their actions and consider its consequences while also providing support for the students who were affected in conflict. Rather than receiving punishments that exclude and isolate students, restorative practices engage those students, so they learn to take responsibility and are accountable for their behavior. As such, restorative practices offer a means of rebuilding relationships that have been "damaged and repairing harm that has been done to the school community as a whole" (Gregory et al., 2014, p. 227). Restorative justice practices are comprised of various circle and group conversations and activities. There is not a uniform standard for restorative justice, but it usually involves three common practices, including community-building or proactive circles, responsive circles, and restorative conferences (Gregory, & Clawson, 2016).

Different practices are incorporated for particular parts of the conflict: before, during, and after. For example, community building circles seek to build relationships

and are usually incorporated before conflicts occur to establish trust and a sense of community (Gregory, 2016). This is more of preemptive and preventative measure for students and teachers. When students have established relationships with their peers and teachers, all parties can be more open and accountable when an incident occurs. Responsive circles are utilized during the incident. They are held in response to challenges that arise in classrooms to encourage joint accountability and empowerment in setting (or re-setting) positive norms among students and teachers. This could manifest as a teacher addressing what the student needs, why they behaved in a particular manner, and opening bi-directional conversations instead of sending a student out of the classroom (Gregory, 2016). The responsive circles are meant to "encourage joint accountability and empowerment in setting (or re-setting) positive norms among students and teachers.

Restorative conferences are held after a discipline incident or dispute among school community members" (Gregory, 2016, p 155). Finally, restorative conferences are held after a discipline incident or dispute among school community members. Restorative practices may manifest in different ways, for example, Gregory et al. explained how "students typically sit facing each other without barriers, and when students are handed the 'talking piece,' they have an opportunity to voice their perspective. This gives students an opportunity to learn about one another, and practice social and emotional skills such as active listening and appropriate personal disclosure" (Gregory et al., 2014, p. 155). Restorative justice practices create a way to address the needs of both the victim

and the perpetrator and give both the chance to rehabilitate. Okonofua et al. (2016) finds that using approaches like restorative justice can be a remedy to the school discipline problem. When teachers and students are held accountable to one another as a part of a community, then phycological barriers to positive student-teacher relationships are addressed. The communal approach "is noncontrolling; It empowers teachers and students to be agents in their own improvement, which may be essential for adolescents" (Okonofua et al., 2016, p. 391).

Shortcomings associated with restorative justice practices rests upon its level of implementation given it is not a standardized, *one-size-fits-all,* model. In order to successfully implement restorative justice practices, school leaders must adjust the model according to the unique needs of their school community. This model, perhaps more than others, is only as effective as the entities implementing them. Addington (2019) also notes that another shortcoming specifically related to Black girls, is the act of taking accountability for, or admittance of, wrongdoing in the process towards reconciliation. She holds that because the majority of offences for which Black girls receive punishment are subjective that:

> It is not a girl's underlying behavior that is the problem but rather the school staff member's interpretation of the behavior or rule. . .As such, if Black girls are required to acknowledge cases of misbehavior it would be at odds to restorative justice's larger goal of improving relationship and having a voice in the discipline process. (Addington, 2019, p.12)

Healthy school communities have teachers who equally see and value their students, they are able to meet regularly with administration for guidance support and a space to recharge, and they have positive relationships with their students, which in turn, would inform how they consider punishment (Addington, 2019). Not only does restorative justice practices eschew exclusionary punishments as the first line of defense, it is grounded in building communities/relationships. That means each person has to be accountable to one another. The students have to be cognizant of their role and the educators/administrators have to acknowledge their shortcomings as well. The effectiveness of the approach lies in administrators' ability to meet the needs of their school community and educators' investment in effective implementation.

Because many schools are beginning to implement restorative justice in school with notable success, scholars have also begun to conduct smaller studies on US schools that have implemented the restorative practices. Gregory et al.'s (2014) study on Oakland and Denver schools findings suggested: "that the use of restorative practices may have far-reaching positive impacts on school culture and climate in addition to reducing the gender and racial discipline disparity gap" (p. 227). Ultimately that study found that African American students had the greatest decline in suspension rates relative to other student groups. "In both districts, the gap between the percentage of suspended African American and white students went down by about 6 percentage points" (Gregory, 2016, p. 156). Teachers, regardless of race, are impacted by stereotypes and how that manifests in the discipline and expectations of those students. This also showed that most teachers

do not intend to disrupt the academic success of their students, but that racism has cultivated environments where people internalize and project implicit biases on children they are supposed to protect. Most importantly it shows that the current ills of school discipline can be mitigated with an accessible alternative.

Theoretical Frameworks

The most utilized conceptual frameworks for Black girls and school discipline are Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1976), Black Feminist Theory (Collins, 1990), and Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989). Scholars typically utilize those theories alone or in conjunction with one another. My study focuses on Black girls, who occupy unique spaces as female and Black, so I used a combination of critical theoretical frameworks. The scope of my research investigates discipline policies as they impact Black girls.

In addition to Critical Race Theory (CRT), Intersectionality, and Black feminist theories, this study employed a Positive Psychology lens because studying what works is just important as the alternative and can help "researchers and practitioners develop more robust theories about human change" (Lopez & Magyar-Moe, 2006, p. 325). Peterson (2006) explains that "positive psychology is the scientific study of what goes right in life, from birth to death and at all stops in between" (p. 4). Positive Psychology is an underutilized tool in education studies and could be used in conjunction with critical lenses to move towards actionable change. Researching what works is a necessary addition to a field saturated with problem-focused and deficit-framed discourses (Peterson, 2006). My larger goal is to collaborate with Black girls in order to create

76

school supports *by* them *for* girls just like them. Black girls are the experts in my study because they know best about what resources their schools should have to help them feel supported. The following section will give an overview of the frameworks used throughout the study including, Critical Policy Analysis, Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Theory, Intersectionality, and Positive Psychology lens. This section will conclude with an explanation of how each will be used throughout the study.

Policy Analysis: Critical Policy Analysis

Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) is an effective framework for analyzing educational policy for concentrations on race and power dynamics (Diem et al., 2014; Young & Diem, 2017). Given the complexity of school discipline and its nuanced conceptualization, this study employs CPA to investigate how this policy perpetuates disparities for Black girls in public schools. Guns Free Act of 1994 was presented as a fair and color-blind discipline policy that would protect innocent students and teachers from the presence of guns, drugs, violence. However, the policy's expansion to subjective and discretionary offenses coupled with educators' implicit racial and gender biases, exacerbated an already prevalent issue in education. In order to critically examine those *standardized* policies, frameworks that evaluate the policy process, policy objectives, and policy outcomes are key.

Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) is an interdisciplinary approach that cuts across the humanities and social sciences (Young & Diem, 2017). The ability to analyze educational policies through multi-theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches

results in policy analyses that have more depth and breadth (Diem et al., 2014)

and as Ulmer (2016) stressed, "Understanding policy differently might ultimately

lead to better policy" (Diem et al., 2019, p. 6; Ulmer, 2016, p. 1392).

The field of policy studies is often characterized as a theoretically narrow field, relying

first and foremost upon functionalist, rational, and scientific models (Brewer, 2008;

Marshall, 1997; Scheurich, 1994; Young, 1999). As part of the policy studies field,

educational policy research has tended to operate within a "traditionalistic (i.e., positivist)

paradigm and, over time, has developed a group of taken-for-granted assumptions,

norms, and traditions that institutionalize conventional ontological, epistemological, and

methodological traditions" (Diem et al., 2014, p. 1068). The shift away from standard

policy analysis models began emerging throughout the 1980s (Ball, 1991; Diem et al.,

2014, p. 1069; Stone, 2005). Historically, policy studies consisted of widely accepted

components,

> Relying first and foremost upon functionalist, rational, and scientific models. As
>
> part of the policy studies field, educational policy research has tended to operate
>
> within a traditionalistic (i.e., positivist) paradigm and, over time, has developed a
>
> group of taken-for-granted assumptions, norms, and traditions that institutionalize
>
> conventional ontological, epistemological, and methodological traditions. (Diem
>
> et al., 2014, p. 1068)

Rational and markets-based models are foundational models utilized within the field of

policy analysis. The premise of creating policy is comprised of three components,

including a model of reasoning (rational decision making), a model of society, and a model of policymaking. For rational decision making, "decisions are or should be made into a series of well-defined steps: (1) identify objectives, (2) identify alternative courses of action for achieving objectives, (3) Predict the possible consequences of each alternative, (4) Evaluate the possible consequences of each alternative, (5) Select the alternative that maximizes the attainment of objectives" (Stone, 2012, p 11). Rational and markets-based models "worships objectivity and seeks modes of analysis that will lead to the objectively best results for a society" (Stone, 2012, p. 10). In other words, the traditional model values a *rational* approach and has associated assumptions that often do not fit neatly within complex policy analyses.

Given the complex nature of school discipline disparities for Black female students, the traditional rational approach would not be an appropriate model. CPA is an ideal approach to investigate this policy because this study employs a broader range of theoretical lenses in the analysis. Diem et. al. "scholars are blending theoretical perspectives, engaging in a 'theoretical eclecticism.' Without question, critical policy scholars are providing novel perspectives for research problems in education literature" (Diem et al., 2014, p.1085). Scholars interested in Critical Policy Analysis examine the differences between the *letter of the policy* and its reality after implementation, the formation of the policy and its processes, "the distribution of power, resources, and knowledge and the creation of winners and losers (p. 1072)," the policy's contribution to inequitable structures, and critical policy scholars are often interested in marginalized

groups who challenge oppressive systems and they often "engage in activism and use of participatory methods to employ agency within schools" (p. 1072).

Critical Race Theory

Critical theories serve as tools to aid scholars in conceptualizing issues in their respective fields. Those frameworks help scholars investigate the impact of race, gender, class, and other identifiers. Given that my research focuses on the interaction between race, gender, and class, my paper will focus on Critical Race Theory (CRT), Black Feminist Theory, and Intersectionality Theory. The ideas foundational to Critical race theory emerged with the slow and ineffective implementation of Civil Rights Legislation. During this time, legal scholars began critiquing the law's *colorblindness* and also *legal* structures within the United States justice system.

Derrick Bell is recognized as the founder of Critical Race Theory with his 1976 article, "Serving Two Masters: Integration Ideals and Client Interests in School Desegregation Litigation" is the seminal piece of literature on framing Critical Race Theory. Afterward, key scholars utilized critical race lenses to investigate the law. In this way they critiqued the injustices that Critical Race Theory and shaped it to their particular fields of study (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Williams, 1995; Delgado, & Stefancic, J. 1995; Crenshaw, 1989). Critical Race Theory is the culmination of previous legal scholars' engagement in discussions about systemic race-laden laws in the United States. So ideas critiquing law and race were *not* novel, but up until that point, a concrete framework justifying the utility of such a specific frame did not exist. As a result, CRT

was groundbreaking at the time of conception. In the 1980s and 1990s, scholars borrowed this law-framework and applied to various fields of study.

In educational studies, scholars traditionally focused on disparities along class lines, and critical theories expanded academic discourse to systemic racial and gender inequities. The field of education started widely using CRT in the 1990s. Ladson-Billings' & Tate's (1995) *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education* is one of the seminal pieces for the integration of Critical Race Theory (CRT) into the field of education. The fundamental argument of this article was that CRT could effectively be utilized within the field of education because of its alignment with the framework's tenants. As a result, Ladson-Billings and Tate hold three central propositions: "(1) Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States, (2) U.S. society is based on property rights, (3) The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 48).

When this article was written, a case was still being made to incorporate CRT into the field of education. Therefore, the article tackles the definition of race and contends that it is untheorized. Not because previous scholars did not carefully confront the power of race, but because "the intellectual salience of this theorizing has not been systematically employed in the analysis of educational inequality" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 50). This piece theorized race and argued that its presence impacted inequalities for current educational issues. It also promoted CRT as an effective tool to

nuance policies that are often perceived as "colorblind" and "gender blind." Beyond the actual implementation and its disproportionate impact on minority groups, this piece also challenged the ways in which scholarship is conducted in education. The article drew parallels between the legal tenets of CRT and educational inequalities. Critical Race theory has major tenants and also sub-tenants that describe how race and property lend itself in U.S. legal system. In turn, this article highlights how inequities educational policies could thoroughly be analyzed using the same framework. *Voices of the studied*, is a crucial component to this framework, but also the voices of the scholars are important in CRT. Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) noted:

> A growing number of education scholars of color are raising critical questions about the way that research is being conducted in communities of color. Thus, without authentic voices of people of color (as teachers, parents, administrators, students, and community members) it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities. (p. 58)

The article makes a strong case for the use of CRT in education, especially for policies that are considered *standard* for all. It is important to note that when the conversation shifted towards African American education issues, the few examples posited *only* highlighted issues specific for Black males. Without an intersectional lens, it is almost definite that Black women and girls' stories will be left out and their voices unheard. For CRT, the work of including and validating stories of overlooked/oppressed peoples is a path towards justice. One of the most important components of this study are Black girls'

82

voices. This study rests on the assumption that they are experts in their experiences and their voices matter.

> The "voice" component of critical race theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice. As we attempt to make linkages between critical race theory and education, we contend that the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system. (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p.58)

Soon after CRT was widely adopted in educational studies, it became the go-to, and some scholarship did not move the lens forward or utilize it in a compelling way. Ledesma & Calderón's (2015) *Critical race theory in education: A review of past literature and a look to the future*, investigates how scholars have been engaging with Critical Race Theory (CRT) in the field of education over the past several decades. One of the main objectives of this piece was to challenge scholars in using CRT intentionally, keeping the legal tenants in mind. The article selected exemplary articles that utilized CRT to explore issues in P-12 education as well as Higher Education.

Ledesma and Calderón (2015) also explored how scholars utilize CRT effectively in the field of education. CRT has become very popular in academia. So, scholars must be wary of jumping on the theoretical bandwagon- we must, instead, engage this framework in a robust and meaningful way. CRT is included as a utilized framework because this study is founded upon CRT's conceptualizations of race, its understanding of the value/property of whiteness, and how those elements interact with U.S. laws and

policies to perpetuate disparities in education, specifically. In addition, CRT values voice

and narrative as crucial artifacts. These elements matter because, as stated in Chapter 1, a

major assumption in this study is that Black girls' voices matter. Their voices are crucial

in defining the problem but, *more importantly,* it is critical in the pursuit of justice.

Black Feminist Theory

Black Feminist Theory is essential to this study because it addresses a gap in CRT

by centering the experiences of Black women/girls. BFT further validates the use of

Black girls voices as a tool to mitigate issues of school discipline disproportionality.

Patricia Hill Collins, the founder of Black Feminist Theory, explored Black women's

works and ideas throughout U.S. history. Collins (1986) defined Black feminist theory as

a "process of self-conscious struggle that empowers women and men to actualize a

humanist vision of community" (p. 39). This framework expanded beyond the

contemporary critical frameworks to create a space for Black women. Scholars

investigating Black girls and school discipline typically utilize Black feminist and

Intersectionality theories in addition to, or in place of, CRT. BFT emerged due in the late

1980s as a response to the absence of a feminist framework meaningfully engaging the

Black women's experience. However, it is important to note that the ideas and themes

foundational to BFT was born out of centuries of Black women's scholarly, literary, and

activist contributions.

For example, during slavery, Black women did not receive leniency due to their

sex nor were they able to avoid physical labor or abuse. In addition, Black women

experienced the horrors of rape and sexual assault with minimal to no legal recourse. "Enslaved women were constantly confronted with sexual abuse, where their free counterparts had limited legal recourse against it" (Taylor, 1998, p. 236). However, throughout the 1830s-1860s "Black women abolitionists had developed a collective feminist consciousness that reflected their particular experiences as Black women as well as the aspects of sexism they shared with white women" (Yee, 1992, p. 151). Throughout every era of American history, Black women found ways to confront and challenge their oppression in their daily lives as a means of survival.

Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer, and everyday African American women "sustained resistance to Black women's victimization within interlocking systems of race, gender, and class oppression" (Collins, 1989, p. 745). Their positionality also afforded them a unique perspective into the intimate lives of ruling racial class. Black women were in close proximity to the wealthy and powerful through their jobs as domestics. They understood the structure of their households and also the dynamics. "These women have seen white elites, both actual and aspiring, from perspectives largely obscured from their Black spouses and from these groups themselves" (Collins, 1986, p. 514). Black women were able to make sense of each person's role, power, and lack thereof. In the face of oppression, many Black women were able to develop a "self-defined standpoint on that experience and resistance" (Collins, 1989, p. 749).

Nearly ten years before Collins composed "Learning from the outsider within:

The sociological significance of Black feminist thought," Assata Shakur reflected on her experiences as a Black women and former member of a "Pro-Black" organization, The Black Panther Party. Although the Black Panthers fought against white supremacy and for Black (male) empowerment, the men in that organization were extremely abusive and dismissive towards Black women.

> I think about my sisters in the movement. I remember the days when, draped in African garb, we rejected our foremothers and ourselves as castrators. We did penance for robbing the brother of his manhood as if *we* were the oppressor.
> (Shakur & Chesimard, 1978)

Women in the Black Panther party experienced certain *freedoms* in that most women did not. For example, they were expected to handle guns, and it was acceptable to wear pants, both of which are considered masculine. Those small allowances seemed like liberation, too many, at the time, and Shakur recalled "doe-eyed" looks, admiration, and respect they paid to Black Panther leaders. She explained that those were *also* the "days when we worked like dogs and struggled desperately for the respect which they struggled desperately not to give us (Shakur & Chesimard, 1978)." Black women's work and contributions were often overlooked and disregarded by the Black male leadership. Because of her experiences, Shakur urged Black women to build a *strong* movement for Black women. "It is imperative that we, as black women, talk about the experiences that shaped us; that we assess our strengths and weaknesses and define our own history (Shakur & Chesimard, 1978)." Black women's conversations about dichotomies between

being both Black and woman existed long before the formal articulation of Black Feminist Theory.

> By taking elements and themes of Black women's culture and traditions and infusing them with new meaning, Black feminist thought rearticulates a consciousness that already exists. More important, this rearticulated consciousness gives African American women another tool of resistance to all resistance to all forms of their subordination. (Collins, 1989, p. 750)

Black feminist theory is composed of about four central tenets. First, Black women create their unique *self-definition* and *self-evaluations* that counter the dominant negative stereotypes present within the dominant white-supremacist society. Collins (1986) explains that "defining valuing one's consciousness of one's own self-defined standpoint in the face of images that foster a self-definition as the objectified other is an important way of resisting the dehumanization essential to systems of domination" (Collins, 1986, p. 18). In this way Black women have agency and control over their narratives and representations. The second tenet is that Black women challenge and dismantle interlocking "structures of domination in terms of race, class, and gender oppression (Taylor, 1998, 235)." The third tenet is that political activism and intellectual thought is intrinsically interlaced. Also, dialogue is an integral part of how Black women assess knowledge claims (Beard, 2012; Collins 1989). Finally, Black women "recognize a distinct cultural heritage that gives them the energy and skills to resist and transform daily discrimination" (Collins, 1986; Taylor, 1998, p. 235).

In addition to reconciling the unique challenges and experiences of being both Black and women, Black women had to reconcile oppression within the racial and gender-based social movements. Ula Taylor's (1998) "The historical evolution of Black feminist theory and praxis," provides historiography on Black women's creation of Black feminist theory at the marginalization of both race and gender. Her juxtaposition of Black women's work in racial/civil rights movements and collaboration with white feminists/Black "race" men, created a compelling illustration of how Black women's dilemma. They nearly always had to negotiate and/or repress components of their identities to advocate for siloed gender or racial inequity issues.

Black women have historically been active in progressing both Black and Feminist-movements, yet they were ignored when issues gender and race intersected. For these reasons Collins defined Black women's unique positionality as "outsiders within" (Collins, 1986). In the case of White women their feminist movements, "The historical evolution of Black feminism in the United States not only developed out of Black women's antagonistic and dialectical engagement with White women but also out of their own terms" (Taylor, 1998, p. 235). Ultimately, the second theme is key to conceptualizing Black feminist thought. For Black women "minimizing one form of oppression, while essential, may still leave them oppressed in other equally dehumanizing ways" (Collins, 1986, S19).

Intersectionality Theory

Legal scholar and Black feminist, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) coined the term

intersectionality in her seminal piece "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex:

A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist

politics." The lens sought to expand the CRT lens to encompass the intersection of

multiple oppressions using Black women and legal cases as an example.

> With Black women as the starting point, it becomes more apparent how dominant
>
> conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as
>
> disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis. (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140)

Those frameworks have been integral in examining gender's role at the intersection of

race and class. "Although Crenshaw's work is situated in the legal field, as a Black

feminist, she created intersectionality theory as a tool to address how identity politics

have often left women of color marginalized" (Harrison, 2017, p. 1025). This article

utilized court cases (e.g., DeGraffenreid v General Motors, etc.) to demonstrate how

singular oppressions interact in unique ways for Black women, who exist in the

intersection of both gender and race. The central argument was that Black women can

experience discrimination in ways that are both similar to and different from those

experienced by white women and Black men" (p. 149). The cases highlighted throughout

the article demonstrate the success of cases depended on Black women's proximity to

white women and Black men's experiences.

Traditional critical and feminist framings of discrimination only allowed for

singular experiences of oppression. "Black women have sometimes been excluded from

feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). Black women were at uncomfortable crossroads, where they were expected to forsake one part of their identity for the other. Crenshaw explained that "Black women are regarded either as too much like women or Blacks, and the compounded nature of their experience is absorbed into the collective experiences of either group or as too different" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 151). This was reflected in the Black women's lived experiences highlighted throughout Black feminist literature, but Crenshaw expertly used outcomes of legal cases to demonstrate the same phenomenon.

In the DeGraffenreid v. General Motors case, a collective of Black female employees sued G.M. using the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Their case was built on the premise that their policies were discriminatory along the lines of race *and* gender.

> The legislative history surrounding Title VII does not indicate that the goal of the statute was to create a new classification of 'black women' who would have greater standing than, for example, a black male. The prospect of the creation of new classes of protected minorities, governed only by the mathematical principles of permutation and combination, clearly raises the prospect of opening the hackneyed Pandora's box. (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 142)

Crenshaw found that Black women were not protected because they did not neatly fit within racist or sexist discrimination. The court perceived Black women's intersectional classification as *new* and as one that competed with Black males. The court was

concerned with Black women's designation being placed higher or lower in context to Black men. Essentially, laws protecting citizens from discrimination were defined in context of white women's and Black men's experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw noted that "Under this view, Black women are protected only to the extent that their experiences coincide with those of either of the two groups'." (1989, p. 143).

In another case, Moore v. Hughes Helicopter, Inc. a Black woman did not win the antidiscrimination lawsuit *because* of her self-identification as Black woman. Because of this nuanced identification, Moore was then excluded from protection as *female.* Moore claimed that Hughes Helicopter, Inc. used racist and sexists practices during their promotions process. In response, the court found that because her original claim was made as a *Black woman* and not just as a *woman*, her argument was insufficient. The court held that because of her unique distinction… "[T]his raised serious doubts as to Moore's ability to adequately represent white female employees (p. 144)." Again, Black women's protection was only as valuable at their proximity to white women. This also highlights the "centrality of white female experiences in the conceptualization of gender discrimination" (p. 144). This is something that has historical precedent and has persisted throughout U.S. history.

Although this piece focused on adult Black women, this phenomenon plays out in the realm of public-school discipline. Black girls have historically been subsumed or ignored in discussions on public school discipline disparities. Data about Black girls were typically included as a side note in the larger discussion on Black boys. In this way, their

unique experiences and needs were overshadowed, and they were rendered invisible (Morris 2015; Morris 2012; Wun, 2016).

Monique Morris' (2012) report advocated for utilization of Intersectionality in the study of Black girls. This is "because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take Intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 18). Morris (2012) created a report about Black girls and the school discipline gap with a call to action for scholars. Morris utilized Intersectionality Theory to examine the convergence of race and gender in disparities of school discipline for Black girls. Morris applied this theory because an "absence of a lens that explores gender— female and male—facilitates the absence of a structural analysis of the education-systems factors and experiences associated with the discipline of Black youth in many schools" (p. 8). As this paper noted in an earlier section, scholars emphasized the school discipline gap for Black students - and most times, that meant focusing on Black boys **(**Morris, 2012). The implications of the trend of research around school discipline and Black students where Black girls are mentioned only in the margins has had unfortunate implications:

> The failure to critically apply an intersectional framework has limited our ability
> to advance the scholarship on racial threat and stereotyping and its impact on the
> life outcomes of affected populations, both female and male. It prevents
> scholarship on the subject from asking questions that extend beyond causal

92

relationships to better understand the connection between systems and policies

such that we can explore how Black girls are perceived as threats to public safety

(Morris, 2012, p. 7).

Understanding Black girls through a lens employed for Black boys overlook the nuances

for Black girls. Morris held that by understanding Black girls' experiences through a

patriarchal and school-to-prison framework obscures their unique experiences, as well

(Morris, 2015). In the past, articles that addressed racial disparities in school discipline

prescribed recommendations, and rarely was it gender-appropriate evidence-based

programming and initiatives for Black girls. As a result, the recurring assumption was

that the pattern and impact for Black boys were also applicable to Black girls. Morris

does not argue that research about Black boys should stop, but rather, research should

also prioritize the experiences of Black girls so as to serve them better:

> While the conditions of Black males are certainly worthy of substantial
>
> investment, centering only the Black male condition has presented a zero-sum
>
> philanthropic dilemma, where private and public funding resources have
>
> prioritized in their portfolios a number of efforts to improve the conditions of
>
> Black males without consideration for Black females, who share schools,
>
> communities, resources, homes, and families with these males. (p. 9)

Policy actors can utilize available research-based interventions that specifically support

Black boys. As those programs and interventions grow, Black girls' experiences are often

overshadowed and unintentionally ignored. This is an example of how if nuanced

research is not produced, paradigms used to study Black boys will be unwittingly applied in the same way to their female counterparts (Welch et al., 2012). In addition, policymakers will not have enough evidence-based interventions to pull from for Black girls.

Morris argues that this gap in research is stunting the progress in *informing the advocacy agenda*. In order for policy actors to work on behalf of Black girls, research must continue. Morris held that scholarship about Black girls from a diverse set of geographic areas will help account for the unique regional and state norms and will be fundamental, making progress with the pursuit of justice. Morris also explains that culturally-competent female-responsive research must prioritize "the dismantling of policies that criminalize Black girls for noncriminal behavior, such as violating dress codes, refusing to produce identification in school, or using profanity with a teacher (p. 10). This report did not produce any new data on the overrepresentation about Black girls, but the purpose of this article was to voice a concern- lack of research on Black girls and the serious implications of such an occurrence; this was a call to action for scholars, a call that few took up in the upcoming years.

In "Black Girls and School Discipline the Complexities of Being Overrepresented and Understudied," Annamma et al. (2016) used Denver public schools as a representation of the larger ways in which urban schools perpetuate *intersectional* violence against Black girls. Annamma et al., utilized Critical Race, Critical Race Feminism, and a Critical discourse Theories. This article employed mixed method

research to investigate the experiences of Black girls. Results from their multivariable analysis suggested that although Black girls were referred to the office for the same offenses as their non-Black peers they were punished more harshly. In line with current literature, the article's qualitative analysis found that Black girls were more likely to face exclusionary punishment for subjective offenses based solely on the judgment of school personnel.

This article highlighted the importance of counter-narratives, as part of the theoretical frameworks, to tell the stories from marginalized people from their perspective in their own socio-cultural context (Harper, 2015). U.S. cultural/historical context has forced "young women of color . . . to learn to be assertive, take initiative, and show fortitude in the face of historical and contemporary racism" (Collins, 1991, p. 22). The people responsible for administering punishment for Black girls often have a limited understanding of how race, racism, and gender affects their lives. Annamma et al. (2016) recommended teachers and school personnel to participate in professional development that would inform and train them on "understanding both historical and contemporary racism, equity, and power" (p. 23). Also, they charged researchers to account for school-related factors such as school-specific discipline ideologies, codes of conduct, as well as students' "access to culturally responsive instruction, and the availability of prevention or intervention programs" (p. 24).

This was reflected in Morris and Perry's (2017) study, arguing that school discipline is a powerful tool that perpetuates inequality in schools. Morris and Perry

investigated Black girls educational experiences and how they experience school discipline in comparison to their female peers by using Kentucky's School Discipline Study (KSDS). The results from their study were situated within an Intersectionality framework. Their study results found significant interactions between race and gender for school discipline. Majority of infractions faced by Black girls are for offenses at the discretion of their teachers and administrators, and those punishments are linked to standard white patriarchal assumptions of femininity.

Hines-Datiri & Carter Andrews's (2017), "The effects of zero tolerance policies on Black girls: Using critical race feminism and figured worlds to examine school discipline" also utilize critical theories to study Black girls and school discipline. Both authors argue that a critical framework is necessary to examine the complex experiences of Black girls' combined experiences with racial and gender inequality, specifically, under the implementation zero tolerance policies. Typically, research studies related to racialized discipline disparities center Black boys as the focal point of discussion (Hines-Datiri & Andrews, 2017). The article holds that this practice conceals negative outcomes for Black girls in P-12 settings, and it does not give a full picture of disparities against Black youth.

Critical theories are useful tools for exploring systemic issues and disparities, but those frameworks are not often utilized as effectively when analyzing what works. When scholars employ critical theories, it is from a problem-focused stance, and the solutions comprise a small section of the study or article. Focusing on the issue is extremely

96

important in the beginning phases of research, but examining solutions are equally as important.

Positive Psychology

As an advocacy scholar, this study will do more than corroborate existing issues. This is particularly important in a field such as education policy. Learning what *does* work will be an extremely important component in improving the wellbeing of students. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), holds that "psychology is not just the study of pathology, weakness, and damage; it is also the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is broken; it is also nurturing what is best" (p. 284). Positive Psychology was created to add another important focus in psychology. This approach could have a great deal of utility in education policy. The field of education works toward promoting equity and in doing so is often focused on problematizing accepted norms in education. The downfall is that much of scholarship in this field tends to be from a deficit perspective. This lens is grounded in the belief that it is important to study "what makes life worth living deserves its own field of inquiry within psychology, at least until that day when all of psychology embraces the study of what is good along with the study of what is bad" (Peterson, 2006, p. 6; Peterson & Park, 2003).

Although this *phrasing of thought* is not unique, Positive Psychology was formally termed in 1998 by Martin Seligman. Peterson, Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi, and contemporary scholars in that field pioneered a new platform in psychology by focusing on the positive. The foundational assumption is that the good in people's lives is just as

97

worthy of study. Peterson explained that "positive psychology is the scientific study of what goes right in life, from birth to death and at all stops in between" (Peterson, 2006, p. 4). Positive Psychology does not discount the valuable utility of critical theories; however, the field should continue to grow and explore multiple facets in understanding the human experience.

Positive psychology counters the pessimistic limitations found in coercive environments. It encompasses optimism and a propensity toward optimistic outcomes as an alternative to the traditional negative foci found in deficit frameworks prevalent in educational research" (Beard, 2015, p. 10). In education policy, scholars typically approach research from a problem-centered approach, and this paper will contribute to literature by exploring how critical theories and Positive Psychology could work collaboratively to improve the educational experiences of Black girls in urban public schools. Black students have historically been studied from a deficit victim-centered perspective in education, with impacts affecting schooling experiences and ultimately quality of life (Beard, 2019). It is important to utilize other perspectives to move away from "deeply entrenched deficit perspectives continuing to negatively suppress achievement gains and life opportunities among marginalized populations" (Beard, 2015, p. 5).

Psychology has begun answering this question in studies on alternative models of discipline for Black girls. Aston et al.'s (2018) *Promoting sisterhood: The impact of a culturally focused program to address verbally aggressive behaviors in Black girls*

98

investigates positive outcome interventions for Black girls. Their work corroborated the need for more research about evidence-based school interventions specifically geared towards Black girls. Black girls are often faced with the burden with disproving stereotypes while they fight to advocate for equal treatment from teachers, which is known as stereotype threat (Aston et al., 2018, p. 50). This negatively translates into Black girls' academic achievement and perceptions of the classroom and school climate.

The premise of this study is based on literature that Black girls counteract negative stereotypes most effectively by connecting to their racial identity. Scholars in this study conducted a single subject, multiple baseline study where female participants participated in an Afrocentric intervention, Sisters of Nia. The study results comprised of visual analyses, "percentage of nonoverlapping data and Tau-U all show that the Sisters of Nia intervention led to a significant reduction in verbally aggressive behavior for all four participants" (Aston et al., 2018, p. 50). The findings in this study were framed in the Black feminist-womanist frameworks. Their results highlighted significant decreases in the number of verbal altercations for students participating in the Sisters of Nia. They urged future psychologists to be trained in and to create more culturally based interventions. The latter part of the paper highlights *why* it is important. Scholars have to investigate what works for Black girls for the creation of effective interventions and its implement in education policy.

Linkins et al.'s (2015) *Through the lens of strength: A framework for educating the heart* engaged Peterson's Positive Psychology work to expand upon the need for a

revised model of character-building curriculum. The article explained how character education is often advertised and how it is marketed to parents and teachers. Linkins et al. (2015) make a case for the Values in Action Paradigm (VIA), in that it moves away from the restrictive ways that building character is imagined in public schools. The article went through the components of the VIA paradigm to character education: "(1) Developing a character strengths language and lens; (2) Recognizing and thinking about strengths in others; (3) Recognizing and thinking about one's own strengths; (4) Practicing and applying strengths; (5) Identifying, celebrating, and cultivating group (classroom, school, etc.) strengths" (p. 67). The main argument from this article was that schools should approach education and form a strengths-based perspective, specifically through the VIA paradigm. Instead of positioning this article in the traditional problem-centered style, this article centers itself in Positive Psychology.

Conclusion

This chapter addressed discretionary offenses' unique role in exacerbating the discipline gap along the lines of race and gender. The majority of exclusionary discipline cases are for discretionary offenses that are moderate or minor levels of severity (Insley, 2001). While there are certainly cases where it is wise to suspend, expel, or refer a student to law enforcement (for example, cases of sexual assault , gun violence, etc.), public schools are routinely exercising extreme disciplinary measures for minor offenses. The punishment does not fit the crime as one considers the negative short- and long-term impacts of exclusionary offenses.

The rise of exclusionary discipline also coincided with a rise in police presence in schools and rises in cases of students being restrained in handcuffs, physically assaulted, arrested, and referred to juvenile facilities by police officers. Scholars have referred to this disturbing phenomenon as the school-to-prison pipeline (Nance, 2015). Monique Morris (2016) nuanced that the school-to-prison pipeline for Black girls, by introducing the "school-to-confinement pipeline." Studies also show that interactions with juvenile justice centers increases the likelihood of future experiences with the justice system in adulthood. When this is coupled with the fact that ex-felons lose much of their citizenship rights (including the right to vote, public assistance, etc.) after serving time in prison, this problem gets even bigger.

School discipline overwhelmingly affects Black students, and Black people are overrepresented in the prison system as well, for both women and men (Alexander, 2012). The school-to-confinement and school-to-prison pipelines contribute to the overpopulation of vulnerable groups in prisons, which are systematically revoking citizenship rights, as promised under the 14th Amendment. The expanse of this problem is quite profound and has significant impacts not only on the student but ultimately our society as a whole.

This study is an advocacy research project investigating a vulnerable and historically overlooked population. It also comes at an opportune time because scholars and policy actors are showing interest in Black girls' experiences. The intention of this study is to influence school discipline policies by raising awareness about discipline

disparities for Black girls. Additionally, this study will also contribute to the literature in two ways: First, by establishing the state of discipline in Ohio. Secondly, by positioning Black girls as experts in consideration of necessary supports to improve their educational experiences.

Scholars must continue investigating this topic to help create a base of evidence for policy actors. Administrators and educators would benefit as they implement racial- and gender-appropriate interventions in schools. Scholars must produce nuanced, actionable, and realistic recommendations useful for policy actors. Positive Psychology is an effective lens through which to accomplish this. By collaborating with Black girls, policy actors can learn what they want and need in order to succeed. Learning from their experiences concerning school discipline, relationships with teachers and currently available resources will support their overall wellbeing. Chapter 2 provided a historical overview of discipline in public schools, the associated issues with current exclusionary punishments in schools, and how Black girls are affected by disparities in school discipline. Chapter 3 will explain the study's research design, research questions, setting, participants, data collection, and data analyses for both qualitative and quantitative components of the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Model

Within the last few years, scholars have begun to expand their analysis of Black girls using mixed methods designs in their analyses on Black girls (Martin & Smith 2017; Morris & Perry, 2017). Mixed methods research "implements qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques in parallel phases or sequentially" (Fay et al., 2010). This research study embraces this approach by using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in search of two larger inquiries. (1) What is the current state of school discipline for Black girls in Ohio? (2) What do Black girls believe are effective ways to mitigate school discipline issues? The quantitative analysis established racially disparate school discipline rates in one Midwestern state. The qualitative analysis investigated perspectives and possible solutions using voices and experiences of Black girls who attend high school within that state.

Thoughtfully incorporating multiple methods is a point of concern for methodologists (Creswell, 2014; Johnson et al., 2004; Yvonne, 2010). For example, Given (2008) explained that "one of the main concerns in mixing methods was to determine whether it was also viable to mix paradigms—a concept that circumscribes an interface, in practice, between epistemology (historically learned assumptions) and methodology" (p. 5). The decision to design a mixed methods research study requires

consideration of various factors. This section will detail some of those considerations, to justify the use of a sequential explanatory mixed methods design for this study.

Greene et al. (1989) explained there are five major rationales for conducting a mixed methods design including triangulation, complementarity, initiation, development, and expansion. With respect to this study, the mixed method analysis evidences the problem and reveals some of the extant issues and goes a step further by examining possible solutions. This rationale aligns best with development, which is described as "using the findings from one method to help inform the other method" (Greene et al., 1989, p. 21). Creswell et al. (2003) furthered the idea of distinguishing specific criteria for the appropriateness of using mixed methods. It is important to decide if the study's purpose is aligned with these typologies (see Figure 6).

Creswell et al.'s (2003) mixed methods handbook compiled typology with the associated relevant design type information: implementation, priority, stage of integration, and theoretical perspectives (see Figure 6). The research designs include: Sequential Explanatory Design, Sequential Exploratory Design, Sequential Transformative Design, Concurrent Triangulation Design, Concurrent Nested (Embedded) Design, and Concurrent Transformative Design. When considering design type, Creswell proposed several qualifying questions to address:

> In what sequence will the qualitative and quantitative data collection be implemented? What relative priority will be given to the qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis? Will an overall theoretical

perspective be used to guide the study? At what stage of the project will the

qualitative and quantitative data be integrated? (Creswell et al., 2003, p. 224)

The next section will consider each of those qualifying design questions supporting the

decision to use a sequential explanatory mixed methods research design.

Figure 6. Types of Mixed Methods Designs

Design type	Implementation	Priority	Stage of integration	Theoretical perspective
Sequential explanatory	Quantitative followed by qualitative	Usually quantitative but can be qualitative or equal	Interpretation phase	May be present
Sequential exploratory	Qualitative followed by quantitative	Usually qualitative but can be quantitative or equal	Interpretation phase	May be present
Sequential transformative	Either qualitative followed by quantitative or quantitative followed by qualitative	Qualitative, quantitative or equal	Interpretation phase	Definitely present (i.e. conceptual framework, advocacy, empowerment)
Concurrent triangulation	Concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative	Preferably equal, but can be quantitative or qualitative	Interpretation or analysis phase	May be present
Concurrent nested	Concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative	Quantitative or qualitative	Analysis phase	May be present
Concurrent transformative	Concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative	Qualitative, quantitative or equal	Usually analysis phase but can be during the interpretation phase	Definitely present (i.e. conceptual framework, advocacy, empowerment)

Note. Mixed methods design. Creswell et al. (2003) in Tashakkori A. and Teddlie C. (eds.) Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research, p. 224. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications. Reprinted with permission of Sage Publications

Sequence of Data Collection. *In what sequence will the qualitative and quantitative data collection be implemented?* Creswell et al.'s (2003) first query addresses when data collection, per methodology, will be collected. It is important to note that within mixed methods studies, data collection can happen simultaneously (concurrent) or separately (sequential). In this study both quantitative and qualitative data collection processes were conducted separately and respectively. Quantitative data was engaged first to establish if school discipline disparities existed within the Midwestern state, as literature would suggest (Insley 2001; Morris, 2015; Skiba et al. 2014; Wun, 2016).

After school discipline disparities were examined using requested statewide data from MDE, the qualitative data was collected to contextualize and provide narratives to the data. Interviews supplied Black girl perspectives (or understandings) while allowing for the examination of possible solutions to issues entangled in school discipline. Therefore, it falls within the established criteria for sequential design. Another factor to consider when selecting the mixed method design is priority of each methodology.

Priority of methodology. Creswell et al. (2013) asked a second qualifying question: *What relative priority will be given to the qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis?* The prioritization of each methodology is an important consideration when selecting an appropriate mixed methods research design. A research study's purpose will not only dictate the sequence of data collection but also how both methodologies are prioritized (Johnson et al., 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006).

Because this study purposed to provide a broad view of Black girls' school discipline experiences and their perspectives for mitigating discipline related issues, quantitative data was prioritized. Prioritizing quantitative methods allowed for the illustration of discipline frequency, rates of occurrence different types of discipline, and most importantly *who* was disciplined the most severely; thus, describing discipline disparities in a Midwestern state. Following the big picture, came the voices that offered contextual insight, and perspectives on this phenomenon. Their interviews provided insights into understanding what could be useful in mitigating the issues related to the discipline disparities, and most importantly, ways to inform school discipline policy. In addition to adding nuance, the narratives also met a level of internal validity by producing extensive description of the issue.

Theoretical Perspective. Creswell's third criteria was guided by the question, *will an overall theoretical perspective be used to guide the study?* Theoretical frameworks are not mandatory components for all mixed methods designs, but it is a necessary element to this study. This study is complex, and it would not be possible to use one overarching guiding theoretical framework. Instead, this mixed methods research study selects appropriate frameworks depending on the context of each methodology. The quantitative uses critical lenses to conceptualize findings, and the qualitative uses a phenomenological inductive approach with a positive psychology lens. This chapter will address those theoretical perspectives along with their associated application.

Internal Validity. Theoretical frameworks not only contextualize the study

bolsters reliability. The quantitative study is largely correlational in design and does not

make causal claims. In general, correlational research is lower in internal validity than

experimental and quasi-experimental designs. However, correlational research designs

tend towards higher external validity. This quantitative study does not have a control

group and the independent variable is not manipulated. This, in turn, means that the

"results are more likely to reflect relationships that exist in the real world" (Chiang et al.,

2015). Each question in the quantitative study utilized an analysis appropriate for the

inquiry with the data (and its limitations in mind). This study included studies with

experimental designs with high internal validity in order to bolster confidence the

findings from the correlational design in chapters 2 and 3. Those converging results

provide evidence that there is a real relationship (Chiang et al., 2015; Picard & Cook,

1984). The strength of this quantitative study rests the nuanced use of statistical modeling

with consideration of the data.

In qualitative research, validity is based on the researcher's credibility

authenticity, criticality, and integrity (Golafshani, 2003). Extensive description provides

the rich thickness of the phenomenon, which aligns with Lincoln and Guba's (1985)

recommendation to establish transferability. Other verification procedures included

triangulating different sources of information, member checking, intercoder agreement,

rich and thick descriptions of the cases, reviewing and resolving disconfirming evidence,

and academic adviser's auditing (Angen, 2000; Creswell 1998; Golafshani, 2003; Lincoln

and Guba 1985). For this study, member checking, audit trail, theory/perspective triangulation, and thick description were all employed, thereby satisfying the established criteria for internal qualitative validity.

Data integration. Logistics of data integration is an often overlooked but crucial consideration in selecting a mixed-methods design. The quantitative component is prioritized and also conducted first, the qualitative acts as the supporting role and is conducted afterwards. The integration of data from both methodologies occurred in the interpretation phase.

> This design is typically characterized by an initial quantitative phase, which is then followed by a qualitative data collection phase. The two methods are integrated during the interpretation phase. Findings from the qualitative study component are used to explain and contextualize the results from the quantitative study component (Kroll & Neri, 2009, p. 41).

The process of integrating data can be quite complicated in mixed methods design and although there are guidelines, the research must have flexibility (Lee & Smith, 2012). Sometimes results from each methodology do not hang together neatly, in these cases there are a variety of alternative approaches. For example, the "diffractive approach to analyzing mixed methods data which involves reading the data across methods while allowing data to noncohere, disintegrate and not reproduce objects of study" (Uprichad & Dawney, 2019, p. 29). In the discussion section, data integration is extensively detailed. In consideration of factors as described, *sequential explanatory mixed methods research*

design was the most appropriate mixed methods research design for the current research study.

Role of the Researcher

Upon successful review of the Midwestern State University's (MSU) Institutional Review Board's (IRB) application process, approval was sought and received from a Midwestern City School District (MCSD) and the Midwestern Department of Education (MDE) to conduct the study. The researcher initiated a collaboration with MDE and acted as a liaison between MDE and MSU to facilitate the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to share school-level data. The researcher also coordinated with an MSU Bridge (college preparatory) program coordinator to schedule focus groups and individual interviews (as approved through IRB). The researcher was also responsible for obtaining all necessary equipment to conduct interviews including purchasing participant incentives, renting the video recorder, tripod, and audio recorder from MSU for the quantitative data collection. The researcher was ultimately responsible for conducting the mixed-method study and disseminating findings to MDE and MSU as well as study participants.

Assumptions

This study was anchored in the belief that Black girls are important policy actors because they are experts in their own experiences and is predicated on the following assumptions:

1. The policy process is an effective tool for engaging educational issues and can provide an important framework for effecting implementation changes in school discipline.

2. School discipline disparities, along the lines of race and gender, can and should be mitigated by policy informed by research

3. Oppressed, underserved, and impacted peoples have the agency *and desire* to create better outcomes for their community and actively work towards that goal using creative methods.

4. Black girls' educational experiences are unique and necessitate nuanced exploration.

5. Black girls are experts in their own experiences and, therefore, key to informing mitigating issues involved in discipline disparities.

<center>**Quantitative Analysis**</center>

Sample

      Data used for the quantitative analysis was provided by MDE (see Table 7).

School and district-level data were suppressed at a denominator of 10. In other words,

schools having fewer than ten students from any given racial (or any other identifier)

group were removed from the dataset to protect their identity. Requested data only

included entries for students who experienced school discipline. Raw data included both

males and females but was split by to allow for the interrogation female students'

discipline occurrences (frequency and reason code). Raw data was for 2018-2019, but the

dataset was split by year and analyzed separately. Some key variables (i.e., race,

typology, etc.) were condensed and recoded into new variables. Chapter 4 provides a

thorough description of data and details each step taken to clean data for the quantitative

analysis.

Table 7. Overview of Data for Female Students

Variables	Number of cases
Schools with unique School ID Code	3456
Districts with unique District ID Code	932
Years	2018 & 2019
Female Enrollment (2018)	18807
Female Enrollment (2019)	19722

Context

The quantitative analysis highlighted extant realities regarding public-school discipline disparities for female high school students in a Midwestern State. Literature indicates that Black girls typically receive higher rates of school discipline and more severe punishments in comparison to their female peers. Empirical studies also show that certain types of punishments are more prevalent amongst Black girls (Bryan et al. 2012; Morris, 2012; Skiba et al., 2014). The following studies demonstrate that Black girls are more likely to experience differential treatment for school discipline. Annamma (2016) conducted a study finding "that even when Black girls are referred to the office for identical behavior as other girls, holding for other identity markers, Black girls are punished more harshly. "This pattern is reinforced by other research that documented similar patterns for all Black students and Black girls, in particular" (Blake et al., 2010, p. 22).

Contemporary studies also examine the severity level of punishments that teachers and administrators assign to students when they misbehave. The study investigated whether or not identifiers such as race, gender, socioeconomic level, etc., impact how severely students are punished. Studies find that Black girls are more likely to be punished for subjective behavior related to their actions being perceived as threatening, disruptive, loud, insubordinate, etc. (Bryan et al. 2012; Morris, 2012; Morris & Perry, 2017; Skiba et al., 2014). Annamma et al.'s (2016) study found that when Black

girls and their non-Black female peers were referred to the office for identical infractions, Black girls received a higher discipline severity level.

Previous studies found that in comparison to white female students who were removed for more objective offenses (smoking, alcohol use, etc.,), Black girls were overwhelmingly removed from school buildings and classrooms due to discretionary, or subjective, offenses (Morris, 2015; Morris, 2012; Okonofua et al, 2016). After establishing the distribution of disciplinary infractions among Black girls and their peers, the current study focused on the codes teachers indicated for removing the girls. Literature shows that Black girls are removed for offenses related to the performance of white femininity. In other words, Black girls are typically removed for being too loud, disruptive, insubordinate, or threatening (Morris 2012; Wun, 2016).

In some ways the current study is slightly modeled after Skiba et al.'s (2016) study entitled, *Parsing disciplinary disproportionality: Contributions of the infraction, student, and school characteristics to out-of-school suspension and expulsion.* Skiba et al.'s study focused on female public-school students in a Midwestern state, with special attention to Black girls. Black girls' rates of discipline occurrences were compared to that of their non-Black female peers. Other racial groups were omitted due to logistical factors. For example, if a significant number of schools have a low population of Asian or Native American, it was removed from the data for more information, see Chapter 2). Despite a few areas of similarities, context of this study, type of data, purpose, and

methods ultimately led to a unique research design. The quantitative section addressed the following guiding hypotheses:

1. Studies find that Back girls receive disproportionate exclusionary discipline practices (EDP) when compared to their non-Black female peers (Morris, 2012). When focusing on female students, do the Black female students receive more EPD compared to other racial groups?

2. Contemporary research studies find that the most prevalent type of misbehavior for Black girls is *insubordination or disruptive behavior* (Morris, 2012). So, what types of misbehavior are most common for each racial group?

3. Exclusionary discipline practices (EDP) have a negative correlational relationship to academic achievement (Annamma et al. 2016; Skiba et al., 2014). So what relationship, if any, exists between the rate of disciplinary occurrences and math and reading proficiency rates among female students?

   H_0: There is no significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency.

   H_1: There is a significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency.

4. It is likely that a student's race may be a significant predictor for determining the severity level of their punishment (Skiba et al., 2014). So, are race and percentage of Black enrollment significant predictors of students' discipline severity levels for female students?

H₀: There is no relationship between race and percentage of Black enrollment on

the severity level of punishment used in schools.

H₁: There is a relationship between race and percentage of Black enrollment on

the severity level of punishment used in schools.

Data Collection

The data collection process commenced spring 2019 and ended fall 2019. At the

beginning of the data request process, the researcher anticipated receiving continuous

student-level data for a Midwestern state. With student level data, the model structure

would nest the misbehavior types within the students who were nested within the schools.

In the end, MDE's research office provided count data at the school and district level.

Those changes necessitated a re-framing of the quantitative research questions and the

modeling used to answer them. Given that student-level data was not available, this study

used a 2-level data structure where schools are nested within districts (See Figure 7). The

school level variables used in the study were *race, percentage of Black enrolled, test*

proficiency, economic disadvantagement, misbehavior type, and *discipline severity level*

and were count rather than continuous.
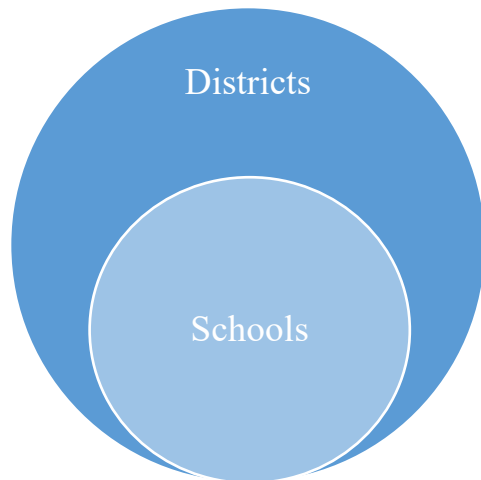
Figure 7. Structure of the Data

Data storage. The school and district-level data are stored securely on an MSU password protected and encrypted platform. The only people designated in the IRB as *research team members* have access to study data.

Data Analysis

The quantitative analysis provided a scope of school discipline for public school students in a Midwestern state. Four research questions provided basis for the hypothesis guiding this quantitative analysis. Research Questions (RQ) 1-2 were descriptive questions. These were addressed without the use of any statistical modeling. The researcher used the pivot table option in Excel to conduct a descriptive analysis on the dataset. RQ1 investigated which racial group received the highest rates of discipline. RQ2 examined the three most prevalent types of misbehavior per racial group. The results and visualizations presented rates of disciplinary occurrences by racial group for female

117

students, per *type* of misbehavior. Chapter 4 provides more detail about the analysis (and its limitations) and provides tables and visualizations of the data.

RQ3 explored the relationship, if any, between rates of disciplinary occurrences and math and reading proficiency rates among Black female students. RQ3 was concerned with the relationship between discipline and academic proficiency. As a result, the analysis comprised of a correlational analysis via SPSS to examine rates of reading and math proficiency and the rates of disciplinary occurrences by racial groups. Finally, RQ4 examined if there were school-level variables that could be predictive of the level of discipline students received. RQ4 was interrogated using a multilevel negative binomial regression analysis in R. This model investigated if particular school level variables had a statistically significant relationship to the outcome variable, severity of discipline. A multilevel negative binomial regression modeling was ideal for this quantitative inquiry because it had the capacity to analyze hierarchical and nested data. Moreover, given that this dataset comprised of count data with an overdispersion in the variance, a multilevel negative binomial regression model was most appropriate model for this question.

The analysis for this question comprised of three models. Chapter 3 presents the unconditional model first. That model did not include any of the school-level variables, it is also known as the null model. The unconditional model was used as a base comparison to other two models. The second model introduced all of the school-level variables (*race, percentage of Black enrolled, test proficiency, economic disadvantagement, misbehavior type,* and *discipline severity level*). It also explored the interaction between discipline

118

severity and *percentage of enrolled Black students*. That model explored the relationship

between the percentage of Black students enrolled in school and the level of severity of

discipline used in schools. The final model also included all school-level variables and

explored the interaction between discipline severity level and *race*. The final model

explored the relationship between students' racial groups and the level of severity of

discipline used in schools. The researcher also created visualizations using the *ggeffects*

and *ggplots* function in R to aid in the interpretation of regression results, namely,

interaction terms. In the visualizations, FTE was changed to 1000, meaning that the plot

is for every 1000 students. Chapter 4 will present the interpretations of those figures and

their accompanying tables in relation to research question four.

Quantitative Methodology Limitations

The study's scope of research focused solely on female public-school students in

one Midwestern state. Previous studies and literature have overwhelmingly focused on

male high school student discipline, while this study intentionally focused exclusively on

female students. The transition from student-level data to school-district level data (as

previously noted) changed the study's scope. When MDE's legal leadership changed they

modified the type of data that would be shared. As a result, student level data was no

longer an option, which then shifted the study from an analysis of individual students to a

school and district-level analysis.

Within the school-level data, another limitation was a reduced dataset size due to

suppression. The dataset provided by MDE has a suppression level at a denominator of

119

10 with the intention of protecting students' identity. In some cases, students may not be reflected in the data even if they attended the school under review. Study data were drawn from all public high schools in a Midwestern state's rural, urban, and suburban settings.

With regard to the actual discipline records data provided by the state, it should be approached with caution. This Midwestern state does not have legal or financial incentives to ensure that school leaders report every case of discipline in their schools. Additionally, there are no accountability measures or evaluations to verify the accuracy of reported cases of school discipline records. Except for in extreme cases, schools have little incentive to report discipline infractions because it tarnishes the reputation of their school. School discipline records are the best depiction of school discipline but may not necessarily be accurate as there is a level of error. Meaning that there is some degree of error in the overview of discipline.

Qualitative Analysis

Sample

The IRB-approved qualitative analysis served as a support and provided a voice to the mixed-methods study (Appendix A). Results from the qualitative analysis are used to create recommendations which in turn could inform policy and promote effective interventions. The sample was composed of 13 Black female high school students in the central region of a Midwestern state. Students were asked to participate in two separate, but consecutive, focus group interviews followed by an individual interview per

participant. However, towards the end of the spring, the Bridge coordinator created an opportunity to work with high school girls participating in the Summer Bridge program. The interviews were conducted in the Midwestern State's academic building, where Bridge programming generally takes place.

An overview of the Bridge program and a snapshot of program target areas provides important context about study's participants. Each participant had to meet eligibility requirements to be selected for the program. The participant selection process comprised of limiting the sample only to include females. All participants were girls of color and all, except one, were Black. Only those who submitted both parental consent and student assent form, as required by IRB, were permitted to participate (see Appendix C & D). Thirteen girls submitted completed consent and assent forms.

Typically focus groups are comprised of 6-12 participants to facilitate the richness of data (Guest et al., 2006). Thirteen participants were acceptable for achieving saturation according to literature on qualitative methodology. "If the goal is to describe a shared perception, belief, or behavior among a relatively homogeneous group, then a sample of twelve will likely be sufficient" (Guest et al., 2006, p. 76). It is also expected that researchers recruit more than necessary just in case there are no-shows (Gibbs, 1997 and Stewart et al., 2007). 13 participants comprised the qualitative data section which falls within the range commonly specified within qualitative research. However, it is important to note that although there are widely accepted ranges of saturation, there is no

standard number. With respect to saturation, the number a of participants may vary per scholar and per study.

The data collection comprised of two separate focus groups, which aligned with qualitative literature. For qualitative research design, a "sample size of two to three focus groups will likely capture at least 80% of themes on a topic—including those most broadly shared—in a study with a relatively homogeneous population using a semi-structured guide" (Namey, 2017, p.16). Although there are no stringent rules about the size and quantity of the groups, the literature does provide helpful guidelines. "Though there are no firm guidelines regarding the number of focus groups, most studies use at least two groups and few studies use more than four groups" (Stewart et al., 2007). The amount of focus group sessions depends on the information needed, the homogeneity of the group, the complexity of questions, etc. (Stewart et al., 2007).

Context

The qualitative sample comprised of 13 girls from a Bridge Program at MSU. All participants were current and or former MDE students. The researcher originally planned to interview students and teachers at several school sites, but because the population and recruitment site changed, study's focus shifted solely on students' perceptions. The researcher was able to collaborate with an MSU Bridge coordinator, who served students enrolled in nearby public schools. Every summer the program did a live-in experience on MSU's campus and the research was able to collect qualitative data during that time. The section below will provide more information about the program and populations it serves.

Bridge Program and the Summer Session. The Bridge program is a federal government TRIO program aimed at addressing the needs of first-generation college-bound students. TRIO outreach programs have student services, including the Bridge program, to help students from historically marginalized groups and disadvantaged backgrounds. The Bridge program, TRIO program, works with students "low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post-baccalaureate programs" (DOE, 2014). The Bridge program is a competitive program that requires an application process. However, because of the target population, there is still diversity in the accepted students' G.P.A.s, involvement in extracurricular activities, involvement with discipline, etc. MSU's Bridge program is particularly dedicated to preparing program participants for higher education and provides year-round tutoring services and standardized test preparation. The Bridge program at Midwestern State University (MSU) shares a specific mission:

> Midwestern State University Bridge program is more than just a program, and it is a mission. Those individuals who are accepted into the program are expected to attend and meet with Bridge program staff during weekly in-school advising sessions, attend Saturday Academy sessions, traveling classroom experiences, cultural events, community service projects, a six-week Summer Institute held on the campus of Midwestern State University, and all other activities sponsored by the program.

Participating students must meet the following requirements to apply for the program: aspiring college-bound high school students who are dedicated to their academic and personal success and believe in the mission statement of the Bridge Program, and they must first-generation and/or low-income college-bound 9th, 10th, and 11th-grade students. This program defines first-generation as a student whose parent and/or guardian does not hold a baccalaureate degree. This program defines low income as an individual whose family's taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level amount. The program specifically targets students who attend or live in designated service areas described on their website. Study participants represented various public and private schools in the central region of a Midwestern State (see Table 8).

Table 8. Demographic "Snapshot" of a Bridge Program's Targeted Demographic

High school Name	Total Enrollment	Student-Teacher Ratio	% of Minority Enrollment	Full-Time Teachers	Free and Reduced Lunch
North	960	16:1	80%	59	85%
South	509	16:1	97%	32	77%
East	820	16:1	95%	48	82%
West	920	20:1	52%	50	85%
Mid-Western City School District	31,616		**79%		

Note. The is representative of 21 high schools. **Higher than Mid-Western State's average of 29%. Based on data from the public-school Review

The use of Bridge program participants was ideal because program participants represented various high schools throughout a Midwestern city. They also represented

various levels of academic achievement and experiences with school discipline. Using the Bridge program eliminated a degree of selection bias, which could have occurred at the school-level if data collection occurred *in* their schools. Also, the participants could speak about their experiences without fear of being heard by their teachers. The program provided opportunities for participants to be truly open about their relationships with teachers, successful resources/interventions, and practices that need improvement or should be stopped altogether. Throughout the spring, the Bridge program's coordinator provided the researcher multiple opportunities for introductions to garner interest, and to share the study's purpose and implications with participants.

Those sessions occurred during their regularly scheduled Saturday meetings. On June 10th, the coordinator provided an opportunity to administer the parent consent and student assent forms. Fortunately, most girls were interested and accepted forms to participate in the study. On June 12th, parental consent and student assent forms were collected from all of the Bridge program girls, except one (parental refusal). The following week participants received copies of the parental/student consent forms for their records (in alignment with IRB requirements). On June 24th, participants received interview questions and objectives for their review before group interviews.

Data Collection

The researcher shared interview questions with participants on June 24th, 2019, a week before interviews. Focus group interviews were conducted on Tuesday, July 2nd and the individual interviews were conducted during the first two days of their Bridge

Program's Summer Institute session from July 8th - 11th. During that week, participants lived in MSU's college dorms as they completed the Bridge program activities. The coordinator of the program was supportive of the study and agreed to build in time for focus group and individual interviews. Each group interview session took approximately 45 minutes. The individual follow-up interviews took an additional 5-20 per participant. They shared ideas on what educators and principals might do to support Black girls facing discipline. School leadership's role in stimulating positive change was the focus of each participant's follow-up interview.

Data storage. The secure data storage process for qualitative data received IRB approval. Only the PI and co-investigator have access to recorded materials and digital notes. Notes were stored online in a private folder only accessible to the PI and co-investigator. The .mp3 recordings were stored in a passkey protected computer, in a private folder only accessible to the PI and co-investigator.

Framework for Interviews. The qualitative methodology's epistemological stance was phenomenological because of its focus on shared commonalities in Black girls' lived experiences (Kroll & Neri, 2009). Phenomenology explores commonalities of a lived experience within a particular group to describe the nature of a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, the qualitative component investigated possible solutions to the phenomenon, using a Positive Psychology lens. Positive Psychology moves away from the predominant deficit-lens assigned to marginalized populations. "Positive Psychology counters the pessimistic limitations found in coercive

126

environments. It encompasses optimism and a propensity toward optimistic outcomes as an alternative to the traditional negative foci found in deficit frameworks prevalent in educational research" (Beard, 2015, p. 5; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

In addition, positioning participants as experts aligned with Chmielewski's (2016) understanding of participatory research as a model that reframes "all participants as co-investigators in a process of collective inquiry and action" (p. 13). The focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews addressed similar questions. Students reflected upon their perceived experiences at school, relationships with teachers/administrators, their schools' relationship with the community, how they imagined effective discipline & supportive resources, and their recommendations for school discipline reform. Additionally, they were asked to share their perceptions of effective resources that could help them feel supported. The qualitative inquiry explored the following guiding questions:

1. What are the girls' perceptions and experiences of school discipline?
2. How do the girls imagine effective school discipline, interventions, resources, or levels of support?

Instrumentation

The semi-structured interview protocol for group and individual interviews were created to explore possible solutions to extant issues in school discipline practices. A few key questions were drafted to frame the conversation, with the expectation that participants would guide the conversation. The researcher ensured that every participant

had an opportunity to speak. The researcher also devised probing questions while being careful not to insert their own personal opinions into the conversation (Stewart et al., 2007). General questions were posed first and then more specific questions were introduced. Examples of the focus group questions (Appendix B provides all interview questions) included:

- Describe your school environment/climate?

- Describe general classroom climate?

- How do the teachers and administrators deal with misbehavior?

- Do you have a counselor?

- Are there people in your school to talk to about major issues going on in your life?

Important questions were asked in the beginning of focus group interview sessions to ensure that participants had time to answer (Stewart et al., 2007). After learning more about their experiences and implementation of discipline at their schools, the researcher asked: If you could speak with an administrator, education policy maker, or teacher, what would you tell them to keep in mind for Black girls when it comes to discipline *and* providing support? This question helped guide participants to consider what things are working and what things they would suggest if given the opportunity to advocate for themselves and their peers.

Study Procedures

Participatory research centering the interviewees as experts in their own experiences was central to both the focus group and individual interviews. The interviews were designed to be semi-structured. Semi-structured creates a middle ground in terms of interviewing which is most ideal for an interviewer who is knowledgeable about a topic but seeks an interview that can provide "detail, depth, and an insider's perspective, while at the same time allowing hypothesis testing and the quantitative analysis of interview responses" (Leech, 2002, p. 665).

The researcher met with one diverse group of Black girls participating in the Bridge program in July 2019 to conduct the Qualitative data collection. That group was ideal because it comprised of multiple Midwestern City High schools, participants varied in levels of academic performance, and participants had different experiences with school discipline. The nature of semi-structured questions allowed participants to guide the flow of questions. The questions were shared with participants a week before the focus group so participants could enter the research with a clear understanding of its intent. The following week, the Bridge coordinator arranged time in their program to accommodate the individual interviews. At the beginning of each interview, participants were informed that they were the experts and could help create better alternatives to school discipline by sharing their experiences. The intent was to explore what they believed were effective interventions and practices that could help them and girls like them. The study compiled

their ideas about how school personnel and scholars should support their needs, especially as they relate to discipline.

Data Analysis

The focus groups were audio and video recorded, and the individual interviews were only audio recorded. Both audio and video recordings were *only* used for transcribing purposes. The audio recordings were professionally transcribed and were transcribed again by the researcher. The researcher worked with the Bridge coordinator so that the study participants could review the transcriptions to confirm that their sentiments were captured (known as member checking). The qualitative data were analyzed using hand-coding as well as Dedoose. Interviews were conducted using a participatory research model. As outlined earlier in the chapter, the girls were viewed as experts. They alone know their own experiences and have a unique take on where scholars should explore further and suggestions innovative solutions or recommendations.

Scholars are not the only experts; in fact, lay people can understand social and institutional forces that impact their lives. Chmielowski (2016) argues that the core, participatory research is when people or groups who are negatively impacted by an issue collectively work to research the issue. In its purest form, "research questions emerge from shared lived experiences, and the group retains control over every phase of a research process—from developing questions and methods to interpreting and using the results as the basis for collective action. In the end, the knowledge is collectively owned

by all who co-created it, not a socially- recognized expert" (p. 15). In reflecting on his collaborative research with Native groups, Field (2008) said that "I realized that the research would never have progressed, whatever my own intentions, if it had not coincided with the ongoing research interests of intellectuals and leaders within the Native communities I ended up working with, among whom there were several agendas and goals that were compatible with my own, which were and remain very open" (p. 43). The foundation of both scholars' frameworks is in alignment with an activist research stance.

The qualitative section required extensive knowledge on the subject of Black girls and school discipline. Even after building a rich review of literature, another crucial component involved centering their *experience*. Only a Black girl currently in public schools can speak to the current-day experience of being a Black girl in U.S. public high schools. Therefore, Black girls occupy an important space in the study as the only *current* expert in their experience. Having current first-hand experiences with and understanding of the good and bad of school discipline implementation could provide more effective suggestions to mitigate school discipline disparities. When solving major policy issues, the people most impacted are often left out of discussions. Those impacted by an educational policy issue, have the ability to articulate their problems and to suggests solutions. They are the foremost experts on how issues impact their life and are also an important key to finding solutions.

Qualitative Analysis Limitations

The qualitative analysis focused exclusively on Black female high school students from one Midwestern School district. The sample did not represent a statistically representative sample of Black girls in a Midwestern state. The sample did, however, represent an array of diversities along the lines of discipline, academics, and school type. Nevertheless, the sample is still homogenous along the lines of race and gender. The qualitative piece focused on the Black female high school students' perspectives. Thus, teachers, parents, and school administrators were not interviewed. Future research would include teachers' and administrators' perspectives as a rich addition to the study.

Including parents' voices, in particular, would have been an important addition. It could have been compared to the students' perspectives to investigate if parents and their children are in agreement about how positive change could happen in their schools. The qualitative component also focused on high school students, and the quantitative data focused on all levels. It would be beneficial to investigate the perspectives of younger students. Younger populations are often avoided in education policy research because level of protection due to their vulnerability under IRB standards. But future work incorporating the insights from those populations could provide a unique lens.

Conclusion

Chapter 3 provided a brief historical overview of discipline in public schools, the issues with current exclusionary punishments in schools, and how Black girls are

impacted by disparities in school discipline. One of the key points was how discretionary offenses, exacerbated by zero tolerance policies, contribute to most cases of exclusionary punishments for Black girls. Moreover, exclusionary punishments do *more* harm, than good as evidenced from previous literature students' perspective as in accordance with other empirical findings. Research must continue about Black girls' unique experiences in schools so that policymakers and school administrators can create systems to address their specific needs better. Most of the time students are removed from schools for moderate or minor infractions, the aftermath of which have short- and long-term impacts negatively impacting their academic journey and ultimately their life experiences. What we realize is that students who experience exclusionary punishments, for example, are more likely to interact with the juvenile justice system as early as just within the following year. Also, zero tolerance policies and implementation measures have increased city police presence in schools and for many students, infractions that would have earned them lesser penalties like detention may have more severe disciplinary repercussions.

> While it may be justifiable to suspend, expel, or refer a student to law
> enforcement under some circumstances (for example, when a student harms
> another student with a dangerous weapon or sexually assaults another member of
> the school community), schools routinely invoke such extreme disciplinary
> measures for much less serious offenses. Many have referred to this disturbing
> trend of schools directly referring students to law enforcement or creating the

133

conditions under which students are more likely to become involved in the justice

system—such as suspending or expelling them—as the —school-to-prison

pipeline. (Nance, J. P., 2015, p. 1064)

The school-to-prison (S2P) pipeline emerged with the adoption of zero-tolerance policies

and ideologies in public schools. In *PUSHOUT,* Morris (2015) explained that for Black

girls, that phenomenon is better described as a "school-to-confinement pipeline" (S2C)

because girls end up in a variety of institutions in addition to juvenile justice. We also

know that interaction with those institutions increases the likelihood of future experiences

with the justice system in adulthood. Moreover, a person loses much of their citizenship

rights (including the right to vote, public assistance, etc.) after serving time in prison, the

problem gets even bigger. S2C and S2P overwhelmingly affect Black students, and Black

people are overrepresented in the prison system as well, for both women and men

(Alexander, 2012). As police force is overused in schools due to zero tolerance

ideologies, students are moved out of school into the justice system. School pipelines

contributes to a larger issue systematically removing students of color's citizenship

rights, promised under the 14th Amendment.

Punitive school discipline is expansive and has significant impacts on students but

American society as a whole. Schools must always be student-centered. Creating an

environment conducive of learning should extremely importance for schools and has

been included in educator evaluation for many years. Removing "problem" students from

classrooms or school buildings is seemingly a quick fix toward order but with disastrous

consequences for children. Exclusion should be utilized as a last resort. Instead of

training teachers on implicit biases, moving towards discipline methods with a restorative

model seems to be most promising for the most vulnerable students. Scholars must

continue to focus on Black girls in Pre-K through secondary education and explore their

experiences under zero tolerance. Policymakers must seek out robust and burgeoning

research to create evidence-based programs that better support Black girls in their

academic experiences. Finally, public schools as a whole must move away from harsh

punitive methods towards a model of rehabilitation and restoration. But what do we do

now?

Voices of the Unheard: Black Girls and School Discipline, is an important

actionable research study on a vulnerable and historically overlooked population. It

comes at an opportune time because scholars and policy-actors are showing increased

interest in Black girls' experiences. The study was designed to influence school discipline

policies by not only raising awareness of discipline disparities for Black girls but also

offering policy considerations as Black girls offer their perspectives and thoughts

regarding their experiences and discipline. The study contributes to literature in two

ways. First, great effort was taken to establish the state of discipline in one Midwestern

state. Second, here, Black girls are positioned as experts in consideration of necessary

supports to improve their educational experiences.

Continued scholarly investigation of school discipline topic helps create a base of

evidence for policy actors. Administrators and educators would benefit as they implement

gender and developmentally appropriate interventions in schools. Future research should produce interdisciplinary, high-quality qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodology research. In turn, it would stimulate more nuanced, actionable, and descriptive recommendations useful for policymakers, administrators, and educators. By connecting with Black girls, we can learn what they want and need to succeed. Learning from their experiences concerning school discipline, relationships with their teachers, the resources currently available further supports their overall wellbeing.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents findings for this study's quantitative and qualitative research inquiries. Given the scope of this study, it was important to first understand the larger problem of school discipline for this Midwestern state. The quantitative research established the education policy problem by examining how punitive discipline inequitably impacts Black girls in comparison to their non-Black female peers. By including the study participant's perspectives the qualitative analysis, then explored possible policy and practice considerations to address issues related to exclusionary discipline inequities. In addition, the qualitative methodology provided depth through Black girls' voices by adding nuance to the study that could not be accomplished using quantitative, alone. Therefore, this study required both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Chapter 4 presents the quantitative methodology first. The quantitative portion will re-introduce the hypotheses, specify the sample, data collection process, frameworks, statistical methods used to complete the analysis, and findings by the research question. The qualitative component will state the research questions, present the sample, data collection process, frameworks, the methodology used to complete the analysis, and findings by each research question.

Quantitative Methodology

Contemporary studies on Black girls and school discipline find that Black girls are more likely to receive harsher punishments than their non-Black female peers (Insley, 2001; Morris, 2015; Wun, 2016). In addition, those studies find that Black girls are more likely to be removed from school due to moderate misbehaviors related to disruption and disobedience (Morris, 2015; Okonofua et al., 2016). These punishments are considered to be subjective because they are determined at the discretion of the individual (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995) teacher or administrator. Literature evidences that discretionary punishments are the largest contributors to the school discipline gap because implicit biases impact how teachers and educators to discipline their students (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Okonofua et al., 2016).

Research also demonstrates that schools with higher percentages of African American students appear to use more punitive measures and fewer supportive interventions for school discipline (Skiba et al., 2014). "Schools with higher Black enrollments were more likely to have higher rates of exclusionary discipline, court action, and zero tolerance policies, even after controlling for school levels of misbehavior and delinquency" (Skiba et al., 2002, p. 646; Welch & Payne, 2010). Research findings on exclusionary punishments' impact on students provide overwhelmingly negative academic outcomes (Allman & Slate, 2011; Insley, 2001; McIntosh et al., 2014; Monroe, 2005). As a result, investigated in this study was whether this Midwestern state's public-

school discipline conditions were similar to other states, as presented in contemporary literature. The study examined the following research inquiries:

1. Studies find that Back girls receive disproportionate exclusionary discipline practices (EDP) when compared to their non-Black female peers (Morris, 2012). When focusing on female students, do the Black female students receive more EPD compared to other racial groups?

   H_0: Student discipline for female students is equally distributed across races.

   H_1: Student discipline for female students is *not* equally distributed *but disproportionate* across races.

2. Contemporary research studies find that the most prevalent type of misbehavior for Black girls is *insubordination or disruptive behavior* (Morris, 2012). So, what types of misbehavior are most common for each racial group?

3. Exclusionary discipline practices (EDP) have a negative correlational relationship to academic achievement (Annamma et al. 2016; Skiba et al., 2014). So what relationship, if any, exists between the rate of disciplinary occurrences and math and reading proficiency rates among female students?

   H_0: There is no significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency.

   H_1: There is a significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency.

4. It is likely that a student's race may be a significant predictor for determining the severity level of their punishment (Skiba et al., 2014). So, are race and percentage of Black enrollment significant predictors of students' discipline severity levels for female students?

   H_0: There is no relationship between race and percentage of Black enrollment on the severity level of punishment used in schools.

   H_1: There is a relationship between race and percentage of Black enrollment on the severity level of punishment used in schools.

Sample

The dataset used in the quantitative analysis was provided by the Midwestern department of education. The data request process started in fall 2018 and ended fall 2019. For the majority of that period, the researcher and MDE worked together to obtain de-identified student-level data for females in the state. When the legal leadership changed in 2019, modification needed to be made with respect to the data MDE would ultimately share. This study used a 2-level data structure where schools were nested within districts. The school level variables were race, percentage of Black enrolled, test proficiency, economic disadvantagement, misbehavior type, and discipline severity level and were count rather than continuous. Table 9 shows an overview of the dataset provided by MDE. This data only represents schools and districts with reported cases of school discipline. The data comprises 2018 and 2019 school years. It contains 3,456 schools with unique School IDs and 932 districts with unique District Codes.

The dataset only includes information for schools that reported cases of discipline. In addition, the data only included male and female students who received discipline. The study's analyses were conducted using *only* female students receiving school discipline. The dataset included full-time equivalent enrolled (FTE) female students receiving punishment for 2018 (18,807) and 2019 (19,722) (see Table 9). Enrolled students are defined as "those pupils who are attending school, those who have attended school during the current school year and are absent for authorized (excused) reasons, scholarship students of pilot project districts, and those students with disabilities currently receiving home instruction" (ODE, 2018, p. 12)

Table 9. Overview of MDE Data

Variables	Number
Schools with unique School ID Code	3456
Districts with unique District ID Code	932
Years	2018 & 2019
Female Enrollment (2018)	18,807
Female Enrollment (2019)	19,722

MDE suppressed the data at a denominator of 10. This means that schools and districts with less than 10 students from a particular identifier group, such as race, were left out to protect their identity. The data does not represent every student receiving discipline because some were removed in the data creation process. While this dataset is not necessarily representative of every school in the state or every student receiving

discipline, because of the large sample size, the data does set provide a good

representation of this Midwestern state school discipline. The data included information

for both male and female students in the Midwestern state's public schools. For this study

however, only selected cases related to female students were relevant. The dataset

comprised of various academic levels, including Elementary, High School, Junior High,

Middle School, and Ungraded (see Table 10). Table 10 shows the total amount of schools

per each academic level for 2018 and 2019. The total number varies per year because the

dataset only represents schools with reported cases of school discipline.

Table 10. Total Numbers of Schools by Level and School Year

School Level	2018	2019
Elementary	6357	6379
High School	7385	7774
Junior High	517	547
Middle School	4530	4994
Ungraded	18	28

Table 10 shows that the total amount of schools within each school level per year. This

only represents schools with reported cases of school discipline. MDE's school discipline

dataset disaggregated school-level variables for race and gender (see Table 11). Male

students were selected out for the purposes of the study, and all racial groups in the data

were included. Because the MDE school-level data and the variables were count, there

were some limitations. For example, one school may indicate that three students received

discipline and there were five unique cases of *disobedience or disruption.*

There is no way to determine the number of discipline cases per student. This

shortcoming will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. Table 11 also has

varying totals for female students for 2018 and 2019. As with other components of the

dataset, totals only represent received cases of discipline. This means that totals in Table

11 do not represent the total number of female students, by race. It only represent female

students who received school discipline for 2018-2019.

Table 11. Number of Female Public-School Students Receiving Discipline by Race

Race	2018	2019
White	8488	9027
Black	6118	6124
Hispanic	1712	1871
Other	2489	2700
Total	18807	19722

Note. Other as a category is comprised of Asian and Multiracial students.

Summary of Data Collection

The structure and content of each dataset provided were unique and required

manipulation before the merging process. There was not one key variable (i.e., School

ID) that connected the separate dataset. In addition, some data sets were for both years,

while others were only for one. Thus, an extensive data cleaning and merging process had

to be completed in order to work with the data. All data were manually entered in excel

for proper formatting. For example, the School ID and District ID had to be reformatted so that each ID had six digits. Other variables changed into their proper categories, such as numeric, string, etc., variables.

After the data was restructured in excel, it was exported to SPSS. Before each merge, the key variable, School ID or District ID, was sorted by ascending order. All of the variables were then checked to ensure that their associated types (string, numeric, etc.) were correct. After reformatting and restructuring the data in SPSS, the merging process required multiple steps and to effectively combine the data. Given the content in each of the datasets, it would not have been possible to have one large dataset. Therefore, the merging process resulted in two datasets. The merging process was initially conducted by the researcher, and two members of her IRB-approved research team conducted the same merging process to verify results.

Merging. The merging process started with identifying files with the lowest denominator variables (race/ethnicity, gender, assessment data, enrollment, and discipline) for 2018 and 2019. MDE data contained all grade levels. For the assessment data, this meant that some schools did not have test scores at all or only had test scores for certain subjects. This was because some grade levels were not required to administer certain state subject tests.

Recoding Variables. The race/ethnicity variables and the discipline type variables were re-coded into new variables. In alignment with previous studies on school discipline disparities, the comparison the racial group is white female students receiving

144

in-school-suspension (Okonofua et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2014). The race/ethnicity was re-coded as, white = 0, Black = 1, Hispanic = 2, Asian = 3, and Multiracial = 4. Ultimately, the race/ethnicity variables were condensed to white = 0, Black = 1, Hispanic = 2, Other = 3. Similar to literature investigating racial disparities in schools, certain race/ethnic groups were left out (Skiba et al., 2014). In those studies, groups were omitted because there was not enough data on a particular group, causing issues in the data. Typically, either only Black and white students are examined or Black, white, and Hispanic (Okonofua et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2014).

The original dataset included the following discipline types: Expulsion = 1, Out-of-school Suspension = 2, In-school Suspension = 3, In-School Alternate Discipline Class/Program/Building = 4, Invalid code, allowed to come into EMIS starting in FY12 = 5, Emergency Removal by District Personnel = 6, Removal by a Hearing Officer = 7, and Invalid code, allowed to come into EMIS starting in FY12 = 8. For the study, the first three discipline types were the only ones of interest, in-school-suspension, out-of-school-suspension, and expulsion. The three types were then re-coded by ascending order of severity. The recoded discipline types were as in-school-suspension = 1, out-of-school-suspension = 2, and expulsion = 3.

Findings

Research Inquiry 1

Studies find that Back girls receive disproportionate exclusionary discipline practices (EDP) when compared to their non-Black female peers (Morris, 2012).

When focusing on female students, do the Black female students receive more

EPD compared to other racial groups?

This inquiry investigates which group of students received the highest proportion of

school discipline cases. Understanding the highest *proportion* of school discipline is

different than the highest total counts. The proportion is the value of a variable in relation

to the whole. This seemingly simple question becomes more difficult when the outcome

variable is count. Given the content of the data, it is not quite possible to answer with

100% accuracy. If one school has six cases of discipline and three unique counts of

students for those offenses, there is no way to decipher which students may have

accounted for one or most of the cases. The best alternative for this question was to use

average percent of disciplinary outcomes.

Even so, that approach had limitations. For example, this dataset had a case

where one Asian student, enrolled in a school with very few Asian students, committed

multiple disciplinary occurrences for a particular offense, so the discipline proportions for

Asian students was abnormally high (and not representative of data). Therefore, instead

of only showing the average percent of discipline occurrences per racial group, these

findings will also present the total counts of school discipline occurrences by racial

group. The percentage of discipline occurrences was calculated by dividing the counts of

discipline occurrences by the racial group's full-time-equivalent (FTE). The findings

from the average percent of discipline occurrences per racial group show that Black

females have the highest average percent.

Table 12. Average Percent of Discipline Occurrences for Female Students 2019

	Total Disciplinary Occurrences	Sum of Full-Time-Enrollment	Percentage of Discipline Occurrences
White	39,385	553,474.4	7%
Hispanic	5,788	38,456.0	15%
Black	58,375	128,054.8	46%

Black female students have the highest percentage of disciplinary occurrences, followed by Hispanic and then white female students. For a more acute view of the results, Table 12 shows that Black female students' average percent of discipline occurrences was 46%. It also shows that Hispanic female students' average percent of discipline occurrences was 15%. White female students' average percent of discipline occurrences was 7%.

Figure 8 is a bar graph displaying the overall average percent of discipline occurrences per race. Black female students' average percent of discipline occurrences, *black shaded column*, was 46%. It also shows that Hispanic female students' average percent of discipline occurrences, *dark grey shaded column*, was 15%. White female students' average percent of discipline occurrences, *light grey shaded column*, was 7%.
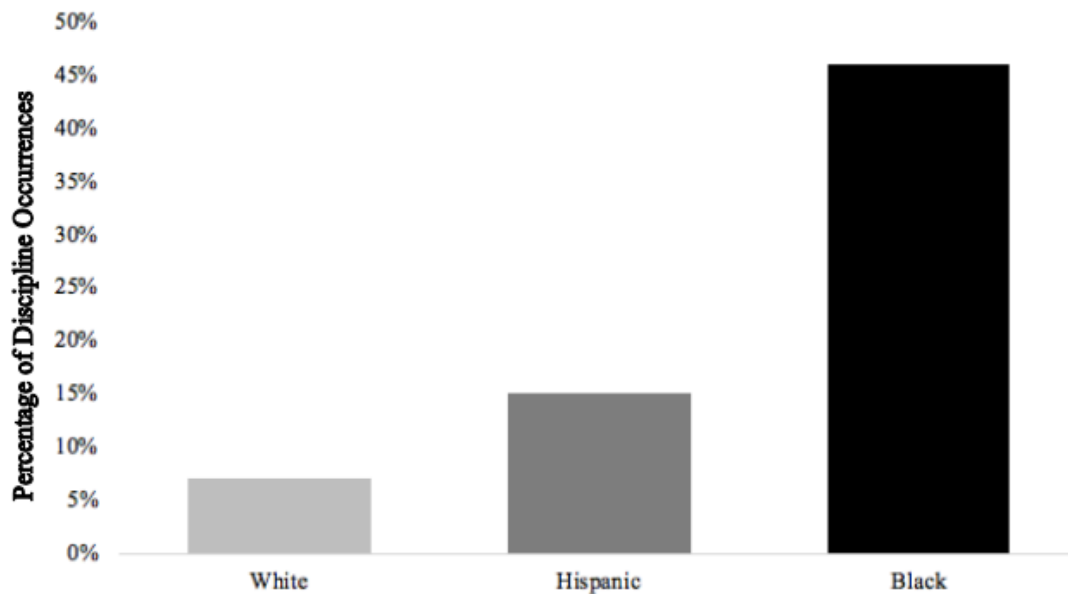
Figure 8. Average Percent of Female Discipline Occurrences Per Race

Typically, white students have higher numbers of school discipline occurrences because they represent the majority of the enrolled population (Insley, 2001). But when reviewing the proportion of discipline for each racial group, the disparities become clearer (DOE, 2014). In the case of this data, the average percentage and total counts of discipline occurrences show that discipline is not distributed equally across race.

Research Inquiry 2

Contemporary research studies find that the most prevalent type of misbehavior for Black girls is *insubordination or disruptive behavior* (Morris, 2012). So, what types of misbehavior are most common for each racial group?

Figure 9 shows all of the misbehavior types indicated in the MDE dataset. Literature evidences that discretionary punishments, *disobedience* and *disruption,* are the most prevalent offense for Black girls (Morris, 2015; Morris, 2012; Skiba et al., 2014). The average percent of discipline occurrences were used to determine what types of misbehaviors were most prevalent for a racial group. Appendix E presents the results for all racial groups. Note that the graph in Appendix E will show an odd skew in Asian students for *false alarm/bomb threat*. This is odd for a couple reasons. First, every racial groups' most prevalent misbehavior is *disobedience*, except for Asian students. Second, this offense is very severe and not typically associated with Asian students in school discipline literature (DOE, 2014). Upon review of the data, there was one school with a small number of Asian students but also had high numbers of this particular offense. This cause the skewed data and is not representative of the discipline data for most Asian students. In other words, the extreme outlier impacted the mean percent of discipline occurrences for Asian students.
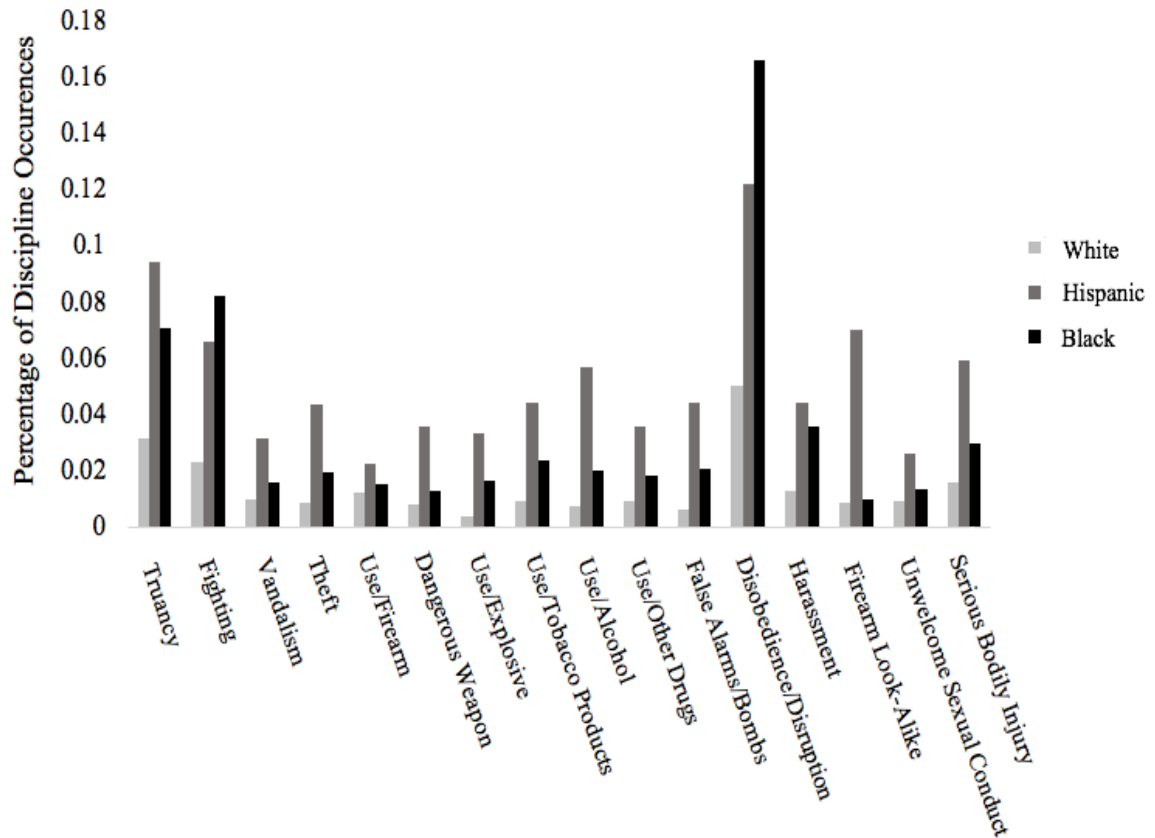
Figure 9. Most Prevalent Types of Misbehavior for Female Students

Figure 9 shows that in addition to *disobedience* being the most prevalent for Black girls, it is the most prevalent for white and Hispanic female students. The top three misbehaviors for Black girls are disobedience (17%), fighting (9%), and truancy (7%), respectively. Those types of misbehavior are commonly associated with Black girls in the literature (Aston et al., 2018; Morris, 2015; Morris, 2012). The findings for research inquiry 2 suggests that there may be a relationship between female students' race and the prevalence of misbehavior type.

Research Inquiry 3

Exclusionary punishments have a negative correlational relationship to academic achievement (Annamma et al. 2016; Skiba et al., 2014). So what relationship, if any, exists between the rate of disciplinary occurrences and math and reading proficiency rates among Black female students? H_0: There is no relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency. H_1: There is a significant and negative relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency.

The correlational results show that there is a significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency. The accepted guidelines for determining the strength of a correlation are following, small relationships are for Cohen's d is ±0.1, moderate is ±0.3, and large is ±0.5 (Thalheimer & Cook, 2002). Table 13 shows that all of the relationships are negative and all are statistically significant at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels.

Table 13. Relationships Between Discipline and Standardized Test Proficiency

Race	English Proficiency Rates	Math Proficiency Rates
White	-0.303[**]	-0.278[**]
Black	-0.104[**]	-0.099[**]
Hispanic	-0.045[*]	-0.054[**]

[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
[*]. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

This means that as the number of discipline occurrences increases, then the rate of proficiency in English and Math standardized tests decreases. However, the relationships between students receiving discipline and its relationship to standardized test proficiency are small to moderate.

Studies investigating the relationship of discipline to academic achievement typically find compelling results (Insley, 2001; Skiba et al., 2014). While the small to moderate effect sizes for this study findings may be a result of the structure of the count data, they still support the fact that receiving discipline has a negative impact on academic outcomes. Also, standardized test scores may also not be the most effective measure of academic achievement. Another point of note, white students had the strongest negative relationship between receiving school discipline and academic achievement. For white girls, there is a -0.303 relationship between receiving school discipline and English proficiency rates. This means that receiving school discipline has a negative moderate effect on academic achievement for white girls. For white girls, there is a -0.278 relationship between receiving school discipline and Math proficiency rates. Table 13 shows that the Cohen's d effect size of the relationship for receiving discipline and academic outcomes is stronger for white girls in comparison to their Black and Hispanic female peers.

For Black girls, there is a -0.104 relationship between receiving school discipline and English proficiency rates and a -0.099 relationship for Math proficiency rates. The Cohen's d effect size of the relationship for receiving discipline and academic outcomes

is small for Black girls. While there is a statistically significant relationship for black girls, their white counterparts is minimally stronger. Hispanic girls have a -0.045 relationship between receiving school discipline and English proficiency rates and a -0.054 for Math proficiency rates. They also have the smallest Cohen's d effect size in comparison to their white and Black female peers. Possible considerations for these outcomes in the context of the larger educational policy issue will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. Findings for this question suggested that the null hypothesis should be rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis; there is a significant and negative relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency.

Research Inquiry 4

Exclusionary discipline practices (EDP) have a negative correlational relationship to academic achievement (Annamma et al. 2016; Skiba et al., 2014). So what relationship, if any, exists between the rate of disciplinary occurrences and math and reading proficiency rates among female students? H_0: There is no significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency. H_1: There is a significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency.

This question was analyzed using a negative multilevel binomial regression analysis in the statistical software, R. The purpose of this analysis was to investigate if there was a

statistical significance in the interaction between the *percentage of Black students*

enrolled in a school and school discipline. It also investigated if there was a statistical

significance in the interaction between *race* and school discipline the following models

were used to explore the fourth research inquiry. The first model presented is the

unconditional model (see Table 14). There were no school level predictors in this model.

The unconditional model served as the model to determine the best fit. For negative

multilevel binomial regressions, the Akaike information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian

information criterion (BIC) indices act as measures of best fit. The smaller the AIC and

BIC indices , the better the fit. For the null model below, the AIC is 88532.5, and the BIC

is 88570.9. This model will be compared to the preceding models.

Table 14. Unconditional Model Discipline Severity Levels

	Estimate	Exp. Values	Std. Error	z value
Discipline Severity Levels				
(Intercept)	-3.27 ***	0.04	0.03	-121.3
Out-of-School Suspension	-0.31 ***	0.73	0.02	-13.32
Expulsion	-1.92 ***	0.15	0.07	-28.46
Variance		0.72		
Standard Deviation		0.85		
AIC		88532.5		
BIC		88570.9		

*** p < .001; *p < 0.05 (two tailed test).

Note : Intercept represents the base line measure, in-school suspensions for female students. Exp. refers to exponentiated values. Akaike information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) variables act as measures of best fit.

Only the outcome variables are listed in the unconditional model (see Table 14). This model is used as comparison, so the latter two models' variance, standard deviation, and fit indices will be compared. If the following models are better fit, then those variables will have smaller numbers. Also, the interpretation is contingent on the scale of the predictors. When the predictor is categorical, the difference is between 0 (the reference group, e.g., in-school suspension) and 1 (the other group, e.g., out-of-school suspension). When the predictor is continuous (school level variables) the difference is in 1-unit change of the predictor.

For the school discipline severity level, *in-school suspension (intercept),* is significant at the p<.001 level in this model. The exponentiated coefficients give the ratio by which the dependent variable changes for a unit change in an explanatory variable; that is, the effect is presented on a multiplicative scale. The intercept (-3.27) is the log expected rate of punishment for the reference group, female students who received in-school suspension, in the model. The significance for the intercept means that the coefficient was significantly different than zero, which we would expect it to be. The estimate (-3.27), exponentiated = .04, indicates that for female students, the average rate of in-school suspension is 4% (i.e., on average, for every 100 female students, there are 4 in-school suspensions).

The regression coefficient for *out-of-school suspension* is -0.31, a statistically significant result, $p < .001$. The log of the rate of punishment for female students was expected to be 0.31 units lower for out-of-school suspension compared to in-school

155

suspension. Given that exp(-0.31) = 0.73, out-of- school suspensions for females

occurred at a rate of about 73% of the rate of in-school suspensions (or the expected rate

for out-of-school suspensions was 27% lower than the expected rate for in-school

suspensions) if all other variables in the model are held constant.

The regression coefficient for *expulsions* is -1.92, a statistically significant result,

p <.001. The log of the rate of punishment for female students was expected to be 1.92

units lower for expulsion compared to in-school suspension. Given that exp(-1.92) =

0.15, *expulsion* for females occurred at a rate of about 15% of the rate of in-school

suspensions (or the expected rate for expulsions was 85% lower than the expected rate for

in-school suspensions) if all other variables in the model are held constant.

Model 1 Findings

Model 1 explores whether there is a significant relationship between the level of

school discipline severity and the *percentage of enrolled Black students* in a school. This

question was in response to studies that evidenced schools with higher percentages of

Black students also were more likely to use punitive discipline (Insley, 2001; Skiba et al.,

2014). The results for this question inquiry show that the AIC (85537.5) and BIC (85622)

are both lower than the null model, meaning that Model 1 is a better fit than the

unconditional model.

Table 15. Model 1
Interaction Between Discipline Severity and Percentage of Black Students

	Model 1			
	Estimate	Exp. Values	Std. Error	z value
Discipline Severity Levels				
(Intercept)	-4.33 ***	0.01	0.04	-107.74
Out-of-School Suspension	-0.46 ***	0.63	0.03	-16.4
Expulsion	-1.60 ***	0.20	0.09	-16.95
School Level Variables				
Percentage Black Students	-0.38 ***	0.69	0.09	-4.39
Black Students	1.02 ***	2.78	0.03	40.86
Hispanic Students	1.01 ***	2.73	0.03	29.43
SES Variable	0.01 ***	1.01	0.00	18.74
Interactions				
Out-of-School Suspension & Percentage Black Students	0.53 ***	1.69	0.07	7.24
Expulsions & Percentage Black Students	-0.70 ***	0.49	0.19	-3.72
Variance		0.28		
Standard Deviation		0.53		
AIC		85537.5		
BIC		85622		

*** p < .001; *p < 0.05 (two tailed test).
Note: Intercept represents the base line measure, in-school suspensions for female students. Exp. refers to exponentiated values. Akaike information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) variables act as measures of best fit.

Model 1 includes the discipline severity levels, school level predictors, and interaction terms (see Table 15). This model is a better fit than the unconditional model because both AIC (85537.5) and BIC (85622) indices are smaller. As the model fit improves, the size of the AIC and BIC indices decrease. This follows for variance and standard deviation. As the model fit improves, those variables must decrease as well. Model 1's variance (0.28) and standard deviation (0.53) is smaller than that of the unconditional model.

For the school discipline severity level, *in-school suspension (intercept),* is significant at the p<.001 level in this model. The exponentiated coefficients give the ratio by which the dependent variable changes for a unit change in an explanatory variable; that is, the effect is presented on a multiplicative scale. The intercept (-4.33) is the log

expected rate of punishment for the reference group, female students who received in-school suspension, in the model. The significance for the intercept means that the coefficient was significantly different than zero. The estimate (-4.33), exponentiated = .01, indicating that for female students, the average rate of in-school suspension is 1% (i.e., on average, for every 100 female students, there are 1 in-school suspensions).

The regression coefficient for *out-of-school suspension* is -0.46, a statistically significant result, $p < .001$. The log of the rate of punishment for female students was expected to be 0.46 units lower for out-of-school suspension compared to in-school suspension. Given that $\exp(-0.31) = 0.63$, out-of- school suspensions for females occurred at a rate of about 63% of the rate of in-school suspensions (or the expected rate for out-of-school suspensions was 37% lower than the expected rate for in-school suspensions) if all other variables in the model are held constant.

The regression coefficient for *expulsion* is -1.60, a statistically significant result, $p < .001$. The log of the rate of punishment for female students was expected to be 1.60 units lower for expulsion compared to in-school suspension. Given that $\exp(-1.60) = 0.20$, *expulsion* for females occurred at a rate of about 20% of the rate of in-school suspensions (or the expected rate for expulsions was 80% lower than the expected rate for in-school suspensions) if all other variables in the model are held constant.

The school-level predictor, *percentage Black students,* is significant at the $p<.001$ level in this model. For a one-unit change in *percentage Black students,* the difference in the logs of expected counts would be expected to decrease by 0.38 unit, while holding

other variables in the model constant. The *exp. values* for this variable indicates that if a school were to increase their *percentage Black students* by one unit, the discipline severity level would be expected to decrease by a factor of 0.69, while holding all other variables in the model constant.

The school-level predictor, *Black students,* is significant at the $p<.001$ level in this model. For a one-unit change in *Black students*, the difference in the logs of expected counts would be expected to increase by 1.02 unit, while holding other variables in the model constant. The *exp. values* for this variable indicates that if a school were to increase their *Black students* by one unit, the discipline severity level would be expected to increase by a factor of 2.78, while holding all other variables in the model constant. School-level predictor, *Hispanic students,* is significant at the $p<.001$ level in this model. For a one-unit change in *Hispanic students*, the difference in the logs of expected counts would be expected to increase by 1.01 unit, while holding other variables in the model constant. The *exp. values* for this variable indicates that if a school were to increase *Hispanic students* by one unit, the discipline severity level would be expected to increase by a factor of 2.73, while holding all other variables in the model constant.

School-level predictor, *SES variable,* is significant at the $p<.001$ level in this model. For a one-unit change in *SES variable*, the difference in the logs of expected counts would be expected to increase by 0.01 units, while holding other variables in the model constant. The *exp. values* for this variable indicates that if a school were to

159

increase their *SES variable* by one unit, the discipline severity level would be expected to increase by a factor of 1.01, while holding all other variables in the model constant.

Model 1 also examined the interaction between discipline severity and percentage Black students. The interaction between *out-of-school suspension* and *percentage Black students* is significant at the p<.001 level in this model. For a one-unit change in the interaction term, the difference in the logs of expected counts would be expected to increase by 0.53 units, while holding other variables in the model constant. The *exp. values* for this variable indicates that if the interaction term, *out-of-school suspension* and *percentage Black students*, increases by one unit, the discipline severity level would be expected to increase by a factor of 1.69, while holding all other variables in the model constant.

The interaction between *expulsion* and *percentage Black students* is significant at the p<.001 level in this model. For a one-unit change in the interaction term, *expulsion* and *percentage Black students*, the difference in the logs of expected counts would be expected to decrease by 0.70 units, while holding other variables in the model constant. The *exp. values* for this variable indicates that if the interaction term, *out-of-school suspension* and *percentage Black students*, increases by one unit, the discipline severity level would be expected to decrease by a factor of 0.49, while holding all other variables in the model constant. The researcher produced visualizations for all of Model 1's interactions using ggeffects/ggplots.

Data Visualizations. The statistical software, R, used throughout this analysis produced data visualization with the *ggeffects* and *ggplots* function. For this section, the FTE was changed to 1000, meaning that the plot is for every 1000 students (see Figure 11 & Table 16). Note that the *ggplots* were adjusted for *percentage Black = 27%* and *SES = 62.39*. Three values of percentage black were selected to create the plot: the mean, one SD above the mean and one SD below the mean. Table 16 below shows the numerical results for that plots. Figure 11 shows that for every 1000 students, around 29 are likely to receive discipline severity level 1 (in- school-suspension) schools when there is 4% Black enrollment. For every 1000 students, around 26 are likely to receive discipline severity level 1 (in- school-suspension) schools when there is 27% Black enrollment. For every 1000 students, around 23 are likely to receive discipline severity level 1 (in-school-suspension) schools when there is 58% Black enrollment.

For level 2 discipline severity (out-of-school-suspension), the plot findings are as follows: for every 1000 students, around 18 are likely to receive discipline severity level 2 (out-of-school-suspension) schools when there is 4% Black enrollment. For every 1000 students, around 19 are likely to receive discipline severity level 2 (out-of-school-suspension) schools when there is 27% Black enrollment. For every 1000 students, around 20 are likely to receive discipline severity level 2 (out-of-school-suspension) schools when there is 58% Black enrollment. Level 2, in particular, yielded results that seemed be less severe in comparison to literature (Aston et al., 2016; Morris, 2012).

161

However, 2018 was more illustrative of the narratives in previous studies (Okonofua et al., 2016).
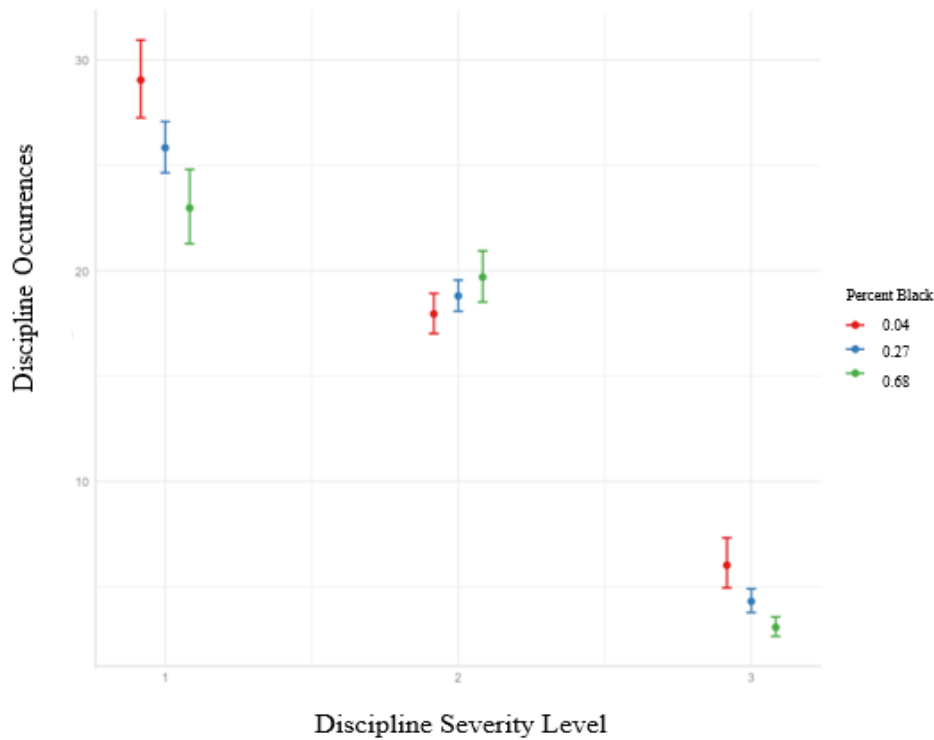
Figure 10. Predicted Counts of Discipline Occurrence for Female Students

For level 3 discipline severity (expulsion), the plot findings are as follows: for every 1000 students, around 6 are likely to receive discipline severity level 3 (expulsion) schools when there is 4% Black enrollment. For every 1000 students, around 4 are likely to receive discipline severity level 3 (expulsion) schools when there is 27% Black enrollment. For every 1000 students, around 3 are likely to receive discipline severity level 3 (expulsion) schools when there is 58% Black enrollment. The findings indicate

that the severity level of punishment, the relationships between percentage Black and the number of occurrences differ. Specifically, schools with higher percentage Black tended to have more occurrences for out-of-school-suspensions and tended to have fewer occurrences for in-school-suspensions and expulsions.

Table 16. Model 1 GGPlot Numerical Output

Percentage Black	Severity Level	Predicted	SE	95% CI
	1	29.04	0.03	[27.26, 30.94]
4%	2	17.95	0.03	[17.02, 18.92]
	3	6.02	0.1	[4.95, 7.32]
	1	25.83	0.02	[24.64, 27.07]
27%	2	18.8	0.02	[18.07, 19.55]
	3	4.3	0.07	[3.78, 4.90]
	1	22.97	0.04	[21.28, 24.80]
58%	2	19.69	0.03	[18.51, 20.94]
	3	3.08	0.08	[2.65, 3.57]

Note: ggeffects was adjusted for: Race_Recode2 = 0; ORG_IRN = NA
(population-level); ECONDISADV_PCT = 62.39

For example, when it comes to objective offenses, it is typically standard across the board, meaning that there is less room for implicit bias. If bringing a weapon or drugs to school warrants expulsion, and a student brings a weapon/drug, then the punishment has a standard objective consequence. In addition, studies suggest that the majority of cases involving student removal, very few of them are for serious offenses (Morris, 2012; Skiba et al., 2014).

2018. Given that 2018 results are more aligned with literature, this study will briefly share the *ggplot* interaction visualizations for the *percentage of Black students enrolled* and level of discipline severity. Figure 12 shows that for every 1000 students, around 23 are likely to receive discipline severity level 1 (in- school-suspension) schools when there is 3% Black enrollment. For every 1000 students, around 25 are likely to receive discipline severity level 1 (in- school-suspension) schools when there is 28% Black enrollment. For every 1000 students, around 28 are likely to receive discipline severity level 1 (in- school-suspension) schools when there is 60% Black enrollment. For level 2 discipline severity (out-of-school-suspension), the plot findings are as follows: for every 1000 students, around 13 are likely to receive discipline severity level 2 (out-of-school-suspension) schools when there is 3% Black enrollment.

For level 2 discipline severity (out-of-school-suspension), the plot findings are as follows: for every 1000 students, around 13 are likely to receive discipline severity level 2 (out-of-school-suspension) schools when there is 3% Black enrollment. For every 1000 students, around 18 are likely to receive discipline severity level 2 (out-of-school-suspension) schools when there is 28% Black enrollment. For every 1000 students, around 25 are likely to receive discipline severity level 2 (out-of-school-suspension) schools when there is 60% Black enrollment. For level 3 discipline severity (expulsion), the plot findings are as follows: for every 1000 students, around 4 are likely to receive discipline severity level 3 (expulsion) schools when there is 3% Black enrollment. For every 1000 students, around 4 are likely to receive discipline severity level 3 (expulsion)

164

schools when there is 28% Black enrollment. For every 1000 students, around 4 are likely

to receive discipline severity level 3 (expulsion) schools when there is 58% Black

enrollment.
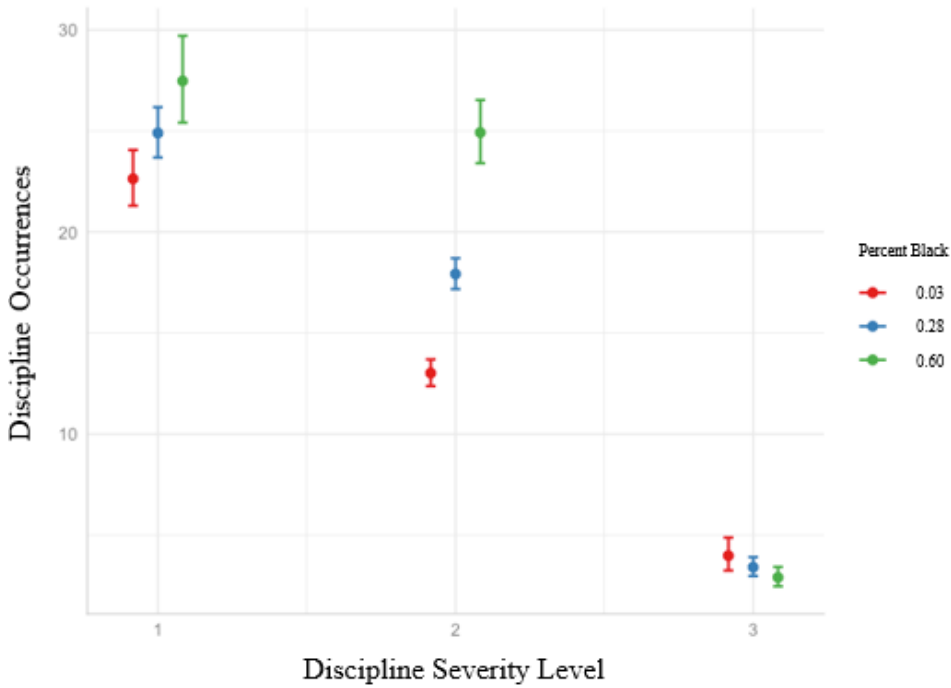
Figure 11. Predicted Counts of Discipline Occurrence for Females Students

Model 2 Findings

Model 2 investigated whether there is a significant relationship between the level

of school discipline severity and race. This question was in response to studies that

evidenced Black students are more likely to receive a harsher punishment (Morris, 2015;

Morris, 2012; Wun 2017). The results for this question inquiry show that the AIC

(85564.1) and BIC (85663.9) are both lower than the null model showing that Model 2 is

a better fit than the null. In terms of the school level variables, *percentage Black students, race, and SES,* are all significant, except *Hispanic students*.

Model 2 includes the discipline severity levels, school level predictors, and interaction terms (see Table 17). This model is a better fit than the unconditional model because both AIC (85564.1) and BIC (85663.9) indices are smaller. However, Model 1 may be better fit than the unconditional model *and* Model 2 because both AIC (85537.5) and BIC (85622) indices are smaller. As the model fit improves, the size of the AIC and BIC indices decreases. This follows for variance and standard deviation. As the model fit improves, those variables must decrease as well. Model 2's variance (0.28) and standard deviation (0.53) is smaller than that of the unconditional model and equal to that of Model 1.

For the school discipline severity level, *in-school suspension (intercept),* is significant at the p<.001 level in this model. The exponentiated coefficients give the ratio by which the dependent variable changes for a unit change in an explanatory variable; that is, the effect is presented on a multiplicative scale. The intercept (-4.42) is the log expected rate of punishment for the reference group, female students who received in-school suspension, in the model. The significance for the intercept means that the coefficient was significantly different than zero. The estimate (-4.42), exponentiated = .01, indicating that for female students, the average rate of in-school suspension is 1% (i.e., on average, for every 100 female students, there are 1 in-school suspensions).

Table 17. Model 2
Interaction Between Discipline Severity and Students' Race

	Model 2			
	Estimate	Exp. Values	Std. Error	z value
Discipline Severity Levels				
(Intercept)	-4.42 ***	0.012	0.04	-109.91
Out-of-School Suspension	-0.33 ***	0.722	0.03	-11.71
Expulsion	-1.61 ***	0.200	0.10	-16.9
School Level Variables				
Percentage Black Students	0.97 ***	2.649	0.04	26.18
Black Students	1.21 ***	3.360	0.05	22.39
Hispanic Students	-0.02	0.983	0.07	-0.25
SES Variable	0.01 ***	1.013	0.00	18.76
Interactions				
Out-of-School Suspension & Black Students	0.09 *	1.091	0.04	2.02
Expulsions & Black Students	-0.53 ***	0.589	0.13	-4.13
Out-of-School Suspension & Hispanic Students	-0.34 ***	0.708	0.07	-5.12
Expulsions & Hispanic Students	-0.10	0.901	0.27	-0.38
Variance		0.28		
Standard Deviation		0.53		
AIC		85564.1		
BIC		85663.9		

*** $p < .001$; *$p < 0.05$ (two tailed test).

Note: Intercept represents the base line measure, in-school suspensions for female students. Exp. refers to exponentiated values. Akaike information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) variables act as measures of best fit.

The regression coefficient for *out-of-school suspension* is -0.33, a statistically significant result, $p < .001$. The log of the rate of punishment for female students was expected to be 0.33 units lower for out-of-school suspension compared to in-school suspension. Given that exp(-0.33) = 0.72, out-of- school suspensions for females occurred at a rate of about 72% of the rate of in-school suspensions (or the expected rate for out-of-school suspensions was 28% lower than the expected rate for in-school suspensions) if all other variables in the model are held constant.

The regression coefficient for *expulsion* is -1.61, a statistically significant result, *p* <.001. The log of the rate of punishment for female students was expected to be 1.61 units lower for expulsion compared to in-school suspension. Given that exp(-1.60) = 0.20, *expulsion* for females occurred at a rate of about 20% of the rate of in-school suspensions (or the expected rate for expulsions was 80% lower than the expected rate for in-school suspensions) if all other variables in the model are held constant.

The school-level predictor, *percentage Black students,* is significant at the p<.001 level in this model. For a one-unit change in *percentage Black students,* the difference in the logs of expected counts would be expected to increase by 0.97 unit, while holding other variables in the model constant. The *exp. values* for this variable indicates that if a school were to increase their *percentage Black students* by one unit, the discipline severity level would be expected to increase by a factor of 2.65, while holding all other variables in the model constant.

The school-level predictor, *Black students,* is significant at the p<.001 level in this model. For a one-unit change in *Black students*, the difference in the logs of expected counts would be expected to increase by 1.21 unit, while holding other variables in the model constant. The *exp. values* for this variable indicates that if a school were to increase their *Black students* by one unit, the discipline severity level would be expected to increase by a factor of 3.36, while holding all other variables in the model constant. School-level predictor, *Hispanic students,* was not significant in this model.

School-level predictor, *SES variable,* is significant at the p<.001 level in this model. For a one-unit change in *SES variable*, the difference in the logs of expected counts would be expected to increase by 0.01 unit, while holding other variables in the model constant. The *exp. values* for this variable indicates that if a school were to increase their *SES variable* by one unit, the discipline severity level would be expected to increase by a factor of 1.01, while holding all other variables in the model constant.

Model 2 also examined the interaction between discipline severity and students' racial group. The interaction between *out-of-school suspension* and *Black students* is significant at the p<.05 level in this model. For a one-unit change in the interaction term, the difference in the logs of expected counts would be expected to increase by 0.09 unit, while holding other variables in the model constant. The *exp. values* for this variable indicates that if the interaction term increases by one unit, the discipline severity level would be expected to increase by a factor of 1.09, while holding all other variables in the model constant.

The interaction between *expulsion* and *Black students* is significant at the p<.001 level in this model. For a one-unit change in the interaction term, the difference in the logs of expected counts would be expected to decrease by 0.53 units, while holding other variables in the model constant. The *exp. values* for this variable indicates that if the interaction term increases by one unit, the discipline severity level would be expected to decrease by a factor of 0.589, while holding all other variables in the model constant.

169

The interaction between *out-of-school suspension* and *Hispanic students* is significant at the p<.001 level in this model. For a one-unit change in the interaction term, the difference in the logs of expected counts would be expected to decrease by 0.34 units, while holding other variables in the model constant. The *exp. values* for this variable indicates that if the interaction term increases by one unit, the discipline severity level would be expected to decrease by a factor of 0.708, while holding all other variables in the model constant. The interaction between *expulsion* and *Hispanic students* was not significant in this model. The researcher produced visualizations of Model 2's interactions using ggeffects/ggplots.

Data Visualizations. R produced data visualization with the *ggeffects* and *ggplots* function for the interactions between *race* and *discipline severity*. For this component, the FTE was also changed to 1000, meaning that the plot shows for every 1000 students (see Figure 13). Note that the *ggplots* were adjusted for *race = 0,* or white female students. Table 18 below shows the numerical results for that plot as a reference. Figure 13 shows that for every 1000 students, around 26 white female students are likely to receive in-school-suspension. For every 1000 students, around 70 Black students are likely to receive in- school-suspension. For every 1000 students, around 88 Hispanic students are likely to receive discipline severity level 1 (*in-school-suspension*).
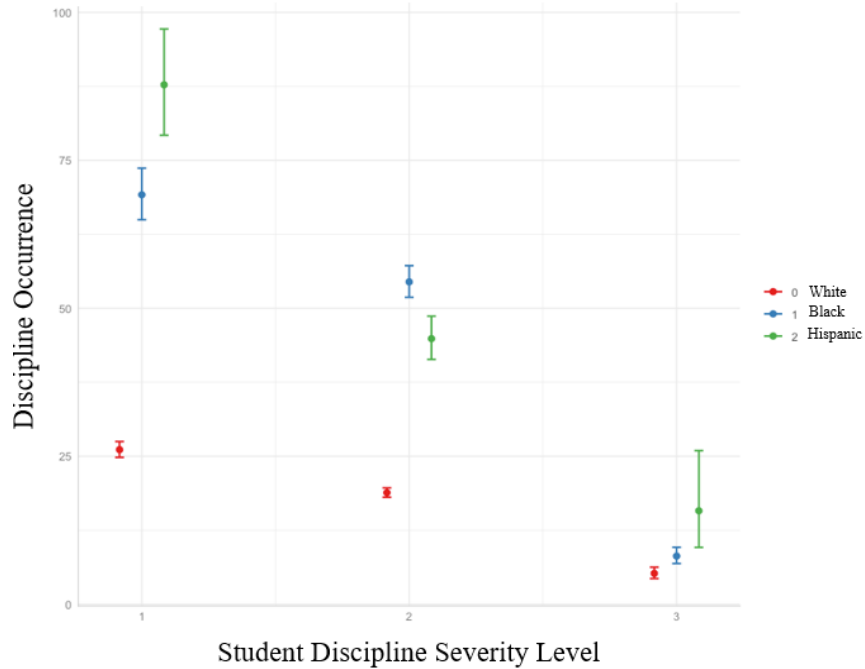
Figure 12. Predicted Counts of Discipline Occurrences for Female Students

For level 2 discipline severity (out-of-school-suspension), the plot findings are as

follows: for every 1000 students, around 19 white female students are likely to receive

out-of-school-suspensions for a given school. For every 1000 students, around 55 Black

students are likely to out-of-school-suspension for a given school. For every 1000

students, around 45 Hispanic students are likely to receive out-of-school-suspension for a

given school. For level 3 discipline severity (expulsion), the plot findings are as follows:

for every 1000 students, around 5 white female students are likely to receive expulsions

for a given school.

Table 18. Model 2 GGPlot Numerical Output

Race	Severity Level	Predicted	SE	95% CI
White	1	26.12	0.03	[24.82, 27.49]
	2	18.85	0.02	[18.08, 19.66]
	3	5.22	0.09	[4.34, 6.27]
Black	1	69.18	0.03	[64.96, 73.68]
	2	54.47	0.03	[51.86, 57.21]
	3	8.14	0.09	[6.89, 9.62]
Hispanic	1	87.76	0.05	[79.24, 97.19]
	2	44.86	0.04	[41.36, 48.67]
	3	15.79	0.25	[9.60, 25.96]

Note: ggeffects was adjusted for: % Black = 0.27; ORG_IRN = NA (population-level); ECONDISADV_PCT = 62.39

For every 1000 students, around 8 Black students are likely to expulsions for a given school. For every 1000 students, around 16 Hispanic students are likely to receive expulsions for a given school. Hispanic students are more likely to be expelled than both white and Black students. White female students are the least likely to receive an expulsion. Findings for this question suggest that the null hypothesis should be rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis; there is a significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency. Results also show that the percentage of Black students enrolled in school may be a statistically significant predictor of the severity of discipline implemented in public schools.

Summary

The quantitative analysis addressed all four research inquires presented at the beginning of the chapter. Research Inquiry 1 asked what racial group had the highest proportion of school discipline. Black girls received the highest average percentage of disciplinary occurrences, 46%. Hispanic girls followed at 15% and then white girls at 7%. The data presented abnormal skews in discipline for other racial groups due to outliers in certain schools. Moreover, considering the structure of the data and the inability to determine who makes up the total discipline occurrence makes answering this question a bit more difficult with the given data. So, in order to provide more context to this question, the sum of disciplinary counts was presented as well (see Table 12). That outcome seemed to be more in line with previous studies on school disparities for female students. Black girls had the highest total counts of school discipline (58,375), followed by white (39,385), then Hispanic (5,788) (see Table 12). The data indicates that Black girls have the highest total counts and average percentage of school discipline compared to their female peers, which aligns with literature.

Research Inquiry 2 inquired about the most prevalent types of misbehavior per racial group. Figures 9 only highlighted Black, white, and Hispanic students. The most prevalent misbehavior types were disobedience, truancy, and fighting for all three groups. The discretionary offenses in the MDE database had a misbehavior type *disobedience* categorized as a discretionary offense. It was the highest for all girls, including Black

173

girls. As a result, the data suggests that there is a relationship between female students' race and the prevalence of a misbehavior type.

Research Inquiry 3 examined the relationship between students receiving school discipline and their performance on standardized Math and Reading tests. The correlational results examining the relationship between receiving school discipline and proficiency rates on English and Math state tests were significant. This suggests that the null hypothesis should be rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. The alternative hypothesis for this inquiry was, that there was a significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency. However, it is important to note that although the relationship was significant, they were weak, especially for Black female students. The limitations of the data may have impacted the strength of the relationship. In addition, using proficiency tests as a proxy for academic achievement may not be the most effective measure.

Finally, Research Inquiry 4 examined whether certain school-level variables predicted whether the number of occurrences of punishment was associated with *percentage Black* and *race* and whether their relationships differ based on severity levels. The results showed that the relationship between *percentage Black & race were significant*. The multilevel negative binomial regression model was conducted for both years, but the findings section primarily focused on 2019. The school-level variables used in that analysis were the percentage of Black students, SES, and race. All of those school-level variables were significant in the null model and models 1 & 2. Another

important part of this analysis was the *percentage of the variable Black students* and *race* interaction with the discipline severity level. The negative binomial multilevel regression showed that the interaction between *race & percentage of Black students* and severity level is significant. The analysis results indicated that the null hypothesis should be rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis; there is a significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency**.**

Qualitative Methodology

This section states the research questions, presents the sample, data collection process, frameworks, the methodology used to complete the analysis, and findings by each research question. The larger study investigates school discipline in a Midwestern state and how Black girls imagine solutions to this issue in their schools. The quantitative methodology provided the broad structure of this study by establishing school discipline disparities. As a result, it was conceptually framed using critical theories. After the study evidenced the education policy problem, the next step considered the solution. As such, the qualitative analysis required a different framework.

The qualitative analysis was conducted using a Positive Psychology lens because it investigated optimal outcomes and solutions. The qualitative study used Black girls' voices to get their perspectives on their lived experiences in schools. But the most critical component was to understand how the girls (positioned in this study as experts) believed school discipline issues could be mitigated at their schools. The qualitative methodology adds the most crucial element to the study, voice. It incorporates Black girls into the

study as more than a subject, but as experts in their experiences. Therefore, they are the key to finding solutions. In order to explore possible solutions to this issue, the guiding qualitative inquiries are as follows:

1. What were the girls' perceptions and experiences of school discipline?

2. How do the girls imagine effective school discipline, interventions, resources, or levels of support?

Demographic Characteristics

The sample for the qualitative methodology composed of 13 self-identified Black girls who participated in a Bridge, or college preparatory, program. This program is year-long and ongoing throughout high school with the ultimate goal of bridging the gap from secondary to post-secondary education. The organization is primarily composed of students of color and those underrepresented in higher education. The group of girls, although racially homogenous, were diverse in their academic achievement, discipline experiences, and the types of school in which they were enrolled.

The girls knew each other because they participated in the program for at least the school year. The girls were comfortable with one another and because the interviews were collected away from their schools' campuses, they were able to speak freely. In preparation for the qualitative data collection the interview questions were sent to participants on June 24th, 2019, a week before the interviews. The researcher sent materials early so that study participants had ample time to consider interview questions before interviews.

Both focus group interviews were collected on Tuesday, July 2nd, 2019. The individual interviews were conducted over several days from July 8th - 11th, 2019. That week participants lived on MSU's campus through the Bridge program. The Bridge coordinator was supportive of the study and agreed to build in time for focus group and individual interviews. Each focus group interview took approximately 45 minutes and the individual follow-up interviews were 5-20 minutes per participant. Girls were asked the following questions during the interview:

1. Describe your school environment/climate?

2. Describe general classroom climate?

3. How do the teachers and administrators deal with misbehavior?

4. Do you have a counselor?

5. Are there people in your school to talk to about major issues going on in your life?

Participants shared their perspectives on interventions that worked at their schools, programming/services that helped their educational experiences, and how educators/administrators supported them. They also addressed areas of improvement for their school community.

Developing Themes

Throughout the data collection process, the interviews were audio and video-recorded for the purpose of transcription. In addition, the researcher kept a journal during the data collection to aid in the analysis process. The researcher transcribed verbatim using the

177

recordings and then had the recordings professionally transcribed. During the qualitative analysis the researcher used an inductive approach to investigate how Black girls imagined effective supports in their schools. The discussions examined their current resources in their school, what works and what could be added or improved. After the interviews were transcribed the researcher analyzed the raw data.

> Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned...you describe, create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to other stories...you must categorize, synthesize, search for patterns, and interpret the data you have collected. (Glesne, 2006, p. 147)

A thematic analysis of interview transcripts using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phases was conducted. These six phases included: familiarizing one's self with the data, creating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and defining themes, and the write up. The steps do not have to be conducted sequentially. In fact, it is expected that the researcher may have to move between those phases depending on the complexity of the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

To obtain the four emergent themes that will be introduced and discussed in the following section, the researcher read and re-read the transcripts multiple times in order to become familiar with the data. Next the researcher began the preliminary coding process. Given that the data analysis process was inductive, the researcher coded every piece of the text using line-by-line coding (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). The researcher also

used open coding because this process did not begin with pre-identified codes (Nowell et al., 2017). These codes were conceptualized and modified throughout the analysis process. The entire coding process was completed by hand and was also completed in the qualitative data analysis software, Dedoose.

After establishing final codes for the analysis, the researcher investigated the data for emergent themes. Qualitative methodology comprises of nuanced and subjective data and therefore there is not one standard way to develop themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). However, there are guidelines that help support researchers navigating their data. In cases where the data is small, there could be overlap with themes and codes (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Themes are typically "characterized by their significance" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 3356). For this study, the line-by-line coding ultimately produced a large number of codes, some of which fit into subthemes and the larger themes.

After identifying the themes, the researcher reviewed and revised to ensure that the themes were coherent and distinct. In some cases, stand-alone themes were condensed and created into sub-themes and added to other themes. For this reason, there are some themes that do and do not have subthemes. After selecting subthemes and themes, the researcher defined subthemes & themes and their associated purposes and aims.

The importance of thematic analysis is for the researcher to find emerging patterns in the data that may be in alignment with literature or to present findings that are new and interesting. The researcher also uses this component to investigate if and how it speaks to the research question (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). During the thematic

analysis process, semantic and latent themes are present. Semantic themes deal with "surface meanings of the data and the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 84). The ultimate goal of this analysis is to understand the interpretation and deeper meaning of ideas posited during the qualitative data collection. At that point the researcher is identifying latent themes by pulling out foundational ideas, assumptions, and beliefs that are embedded within raw data.

The qualitative methodology was an exploratory inductive investigation conducted with a phenomenology framework. The researcher completed the semi-structed individual and focus group interviews to address two exploratory qualitative inquiries. Also, the researcher approached the qualitative component using a Positive Psychology lens. This is key because the qualitative analysis investigated optimal outcomes. This methodology was designed to address the problem established in the quantitative section. In practice, this meant that Black girls were provided the space to talk about their experiences, but the focus was on what things worked at their school or what resources would help support them. In this way, the data collection and analysis process would yield interventions and programming that are currently helping Black girls, or at least suggestions for tools that could support them. The research approached the data collection process based on the assumptions listed below:

1. The policy process is an effective tool for engaging educational issues and can provide an important framework for effecting implementation changes in school discipline.

2. School discipline disparities, along the lines of race and gender, can and should be mitigated by policy informed by research

3. Oppressed, underserved, and impacted peoples have the agency *and desire* to create better outcomes for their community and actively work towards that goal using creative methods.

4. Black girls' educational experiences are unique and necessitate nuanced exploration.

5. Black girls are experts in their own experiences and, therefore, key to informing mitigating issues involved in discipline disparities.

The assumptions impacted the researcher's position during data collection process; and the researcher deferred to the data to guide the analysis process (inductive approach). This was important because there have not been many studies using this demographic beyond the role of *subjects*. In this study Black girls are positioned as experts and as a viable part of the study.

In addition, the researcher sought to explore new solutions or iterations of ideas from Black girls' perspectives. In this way, an inductive approach prioritizes their perspectives by being led by their words first. In the thematic analysis process the semantic and latent themes speak to a larger story, parts of which may be echoed in

contemporary literature. By using the conceptual frameworks later in the process, it helps

the researcher explore new outcomes. Ultimately, the inductive approach allowed for the

researcher to explores Black girls voices independently. The interpretations and

implications of participants' ideas will be connected with literature and other frameworks

in Chapter 5.

Emerging Themes

The following section addresses all four emergent themes from the qualitative analysis.

This section will pull from the individual interviews and focus group interviews to

highlight key quotes that spoke to the themes and subthemes that emerged throughout the

analysis. Before discussing the themes and larger issue of school discipline and the

possibilities for solutions, the girls were asked to talk a bit about their schools and the

school communities. During this discussion the diversity of the school types were

presented as school background.

School Background

This information is important because it could have a significant impact the ways

in which they experience schooling. As stated earlier some of the girls were in private

parochial schools, some were in suburban schools, some were in charter, and other in

specialized public schools. This will determine the types of resources that they are

exposed to, the size of their classes and general school environment. A girl explained that

the basic needs for students at her school were not being met. Her primary issue, and that

of her school community, was to advocate for a better physical school building.

All of our students are really trying to fight for new building. Like our building is so bad and currently, [the associated district] won't realize that we have roofs falling down and everything, water leaks all over the place, rats and everything like that, but they won't listen at all. And we have like, um, been on the news so many times but nothing has changed yet.

Her school experiences are impacted by the fact that the physical environment of the school is unsafe. The school community is fighting for better conditions so that they can learn and feel comfortable when they arrive each day. On the other hand, another participant explained that,

At my school they really want to see kids get through high school, so even if you are a bad student, you don't do work, they'll still let you come cause they just want you to be there. No matter if you get into fights or you're suspended, they want you in the school, just in a classroom.

Her school community was committed to keeping students in school. She also felt that educators and administrators wanted to keep students in school to the best of their abilities. A couple students spoke to the demographics of their school and how it impacted how they navigated or were seen in the student body

I feel like they try not to address us or basically acknowledge that we're black and is, it's different for us. So, I hope I just wish they would be more open about it. Having more conversations about it, knowing that everyone's different, especially, um, us, myself.

In this case, her school body was diverse and in order to promote multiculturalism educators and leaders seemed to take "racial/ethnic-blind" approach to their students. She believed that they did not have bad intentions, but by trying to de-emphasize race they unintentionally exacerbated the problem.

The girls were also asked about how they about the school community overall gain some sort of background about how they view their place in schools. One participant explained that a lot of students at her school knew one another, "*we're all kinda friends like, everybody is like an old friend. I get a good vibe when I'm going to school, I feel happy.*" This girl had a positive outlook on her general school and community. She felt that the teachers and administrators wanted to keep them in schools and that students were generally cordial to one another.

The girls have varying perspectives, from schools with physical disrepair to schools with high-quality conditions. Some of them were in smaller schools and some were in larger schools. Some of the girls perceived their school communities as tight knit and others had cliques and groups. Before investigating themes, it was important to consider the diverse background and the dynamics of the group. Despite differences in details about their schooling, the emergent themes throughout the interviews still speak to their shared experiences.

Theme 1: Misbehavior

The scope of my study investigates how Black girls navigate their educational experiences in a punitive discipline environment. As a result, an important component of the data included information related to misbehaving. For the theme *Misbehavior* there were two associated subthemes, *violent* and *non-violent*. Although each of the girls had unique experiences with school discipline, most of them at least indirectly encountered non-violent misbehavior at their schools.

Subtheme 1a: Non-Violent. The predominant descriptor that emerged from non-violent offenses were misunderstanding/mischaracterizing misbehavior and dress code violations. The study participants are enrolled in various types of schools (public, charter, and private) yet all of them had experiences with these types of misbehaviors. Earlier in the focus group interview, the participants were asked to describe the most prevalent types of misbehavior at their school. One girl said "*talking*", another "*goofing*", and yet another said "*phones*." One girl said,

> *Sometimes I laugh and I be [sic] getting in trouble. . . Yes, we're learning, but like you can't just sit for a whole 45 minutes being serious. Like, something's gonna happen. Like, some people got different personalities. I feel like you can be in the environment so like, who wants to just sit here like this? There are going to be things, people are going to talk to you.*

This is in alignment with findings from quantitative Inquiry 2 and contemporary literature that most of the times girls are engaging in minor behavior (Morris, 2015; Morris, 2012;

185

Wun, 2017). Many of the girls are just being typical high school girls, laughing with their friends and talking in class. Another participant explained that girls in her class tend to goof after they have finished their assignments, "*we will all be doing our work but we will be goofing around and she will get so mad. Like, we're getting work done, there's no reason for you to be upset, no reason.*"

A common frustration was that the dress code violations were not enforced regularly. Some days adults at their school are strict with dress code and the other times they were not. In regard to inconsistent dress code violations, a participant recalled that,

> *Certain administrators walk in and they're like, 'Oh my God, your elbow' and then he started picking her out. I'm like, 'Why do you guys have this like dress code if you don't follow it through? Like don't have it in the first place.'*

Another girl noted that in her school if girls come in with ripped jeans, they have to wear tights or leggings under them. But girls are not allowed to wear leggings alone. "*If you wear holes you got to, um, put leggings on them. You can't wear leggings.*" Some girls recall breaking dress code rules for practical reasons. A participant noted that her school is extremely cold inside the building even if it is not cold outside. "*I wear my jacket. It could be cold in there, in the building, even though it's hot outside or it's-- Even in school it still cold, so I'm wearing my jacket even though they tell me to take it off.*" Interestingly, all of the participants noted that their middle school experiences with dress code had more standardization across the board. "*Oh yeah, middle school was completely different. You had ripped jeans. If I walked into my middle school with this, they would*

186

*literally make me take everything off.***"** The consensus was that across the board dress code was more relaxed, less standardized, and implemented in frequently in high school.

The conversation about dress code led to hoodies. Hoodies are typically not allowed in schools and are consistently banned or discouraged. Some of the girls recognized that the focus on hoodies in particular was an attempt to protect students. One girl stated that hoodies are banned "*for safety, because they want to recognize who is there.*" Another girl stated that it is due to the fear of gang violence. She stated, "*at my school, it's not for safety . . . They don't want, like, gang related [attire]. Like some kids, like most of the boys are in, like, gangs, like Bloods or Crips.*" So, in some cases surrounding environment of the school is the driving force behind dress code policies.

Subtheme 1b: Violent. For some of the students fighting is a part of the school environment. One girl stated that at her school "*it's always fights there. Like lock down fights- it's crazy.*" Lockdown means that no one can enter or leave the school premises for a period of time due to safety concerns. Not only did fights occur frequently at her school, but they were severe enough that lockdowns are initiated. The fights referred in that quote were not specific to Black girls. The overall sentiment was the school climate was one where some students solved their disagreements physically.

Some of the girls reported that they had security guards or even officers employed at their schools. In cases of fighting, the adults responsible for dissolving physical altercations also used violent measures. For example, one girl noted that "*at our school, you fight you get maced [sic]." Maced* means getting pepper sprayed. So, if the security

187

guard or police officer encounters a fight then they immediately spray the children with mace, pepper spray, to stop the fighting.

Some girls noted that they had one or few security guards who were supposed to keep the peace at their large school. On girl notes stated, "*the police officer, he does all the work*" and that he typically is "*downstairs in the front where the sign-in is so people can't just get in*." The fact that there is one person assigned to guard the school and also to be on call if an altercation happens causes issues. For example, if a fight, altercation, or some other serious issue is incited then the students will likely have to take matters into their own hands while the adults in the building get to the issue. For example, a student who may not want to fight may have to be violent in order to defend herself as help is arriving; and when the adult does come then often the person defending herself is punished to the same degree as the perpetrator. Another participant noted a similar issue at her school, "*the students will fight, and the students will break it up*." In this case, if a fight were to break out it would also be likely that other students would help resolve or break up the fight before an adult arrived. This issue of the adults being too late, was a sentiment that was echoed by a few of the girls.

The girls noted that there were different reasons as to why fights occur at schools. During the focus group interviews, in particular, the girls noted that outside disagreements find their way into schools. Some of the girls noted that technology plays a large role in events occurring right before fights at their school. "*Everybody's on social media. Everybody has phones, everybody at school. So, people-- it's like people's like*

188

more like sharing it all over and their page like, 'Oh, go join this live, [and the person]

goes to her live,'" this is in reference to girls starting verbal altercations on their social

media platform. She goes on to say that students will say "*you can do so much with your*

phone, it's like yes, everybody's in your business." In this case, the girl is saying that often

fights do not start at school for school-related reasons, they happen outside of school due

to cyber bullying. The sentiment from most of the girls was that fights or altercations in

school are result of issues happening outside of the building. Girls are involved in fights

for a variety of different reasons, and therefore a blanket punishment can be detrimental.

As a result, some girls connected that issue to ineffective discipline implementation. This

phenomenon is addressed in the *Discipline* theme below.

Theme 2: Discipline

The major objectives of the study are to first consider the education policy

problem and then to explore possible solutions or alternatives. One of the most

detrimental components of this school discipline issue, is that it is often applied to non-

severe offenses. Literature showed overwhelmingly negative effects for students removed

from schools (Skiba et al., 2014). Students fall behind in schoolwork and tests, become

disconnected from their peers and school community, and become more likely to be

removed in the future (Insley, 2001; Morris, 2015; Skiba et al., 2014). The earlier part of

this study established that Black girls are most likely to be removed from school via out-

of-school-suspensions. Throughout each of the individual interviews and throughout the

focus group interviews, it became clear discipline and punitive punishments impacted their schooling experiences.

Similar to how the dress code discipline implementation were administered differentially, girls noted that treatment and discipline were not equally applied to all students. One girl explained that sports were important at her school and she was also a star athlete so she experienced preferential treatment.

> *Yeah, like we get like a little bit more attention. They know that our sports run late and we won't get home until like late at night so like they will understand, like if we don't get things done on time on time, or like we're tired, they'll understand.*

In her case, educators understood that she may not have a particular assignment on time or if she was sleepy in class. She did acknowledge there were some leniency for star athletes, for certain sports, and how it impacted her educational experiences. In terms of other identifiers, the girls all spoke to the fact that grade level predicted whether adults took misbehavior seriously. A girl noted that,

> *When it comes to like discipline, I feel like the seniors and juniors, sometimes sophomores get away with everything. I was doing little stuff as a freshman, I literally asked my teacher, 'Why am I getting in trouble with this but, not, [this] junior and that they just did it? Making it worse, like they be doing any and everything in that school.*

190

The girls explained that discipline was not administered consistently for minor offenses at their school and in some cases, certain students received more or less leniency than their peers. The girls were also asked to consider how students' academics were impacted when students are removed from school. The next section speaks more to the academic implications of punitive discipline.

Subtheme 2a: Academic. There was a consensus that exclusionary punishments had a substantial impact on the students' academics. The girls explained that students felt academically lost when returning and how difficult it was to even obtain their work while suspended. Many of the girls spoke to how high school was a difficult academic transition. "*At my school, freshman year is so hard, so they make it hard to see who can like take it. There was a lot of people who left freshman year.*" This participant felt that her high school set out to weed students out in their freshman year to see who *deserved* to stay in the school. Another said that "*we had essays. We had outlines. We had some kind of notes. Sophomore year was kind of hard.*" They all concurred that transition to high school was difficult in different types of ways. It took an emotional impact on some girls, one of whom expressed "*I had some, crying hours.*" The academic workload was so different that the girls noted it was easy to get off track, "*like if you miss a day of our school it's like you just missed the whole entire year.*"

Participants also spoke to how educators at their school facilitated their transition into high schools. The girls had some teachers who they described as helpful and some who were not. One girl felt that "*some of the teachers don't even care, like you're*

191

supposed to get up and do it yourself. They don't, like, hand stuff to you. They're like, 'You better do it yourself.'" As a result, the girl feels that she has to depend on herself or peers to perform well academically at her school. Participants were also asked to think about how their school educates students about its school discipline policies. The next section addresses how the girls viewed the logistics of discipline at their schools.

Subtheme 2b: Discipline Logistics. Girls were asked to reflect on how their schools addressed school discipline policies with the students' body. They were asked whether they received discipline handbooks and if teachers referred to the handbook while justifying their punishments to the students. Overwhelmingly the girls noted that they did receive a paper or a handbook, typically on the first day of school. On "*the first day of school, they give you like a paper, like what they expect you to do. But no one bothers [afterwards]. . ."* Another girl said, "*we get like a handbook but nobody reads it.*" Some of the girls note that in high school they get the handbook or papers during their freshman year or the beginning of their freshman year and it is often not discussed after that point. **"***Before I went to [high school] like they gave me a handbook, and I had to sign like some bunch of papers*." Ultimately, this quote below sums up the general experience girls had with understanding the school discipline policies,

> *Personally, like we have a handbook . . . I think I remember having one like*
> *freshman year, but after that, it's like more and more on yourself to read it or it's*
> *like online but like I don't have it anymore. They didn't give it to me junior year,*

and they're probably not going to give it to you as a senior. But I think teacher-

wise, they choose what they want personally in their classrooms.

The last part of the quote leads into the next subtheme *Discipline and Teachers'*

Assumptions. What the girl above described was that teachers use their discretion when

they choose what behaviors will be punished in their classrooms.

Subtheme 2c: Discipline and Assumptions. Educators have to make difficult

decisions on how to lead their classes. Moreover, each teacher's personal guidelines may

vary from classroom to classroom. Girls were asked to reflect on how teachers in their

school handled discipline and what they believed were their thought processes when

making those decisions. Upon reflections of her school, a girl noted.

When like a situation happens, they [teachers] are so quick to jump to suspending

[students]. I think that they should try to talk to them first like what's going on for

you to be doing what you're doing. Not just straight to, 'Oh my God we need to

get you out of school.' So, I think having a talk with the students to see what's

really going on behind it, to see what's the reason for how they're acting. That

could be helpful just as much as you suspend them because that doesn't do

anything really but make them miss school days, which is making them miss

[school] work. So, I think a talk will be [good]. . . if that doesn't work, I think

maybe you could not even still go to suspension then. Like a talk with the parent

there or something like that. I don't think you should just go straight to

suspension. Never really.

There are several sections to this quote. One major part is that she feels that suspension is used far too frequently in her school for misbehavior. When considering the outcomes of being suspended, she believes it should be the last resort. It should only be used after the alternatives were utilized, including the inclusion of parents. She emphasized that being removed from school sets you back mentally and academically. This is coupled with the fact that she also feels teachers make those decisions while being reactionary and without understanding the actual issue at hand. The issue with that component, in particular, is the fact that a teacher could in fact administer punishment without understanding the full context of the situation. They may not understand why the fight started who started it or if one student was defending herself.

The girls agreed that suspensions are used far too frequently. But some of the girls also agreed that in some cases exclusionary may be necessary. However, in those cases educators and administrators must be intentional about making sure that the child has materials for school so that they do not fall too far behind.

> *Sometimes, like, people be getting suspended for no [reason]- I can understand if it's a fight or something- yeah, you should get suspended but not for a whole week. And when- when you do get suspended, [they should] have, like, follow-up with you. Or send work home with you or something so you can be caught up when you come back.*

The importance of having a plan in place for students experiencing school discipline was an important concern for the girls. There seemed to be differing philosophies in

194

participants' school leadership about whether students deserved to have their work when they are suspended.

Subtheme 2d: Reintegration Protocol. The girls were asked to reflect on how their school dealt with students who were removed and if/how they reintegrate students back into the community. It was clear that there was not a standard way across all different types of schools. One girl explained that her school seemed to not make an effort get students their work when they were suspended because,

The thing is if you get suspended, and they literally they burn this into our heads, and I think it's so cruel to some. I mean, it's true, but it's just mean to say. They'll be like, 'Well, basically they don't give you work because essentially if you get suspended then you're basically throwing away any other chance of you continuing your education, so just get your diploma and then that's all you can get at that point because if you got suspended, no college is going to accept you.' So, that's what it is.

This is a clear example of the zero-tolerance ideology explained in the beginning of the study. The idea is to make an example of the child. Or to scare the child into the behaving by suggesting that their future is over if they are suspended. Ultimately, if the student gets suspended, they made the choice, their future is limited, and so the expectations have been lowered or removed altogether. The child is then a *throw-away* student. It is possible that her school truly operates this way, or that they cultivated an environment

where the students perceive this to be the case. Another girl spoke to how jarring it is for students to come back after they have been gone for a substantial amount of time.

> *When you come back after a couple of weeks or depending, like, if you get in a fight that's two weeks or more. But if you, like, get suspended and you come back, your grades drop because they won't. . .Okay, so. . .I've heard the stories. You can go to the school and get your work, but sometimes they won't let you walk into the school building to get your work.*

This girl heard from her peers who have experienced long-term suspensions that it is difficult to reintegrate back into the school community. The student comes back with lower scores because they could not take tests or complete homework and they are behind because they missed the material taught in class. For this girl, her school does not allow suspended students on campus to get their work so if an adult is not willing to get the work, the student will fall behind.

Another girl noted, that making sure that one does not fall behind is still a responsibility of the student. They have to understand the results of their actions and do everything in their power to get back on track. But also, the teachers have to be understanding as well. There is responsibility on the part of the student to stay on track and there is responsibility for the teacher to help facilitate their reintegration.

> *Like, not everybody is perfect, so you get suspended, you messed up, come back and, like, when you do come back just be prepared to, like, do all the work you missed. You have to stay focused. And then the teachers need to understand that*

196

you messed up, but they also need to be there and help you like, 'I'm going to help

you get through it, just don't make the same mistake again.'

This here is a representation of the girls' desire to be given a degree of grace. Students misbehave and students make mistakes, but they should also be prepared to accept the consequences. Teachers, on the other hand, need to have some understanding when they work with students to accept that they will make mistakes, and to address it in an appropriate way. The girls felt that after a point, some teachers just expect the girls to get in trouble and it impacts how they choose to discipline.

The girls believed teachers' and administrators' negative assumptions can sometimes impact the way in which school discipline issues are handled. Some of the girls explained that at times even in the face of evidence, they are punished as if they were the wrongdoer. There were cases where proof of innocence existed yet the girls were still punished, all the same. One participant reflected that if there is a fight,

They assume that everybody was the reason why. Where it could really be like a

couple of people who was starting beef on Instagram or something, amongst the

school and you told them through messages-- like you tell them on the phone

through messages like you don't want [to fight]-- like, you know, basically don't

have no problem with them. But yeah, but they still end up coming at you and

fight you first, and then you have to defend yourself. But you still get suspended

because y'all fought, but it wasn't your fault. You was defending yourself and you

have to prove that you were telling them, 'Don't bring it to school. I don't want to

fight you,' all that, but they still don't care. So, they don't take that into

consideration.

Some girls feel that having proof of bullying and trying to dissolve the situation on one's

own is not enough. Girls noted that a lot of times, issues start on social media and

ultimately find its way into school. Because of this, girls often have proof that they did

not want to fight and that they wanted to stop the issue before it reached the school

premises.

When you have the proof in your phone that you told them to leave you alone,

don't mess with you, you don't want no problems. You want to drop the beef, but

they still come to you about it, and then you have to defend yourself. And then you

get suspended but they're [teacher/administrator] not listening to you. They

[teacher/administrator] still think-- see you as, 'No, you're a drama story. You

want to fight,' or that 'Get out my school.'

The major issue from this quote, is the girls are overtly told that they seek drama and also

believe that adults in their school view them that way. They were viewed as being

attacked but as someone who was looking for trouble. In this way, no amount of evidence

would ensure their innocence. The girls believe that they are being perceived incapable of

being innocent, and resulting issues are due to premeditated plans on their part. This type

of classification for children are defined as adultification (Epstein et al., 2017). One of

the girls spoke to the fact that Black girls' general stereotype is that they are "*known for*

drama, and fights and stuff, but it's really like, we'll be going at home, but we can't talk to

someone." Many of the girls felt that the punishments they received were not solely based on the behavior, it also is in part by how they are perceived by their teachers and administrators. The conversation about the girls and their interactions with their teachers is one of the most important components to understanding the issue and considering the solution. The next section addresses what students thought about their teachers then it transitions into the solutions proposed by the girls.

Theme 3. Teachers

Throughout the individual and focus group interviews girls reflected on the teachers at their schools. Many of the girls spoke to the importance of relationships in how they interacted with teachers. In addition, girls spoke to the desire of creating positive relationships with educators. This was not only in reference to administering school discipline, but also for how they show care through making sure everyone understands the academic materials. The girls all agreed that there were teachers, even one or two, that made school a lot better for them. The reason for that was because they showed the girls that that they were valued and seen. On girl stated,

> *I had some teachers that really cared about me, and care about what was going on. Like one of my teachers I wouldn't say is my best friend, but I will go to him a lot about a lot of stuff. But then there will be other teachers that like didn't really seem like they even cared.*

The impact of that teacher-student relationship positively shaped her school experience. She did not have a connection with all of her teachers, in fact she admits that some of them seemed not to care. But even in environments where all the educators do not connect with the students, having one or two teachers who can really help students feel like they are seen. Another girl explained that due to the size of classes she feels that establishing that one-on-connection is difficult. "*Well, I know like in some schools they have like gigantic classes or whatever, but I wish that like teachers could give like individual time to some students because some students just need to talk and stuff like that.*"

Just as there were cases of teachers being unable to help or connect with students, there are some who help students get connected to opportunities that help shape their educational trajectory. One girl noted that the only reason she learned about the Bridge program, was because "*my teacher reached out to us in class and told us about this program.*" Another student agreed that was the case for her as well, "*some teachers come up to me*." There are times when teachers invest extra effort in a student that changes their life or perspective on school. There are also times when students may have needs that the teachers are unable to address, being a counselor, for example. There was a genuine desire to connect with their educators and administrators,

> *They should just be there for students like cause a lot of times students can't talk to people about certain issues that are going on. And even if you do talk to somebody, they are not really listening when you're scared.*

Some of the girls feel that when they are vulnerable and open about their needs that the people supposed to listen are disconnected. This may actually exist for a variety of reasons, teacher burnout, teachers' inability to address their needs as a professional counselor, etc. Often teachers are provided little resources to be successful at their job, and they have additional expectations beyond teaching that they may be ill-equipped to handle. This is especially when students feel, "i*t's just not just coming in and teach, but also have a connection with the students."* The next section addresses solutions proposed by the girls. The following presents the girls views about possible solutions or efforts that could be made in their schools to improve the academic experiences of their school community.

Theme 4: Solutions

This section explores data that addressed programs, interventions, or practices that are currently working at their schools. It also highlights what can be done to improve the educational experiences for themselves and their peers. Subtheme 4 Programs and Resources first starts by addressing some of the programming that is currently working well and the transitions into points of suggestions.

Subtheme 4: Programs and Resources. As stated, girls in this qualitative study represent a variety of different school environments. As such, some of the girls enjoyed a great deal of resources from their school community. Even in traditional city public schools some of the girls benefitted from programming that was a part of their school

environment. One participant enrolled in a suburban school stated that we have "*things like this free store. Well if you need anything like if you don't got [sic] like, shampoo or, the school supplies, they'll give it to you.*" The participant noted that those materials were donated by the community via a charitable organization. Her school community sought to a support the students at the school and worked collaboratively to help the students in need. In that same school there was a program for people experiencing loss of close family members. This programming was conducted during school hours and students were given resources to help cope with the loss of loved ones.

For several different students in traditional city public schools, there was a program designed specifically to empower girls. This program was after school and were for girls of any racial background. Many of the girls spoke favorably about this program and also recommended that one be created specifically for Black girls. Girls also noted the presence of religious-affiliated organizations. Girls participating in the programming did seem to gain something positive from participating, but many wanted programming specific to their intersectional identities.

In regard to suggestions or recommendations for programming, interventions or practices, the central theme was to have programming that helped them build community and feel accepted. One participant noted that, "*I feel like, you know, putting more diversity into school is really important. Because, if you see people like you, you feel like, 'Oh, I'm included, I can do this.'*" Girls want to be represented and also would like to connect with their female peers.

You get to know other people who have the same issue or share your, you know,

what you go through as well. But it's also important to have someone to share

like, who's not a student, that way they can maybe bring out something deeper or

push the conversation. I know like for me like we don't have that at our school.

Like anything involving like, uh, black girls or anything like that. They have

group, but it's like, at-- there's none like that nature.

Not only do girls want the programming, but they note that having an adult or trained professional to help guide conversations would be extremely important. The girls want to connect with one another and talk about their issues in a structured way with people they trust. They have the desire to share what is going on in their lives and would like to receive advice from someone that they believe cares about them. A participant noted "*making the group and just like a place where we can like destress, and just like talk about issues and things that we really like, and just like become sort of like a sisterhood, where we're closer.*"

There was another girl who proposed a program that would help other girls bond through an activity of their choice. Many of the girls in her school environment competed in drill team competitions and that activity was not available at their school. She explained that the girls in her school approached leadership about creating a drill team club, but was denied because it was not traditional enough.

I would say just like providing resources for us to, like, get to know each other or

even like [creating] sports [clubs] that we all, you know, tend to [like].

Cheerleading is a thing, but like at my school, we don't have a drill team. I know

our principal was like, 'Oh, that's not traditional, so I'm not going to do that.'

The girls expressed interest in starting up an activity that is enjoyed in their community,

but was rejected because it was not considered traditional. Getting students excited to be

involved in the school community can be difficult at times, so it may be in the interest of

leadership to consider integrating activities that popular amongst students. In terms of

programming, the girls believe that formally or informally creating a space where they

can talk about the issues that are going on (school, life, feminine issues, etc.) would

facilitate their wellbeing. In addition, girls wanted to be able to share their issues with

engaged adults who were equipped help them navigate life issues.

      Subtheme 4: Developing Relationships. "*I was out for, like, four days. Came*

back, the teacher didn't even know I was gone. I'm just like, 'What the? I was gone for

four days?!'" Feeling seen and knowing that you are valued is extremely important for

the girls and was echoed throughout the interviews. The heart of the issue for many of the

girls is, as one participant stated, "*I wish that teachers or administrators would just kind*

of be there for you." The fact that there are some girls who could be missing from school

and they knew that none of their teachers would notice, is a reality for far too many.

Knowing that one's presence or absence in the school population is important does have

an impact on how the girls navigated. Because of this issue, the girls were able to speak

to practical things that educators could do to help bridge the gap. Another girl spoke up to

say,

I feel like it depends on the relationship that you have with your teacher. If you're close, then I think they would like notice if you're not for like a period of time or for days but also if you're distant, and you don't really develop a relationship with your teacher, it's impossible for them to really focus on you personally or if you're not on class, or where you are.

The girls noted that the relationship with the teachers could impact the trajectory of their path at school. Having a teacher who advocates for students may keep them in the class and expose them to programming and opportunities that they would not have otherwise. Positive relationships with teachers also impact the ways in which students approach school. One girl noted, "*you could be super mad by going to school then like a teacher could [change that] one in class. And so, it's like great.*" This speaks to the possibilities of using relationships as tools for student success. In terms of school discipline, fostering positive relationships could be the difference from being suspended for a week or receiving necessary services. One participant noted,

I feel like a lot of it relates back to like, oh, what happened in the class before? What did they wake up to? What are they living in? Like sometimes we go to school and we express ourselves [negatively] because we can't do that at home. Or we don't get to say how we feel to our parents or whoever our guardian is because it's more of, uh, 'Be quiet and go do what I say.' Some of us don't get to sit down and be like, "'Oh, this is what I'm feeling today, this is how, you

know, what happened.' We don't get to reflect on, like, our issues or problems, and it's more of, uh, "Girl, go on."

The theme that resonates throughout the qualitative study is *developing relationships*. The girls have an innate desire to be connected and to receive guidance on the issues they face in life. The girls went on to explain how they would imagine that happening at their schools. One participant explained that teachers could facilitate academic success if they "*would like stop and ask you if you're understanding it, or if you need extra help and are willing to take the time to, like, go over it, during the lunch as a whole class together*." This approach would be easier to integrate in schools with smaller class sizes. The issue arises when teachers have overcrowded classrooms and little resources, because providing individual support becomes nearly impossible.

Beyond stating the needs in their schools, the girls spoke to the practical steps that could be taken to improve the lives of Black girls in their school community. The most important practices the girls noted were related to fostering relationships with the adults at their school and having outlets to express themselves (via programming and counseling). In response to how teachers could mitigate issues surrounding unfair school discipline implementation, one participant stated,

> *Maybe like have a talk with them and everything. Like you don't know, like, something might be going on that you might not know about. So, like Just like talk to them for a little bit. Like, get to know 'em, get them to open up to you and everything. Like, don't just, like, send them home, you don't know what's going on.*

206

The practices were primarily based in leveling with the student and communicating with them to understand the full context of the issue. The important idea the emphasized by the girls was that it is inappropriate to simply punish the action without knowing the context. Another girl added,

> *Find ways to know why she did what she did it. Figure out if this is like an external thing and [what is] like causing them to be kind of indifferent, I guess; instead of just suspending them because like you really don't know someone could be going through.*

One issue that a participant spoke to was that some teachers do not know how to build professional relationships with students. Some may not understand how to genuinely connect with students while maintaining the teacher student dynamic. One girl explained that teachers should be "*taught [how] to reach out to students. Like you would see something's going on with that student, just don't stand there, just continue teaching class. Like go after class and talk to the student.*" It may be true that teachers may not be equipped in fostering relationships with students, and when additional barriers such as difference in culture, race, and class are added it becomes even more difficult. One participant explained how they believed that a teacher could approach a student,

> *I feel like just talking to them one-on-one like to ask them about their day or seeing what they're doing. Especially when they [notice] something could be wrong with them. Some teachers do come up but not all of them, they think that you're just doing this to get out of doing work but that's not always the case.*

Just see what's wrong and don't try to make a scene. I feel that it's a lot of

communication that's involved for all of this.

This student emphasized the fact that some teachers take the extra effort to follow up

with students who seem to be troubled. But she also explained that some teachers believe

that students talk about problems under the guise of trying to get out of work. If a teacher

automatically decides that certain students are using their personal issues for

manipulation, then their approach is not student-centered. It also dissuades students from

trying to confide in their teacher in the future.

Summary

In the qualitative phenomenological inductive study, the ultimate goal was speak

to the quantitative findings. The qualitative analysis added Black girls' voices to the

discussion and also used them to consider positive alternatives for their schools. The data

yielded four major themes *misbehavior, discipline, teachers,* and *solutions*. Ultimately,

the girls spoke directly to the school discipline disparity issue but followed it up with

practices that are currently working at their schools and what they would like to see.

At the heart of the misbehavior theme was that teenaged girls goof off and

misbehave in the same way any other teenaged girl would. There are times when they

express joy and laughter and it is interpreted as a disruption. The majority of offenses that

the girls discussed was talking, being on their phones, laughing too much, etc. Girls also

noted their direct or indirect experiences with fighting and violence at the school. The

girls noted that at their schools, almost across the board, the issues started with

208

cyberbullying on social media. Technology was a source of a lot of the conflict that manifested on school grounds.

For the discipline theme, the girls explained that from dress code to more serious offenses, punishments were not consistently meted out. This was a major concern for the less severe offenses because on some days dress code may be enforced but on other days they were not. On the other hand, some teachers may have let dress code violations go and others were stricter. There was a resounding sentiment of confusion. The girls all noted that their school provided handbooks, but they were addressed one time per year or just during their freshman orientation. From their perceptions, the teachers did not discipline by letter of the handbook.

In regard to fighting, the girls repeatedly stated the importance of understanding the full context before punishing students. Instead of simply punishing the action and all those involved, there should be a conversation to understand the context. As stated earlier, technology is a big contributor to issues at school, so girls often have proof of bullying. So, if a girl who wanted to avoid a fight had to defend herself and then was suspended after being the victim of cyberbullying, the impacts could be incredibly devastating. The girls understand the repercussions of being removed from school, the fact that it would take a toll on their grades, and that it would be difficult to catch up. They also understand that in some cases exclusionary punishments are appropriate. However, given the academic and emotional repercussions of being removed from school, the girls believe that the punishment should be taken more seriously by teachers

and administrators. This means having conversations with the parties involved understanding what led up to the event and involving the parents before deciding to suspend the child.

The last two themes went hand in hand, *teacher* and *solutions*. The girls noted that a lot of the ongoing problems in their schools are a result of bad (or non-existent) relationships between students and educators/administrators. The girls believed that if the adults at their schools had a better understanding of their student body, they would approach, support, and address students differently. The girls noted that some teachers go out of their way to foster healthy relationships with their students and some do not. Some teachers have negative assumptions about their student's behavior and intentions, and some just do not know how to connect with their students.

The girls also understood that the onus was also on them to reach out to adults at their school. They had to at least show interest in establishing a relationship or to ask for help. One girl noted that in her school they only had one counselor and she wanted to meet with him,

> *We only have one counselor for all of our grades now. So, I want to really say he's effective because it's so hard to get close to him and everything, like every time I tried to see him, there's something, he's never in his office. He's always in some type of meeting and everything like that. I tried to build a relationship with him but he's just all over the place. I just gave up at this point.*

Just as this quote shows, the girls have a desire to connect with adults at their schools. They also may not have the tools for establishing appropriate relationships. The adults in the school cannot be the parents, but they can be effective supports for the girls. Girls also have to understand what they can and cannot expect from the adults at their school. Nevertheless, the recurring point was girls wanted someone to communicate with and to have a space to connect with their peers.

Ultimately the girls wanted to know that they are seen and cared for and they also want spaces to connect with their peers. Building relationships, with peers, educators, administrators, and counselors are very important to the girls. Of course, this will not eliminate all discipline issues, but it would definitely help administrators effectively address school discipline disparities and support their teachers and students. For some students and teachers, creating connections are easy, but for many there may be a desire, but no plan. In those cases, there should be resources (professional development, a free period, etc.) that are designated to help the school community learn more about one another.

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Discussion, and Future Considerations

This sequential explanatory mixed methods research study investigated school discipline in a Midwestern state and explored Black girls' perspectives about school discipline and possible solutions. School and district-level data were used to examine the current discipline condition for public schools, at all levels, in the state. Since the implementation of the Guns Free Schools Act of 1994, there has been a particular focus on school discipline in U.S. public schools (McIntosh et al., 2018). The Guns Free Schools Act of 1994 ushered in zero-tolerance policies in many states that were not using as punitive an approach (Okonofua et al., 2014). As school leaders and educators were mandated to implement ZT practices, the number of suspensions increased (Skiba et al., 2014). Even more, there were a growing number of cases where the leaders were implementing the policy ineffectively. After some time, the U.S. Department of Education, policymakers, and academic scholars, alike, monitored, evaluated, and challenged the use of punitive measures in school discipline.

The education policy and academic conversations about the impacts of zero-tolerance on Black students centered Black boys. Black boys had the highest rates holding for race, gender, and other factors. As such, research continued about Black boys, thereby leaving Black girls forgotten and overlooked. When scholarship is disaggregated by race *and* gender, Black girls' long-term school discipline disparities become visible. Key scholars who dedicated their work to Black women and girls have worked on explicitly focusing on Black girls. Also, within the last decade, more multidisciplinary

work on Black girls and school discipline emerged (Insley, 2001; Links et al., 2015; Welch, 2010; Wun, 2016). This study is in response to the contemporary literature provided in Chapter 2. It seeks to understand public school discipline for Black girls in a Midwestern state. But, more importantly, it also seeks interventions to mitigate discipline disparities using the perspectives of Black girls currently enrolled in public schools.

Interpretation of Quantitative Findings

1. Studies find that Back girls receive disproportionate exclusionary discipline practices (EDP) when compared to their non-Black female peers (Morris, 2012). When focusing on female students, do the Black female students receive more EPD compared to other racial groups?

Of interest was which racial group received the highest proportion of school discipline. Black girls, by and large, had the highest total raw counts of school discipline and the highest average percentage of school discipline. Proportions were chosen over raw numbers with the understanding that white girls made up the enrolled majority and, in turn, may also have higher counts of school discipline. Percentages represented the girls' received discipline in proportion to one another. However, the limitations to using count data and being unable to parse the number of offenses per person per building led to skewed data. There is a difference in skewness due to overrepresentation in data rather than skewness due to outliers. The latter was the case for Hispanic girls who also had a meager count of total discipline occurrences, but outlier cases impacted their representation in the data. The researcher had to compare the raw total counts with the

213

proportions of school discipline and found that Black girls, by and large, had the highest total counts of school discipline. Meaning that for Black girls, the skewness in data is because they are overrepresented for receiving school discipline rather than skewness for outlier data.

This also means that the first quantitative research inquiry's results are in alignment with DOE depictions and academic empirical studies on Black girls and school discipline. Chapter 1 first addressed the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights' periodic reports on school discipline based on 2011-2012 data. The DOE Office of Civil Rights has not produced another discipline snapshot but has completed data for the 2013-2014 academic year on their website (2015-2016 is in progress). The researcher used the Department of Education's publicly accessible data to compare national data to the results from the first quantitative research inquiry.

The DOE records show that Black girls (without disabilities) represented the highest percentage of female students receiving out of school suspensions at around 48%. All the while, Black girls represent only under 8% of the enrolled population for female students in the country. DOE data in reflected all United States public schools responsible for reporting school discipline to the Department of Education. The findings for first quantitative research inquiry suggests that school discipline disparities for Black girls, from an earlier national scope compared to a more current statewide overview, has persisted.

This trend is reflected in the empirical studies highlighted throughout chapter two that also found disparities. The disparities are concerning given that Black girls' experiences with exclusionary discipline have a strong relationship to interaction with juvenile systems. Even in studies before the DOE's 2014 discipline report, found that

> Between 1985 and 1997, Black girls were the fastest growing segment of the juvenile population in secure confinement. By 2010, Black girls were 36 percent of juvenile females in residential placement. During these same periods Black girls also experienced a dramatic rise in per-district suspension rates. (Morris, 2012, p. 35; Puzzanchera et al., 2011; Sickmund et al., 2011)

Their study suggests that Black girls who experience exclusionary discipline seem to coincide with the likelihood of coming into contact with the juvenile justice system. Blake et al.'s (2011) study also found that Black girls' disparities coincided with their male peers in some ways. "Black girls in our study were overrepresented for exclusionary discipline sanctions and were twice as likely to receive in-school and out-of-school suspensions then all female students (Blake et al., 2011, p. 99). The disparities for Black girls and school discipline persists and is reflected in the results of this study.

2. Contemporary research studies find that the most prevalent type of misbehavior for Black girls is *insubordination or disruptive behavior* (Morris, 2012). So, what types of misbehavior are most common for each racial group?

The results for the second quantitative research inquiry presented that Black girls' most prevalent offense was disobedience. Black girls received the highest percentage of

215

discipline occurrences for *disobedience and disruption*, also known as discretionary offenses, at over 16%. This particular misbehavior type was overrepresented in the distribution. *Disobedience* and *disruption* are the most prevalent misbehavior and least severe misbehavior types. Goofing around in class or talking to one's classmates is commonplace for most students' educational experiences. Students interacting with one another during the lesson is a common occurrence. Therefore it does seem reasonable that discretionary offenses are the most prevalent. Although, it is concerning that Black girls receive such a large proportion in comparison to their female peers. Skiba et al., (2002) study on misbehavior types and race found that white students are more likely to be punished for objective offenses such as smoking and vandalism, whereas Black students are removed for offenses such as noise, disrespect, threatening, etc.; those behaviors are considered more subjective.

Blake et al.'s 2011 empirical study about the most prevalent types reasons why Black girls are referred to the office including, disobedience, truancy, defiance, tardiness, improper dress, fight with students, threats to student, profane to adult, encourage to fight, and profane to students. Their study found that prevalent misbehavior types varied per racial group. "Black girls were most often cited for defiance followed by inappropriate dress, using profane language toward a student, and physical aggression. In comparison to Hispanic females, we found that Black girls were more often cited for profanity to students" (Blake et al., 2011, p. 100). The qualitative results also speak to the discipline issue in more detail, especially in regard to inconsistency in the dress code.

216

The reasons for this are posited in literature. Typically scholarship on the prevalence of discretionary offenses for Black girls suggests that implicit bias, cultural misreadings, and Black girls' perceived inability to conform to white standards of femininity are important contributors (Morris, 2015; Morris, 2012). For example, Wun (2016) explained that

> Black girls, in particular, are more likely to be disciplined for 'talking back' and being 'unladylike.' Black girls are also likely to be arrested for being 'disrespectful' and 'uncontrollable.' The characterizations and subsequent disciplinary actions are characterized by underlying racial stereotypes and assumptions about appropriate behaviors, which often indicate that girls are expected to be obedient and docile. (Morris 2012; Wun, 2016, p. 2)

This means stereotypes and perceptions of Black girls impact teachers' decisions in what they consider to be misbehavior. So Black girls, who may be doing the same things as their peers, will be seen as more of a threat. Nance (2015) posited,

> Because most teachers and school administrators seem to be acting in good faith and there is substantial evidence that minority students are not misbehaving at higher rates than similarly situated white students, logically we can attribute at least some of these disparities to the unconscious biases of educators. (p. 1073)

Black girls are perceived as more adult-like than their white female peers, so their adolescent misbehavior will be judged more harshly (Epstein et al., 2017). The second quantitative research inquiry results suggest that the discretionary punishments, i.e.,

disobedience and *disruption*, may be administered inconsistently per teacher and administrators. Inconsistencies in punishing discretionary offenses may be partly explained by typical adolescent misbehavior, adultification, stereotype threat, implicit bias, and cultural misreading (Annamma et al., 2016; Epstein et al., 2017; Morris, 2015). Ultimately, these current study findings are in alignment with contemporary literature that Black girls are punished for discretionary offenses more than their non-Black female peers.

3. Exclusionary discipline practices have a negative correlational relationship to academic achievement (Annamma et al. 2016; Skiba et al., 2014). So what relationship, if any, exists between the rate of disciplinary occurrences and math and reading proficiency rates among female students?

   H_0: There is no significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement, as measured by English and Math proficiency.

   H_1: There is a significant relationship between EDP and academic achievement as measured by English and Math proficiency.

Results for the third research inquiry displayed relationships between receiving school discipline and academic achievement. All of the correlational relationships between receiving school discipline and proficiency in math and English standardized tests showed a statistically significant negative relationship. Meaning that as students receive more cases of school discipline, then they are less likely to be proficient on state English and math tests. This finding is in alignment with the literature. Skiba et al.'s 2014 study

on school discipline found that removing students from school impacts not only their academic outcomes but behavior over time. "School exclusion through suspension and expulsion is associated with lower academic achievement at both the school level and the individual level, as well as increased risk of negative behavior over time" (Skiba et. al, 2014, p. 641).

Scholarship suggests that students who are removed from school via exclusionary punishments have lower academic outcomes (Insley, 2001). This makes sense when considering that students fall behind, miss tests, and become disengaged when they are removed from the school community. The qualitative results speak more to academic issues as well. The girls addressed how some schools did not make the reintegration back into school manageable and that sometimes it was difficult to even obtain missing homework. Studies on the effectiveness of exclusionary school discipline find that,

> Removing students through suspension is associated with decreased overall student achievement and perceived positive school climate. Further, controlling for school and individual characteristics, students who are suspended or expelled for non-dangerous behaviors are substantially more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system, a well-documented phenomenon now widely known as the "school-to-prison pipeline." (McIntosh et al., K., 2014, p. 1)

As stated in Chapter 4, Cohen's g effect sizes for the relationships were strongest for white females, then Asian, Black, and then Hispanic. This was interesting due to the studies showing how detrimental exclusionary punishments are for students. When

219

detrimental outcomes are coupled with the fact that Black girls receive the highest proportion of school discipline, then it would seem to follow that they would also have the strongest relationship in that correlational analysis. Relationship strength could be the result of a variety of different causes, from standardized tests being used as a measure of academic achievement, to internalized self-worth and identity after being removed from schools. In the latter case, perhaps students from overrepresented groups do not view the exclusionary punishment as a hit to their identity. If a student is removed from school and has peers who were removed as well, or in some cases may even expect to be severely disciplined during their school career, it might affect the impact on academic achievement differently. Lower academically performing students tend to be removed from school more often than their high performing peers (McIntosh et al., 2014). In turn this could mean that when lower performing Black females are removed it does not have as great an impact on their academics.

4. It is likely that a student's race may be a significant predictor for determining the severity level of their punishment (Skiba et al., 2014). So, are race and percentage of Black enrollment significant predictors of students' discipline severity levels for female students?

   H_0: There is no relationship between race and percentage of Black enrollment on the severity level of punishment used in schools.

   H_1: There is a relationship between race and percentage of Black enrollment on the severity level of punishment used in schools.

220

The last quantitative inquiry involved investigating school-level predictors of discipline severity level. This was important to the study because it could provide a deeper perspective on the school-level factors that contribute to disparate punishment. Studies show that school-level factors such as race and the percentage of Black students enrolled, seem to predict the severity of punishment used. Welch and Payne's (2010) study found that after controlling for school levels of misbehavior and delinquency, schools with higher numbers of Black students enrolled also were more likely to have higher rates of zero tolerance policies, exclusionary punishment, and court action. "Schools with higher proportions of African American students appear to use more punitive and fewer supportive interventions for school discipline" (Skiba et al., 2014, p. 646). Findings for the current study are in alignment with current literature on Black girls and school discipline. Morris and Perry's 2017 study found that

> Controlling for background variables, black girls are three times more likely than white girls to receive an office referral; this difference is substantially wider than the gap between black boys and white boys. Moreover, black girls receive disproportionate referrals for infractions such as disruptive behavior, dress code violations, disobedience, and aggressive behavior. We argue that these infractions are subjective and influenced by gendered interpretations. (p. 127)

The negative binomial multilevel regression showed that the interaction between *race & percentage of Black students* and severity level is significant. The ggplot visualizations showed that per 1000 students in a given school, as the percentage of Black enrolled

increases, so does the number of out-of-school-suspensions. The plot for the race variable shows that per 1000 students, Black girls were more likely to receive an out-of-school-suspension in comparison to their white and Hispanic peers.

Interpretation of Qualitative Findings

The qualitative analysis was a phenomenological inductive study conducted with a Positive Psychology lens. This section of the study added nuance and provided a voice. The qualitative analysis produced four major themes *misbehavior, discipline, teachers, and solutions*. The qualitative results added depth to some of the quantitative results presented in the earlier section. The major objective of the qualitative piece was to gain a scope of the problem from their perspective and how they think the issue could be mitigated at their schools.

RQ1. What are the girls' perceptions and experiences of school discipline?

Misbehavior. The *misbehavior* theme included the girls' perspectives on the most prevalent misbehaviors in their schools and how discipline was administered. For example, the girls noted that the most common behaviors at their school involved talking, goofing, or being on their phones. Most of the misbehavior revolved around typical adolescent behavior. This is in alignment with the quantitative findings that the most common types of misbehavior are minor and relate to *disruption* and *disobedience*. The girls expressed that sometimes they feel as if their teachers were too harsh when it came to those minor offenses. Especially because they felt that it's difficult to sit all day, and when their work is completed, sometimes they will want to talk to their peers. Again,

222

they noted that the minor type of misbehaviors depends on the teachers. Some will become extremely upset if they hear too much laughing or noise, and the girls feel that they want a little more room to address themselves in class.

Discipline. The girls also noted that there were inconsistencies in how discipline was administered in their schools for different types of offenses within the *discipline* theme. This not only included the minor offenses for in-class misbehavior, but it also included dress code violations. The dress code violations were particularly frustrating because they were not administered consistently or objectively. Some days it was upheld, and some days it was not. If there was a particular administrator in the building, it might be implemented, and students would be punished. The girls noted that they were not even too sure about the discipline policies because the handbook was only addressed during orientation. More importantly, all of the girls felt that when their teachers administered punishment, they were not using the handbook as the foundational guide. This piece ties in with the first quantitative inquiry as a partial explanation for why Black girls receive such a high portion of the discretionary offenses. When teachers or administrators do not make discipline decisions by the letter of the discipline handbook, and they do not do so consistently for all students, then it creates the breeding ground for disparities to develop.

The discipline theme also addressed the first qualitative question with its discussion on fighting. Throughout the interviews, the girls all felt that in many cases, fighting could not be a simple objective event. From their perspective, there were many parts that led to the fight and many factors that may have contributed to it as well.

223

Therefore teachers and administrators should understand the full scope of the issue before removing students from their school. Girls mentioned stories of girls who were bullied and had to defend themselves, even if they did not want to fight, and were punished the same as the girl initiating the altercation. Girls did believe there should be repercussions, but given those outcomes of out-of-school-suspension, they felt that it should only be used for severe cases.

The issue of student removal and academics were focal points in the interviews. It became clear through the discussions that many of the schools possessed different philosophies as it related to exclusionary punishment. Some schools approached out-of-school-suspensions with a *throw away student* approach and offered little aid for them while they were away and none when they returned to school. There were other girls who noted that their school leaders worked really hard to keep the students in the building. Some of the girls explained students were not able to get their homework while on suspension because they were not allowed on school property. In that case, only a parent or guardian could pick up the schoolwork. Nevertheless, the girls noted that their schools were so high paced that missing one day felt like missing a week. All of the girls understood that missing school would directly impact students' academic outcomes, which is why they felt teachers should use that punishment sparingly. Part of the qualitative analysis also speaks to the third quantitative inquiry that investigated the relationships between discipline and academics. There is a steep cost to pay for students

224

who miss school. Oftentimes students who miss school for disciplinary reasons are not top academic performers, which only pushes them further behind.

RQ2. How do the girls imagine effective school discipline, interventions, resources, or levels of support?

  Teachers. Throughout the interviews, it quickly became clear that the girls had an innate desire to have healthy relationships with their peers and their educators and administrators. The girls talked about how developing healthy professional relationships with teachers and administrators would ultimately help the school community. The more educators and administrators know about their students, the more efficiently they can meet their needs. In cases where punishment is meted out, educational leaders who know the full context of the situation can make the most appropriate decision. The ideas that kept emerging were of being seen, heard, and validated.

  Solutions. In addition, they noted that having programming where they could connect with other Black girls could help them build positive relationships with their peers. It would provide the opportunity for them to open up and share their highs and lows with one another as well. The participants expressed that this could be best accomplished if led by a Black counselor or teacher, but girls should also maintain their voice as well. They explained that healthy relationships with peers helped them feel more a part of the school community, and having relationships with teachers helped them feel seen.

More importantly, all of the girls expressed the desire to have a trained mental health professional to speak with at their schools. They explained that many girls do not have a parent with whom they speak about deep emotional issues. Sometimes the girls do not have anyone to speak to at home or at school. They all thought that every school should have an accessible counselor that could relate and form relationships with the school body. Participants were able to articulate their need for professional mental guidance for their emotional growth. They knew it would help with their academics, and they truly thought it would be beneficial for a professional to help give them tools to work through the hardships in their lives.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were formed from the completion of the sequential explanatory mixed-methods study. For the Midwestern state, school discipline disparities existed for Black girls for the 2018 and 2019 school years. When examining the amount of school discipline received by race and gender, Black girls received the highest total counts in comparison to their non-Black female peers. Moreover, Black girls had the highest rates of discipline occurrences for discretionary offenses in comparison to their white and Hispanic female peers. In the Midwestern state, receiving school discipline had a significant negative relationship to academic outcomes. And most concerning, schools with higher percentages of Black students enrolled and the students' race, were predictors of school discipline severity.

Black girls currently enrolled in the Midwestern states' high schools explained that school discipline was not administered consistently and to the letter of the discipline handbook in their schools. School discipline policies are not discussed in detail and infrequently. They also noted discrepancies in punishment for minor offenses, dress code, in particular, between teachers and administrators. The effectiveness of the discipline administration is a large part attributed to the teachers' and administers' relationship with the student and understanding of the *full* concept of the discipline issue. Relationships with peers and their educators are extremely important to facilitate beneficial educational experiences. Most importantly, there is a need for professional mental health professionals to help aid students through difficult academic and emotional issues in their life.

Implications

Findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses yielded results with implications in education policy, education administration, and counseling (see Figure 14). The quantitative analysis showed that discipline disparities persist for Black girls in a Midwestern state. Black girls received the most cases of school discipline and they are most likely to be punished for minor discretionary offenses.

227
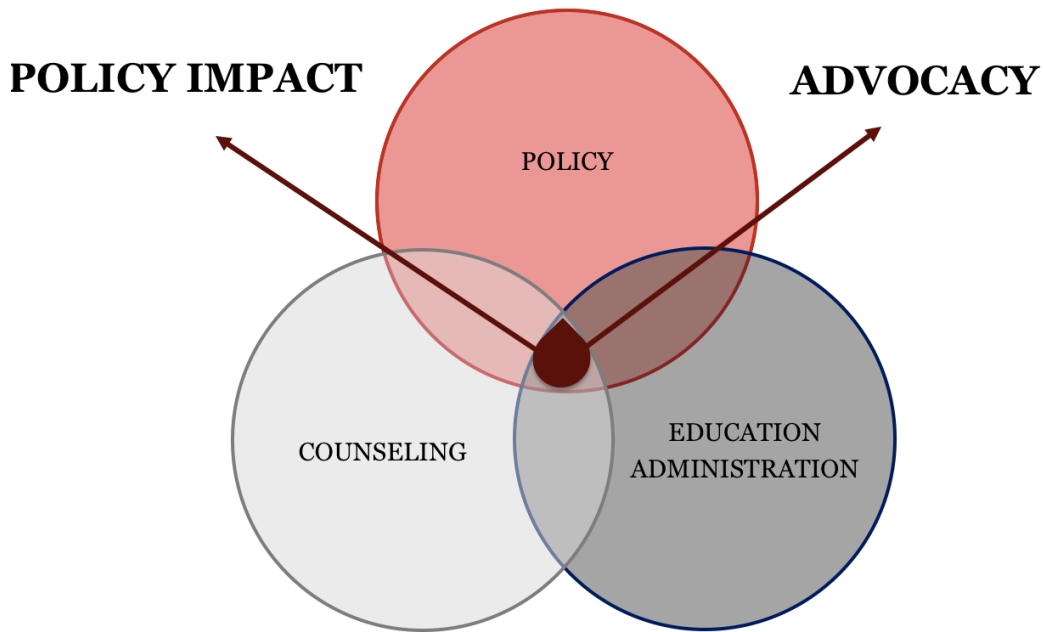
Figure 13. Implications of Research

Receiving discipline has a significant impact on academic performance, and *race* and the *percentage of enrolled Black students* were significant predictors of discipline severity level. The qualitative analysis showed that girls mostly engaged in non-severe misbehavior such as laughing, talking, and playing on their phones. The dress code violations, in particular, were implemented inconsistently and were frustrating to the girls. Girls all felt the effectiveness of school discipline implementation depended on educators' and administrators' relationships with their students and the school community. In addition, they all wanted to have professional counseling programming and/or a counselor. They all acknowledge the importance of having a mental health counselor, especially for girls who do not have people to talk to at home. At the heart of the study were two goals: 1) to positively impact the policy process to improve the lives

of Black girls. 2) Using Black girls as experts, instead of as subjects, to consider effective

alternatives to the issue. The following sections speak more to the application of findings

in education policy, education administration, and counseling.

Education Policy

By investigating the outcomes and experiences of students under zero tolerance

policies and practices investigates the long-term impacts of the Guns Free School Act of

1994. The following decades produced studies finding alarming rates of student removal

and disparities along the lines of race, gender, and disability status. The original intent of

the Act was to mitigate school discipline and promote safety within schools. The Act

transitioned into zero tolerance policies/approaches to school discipline, which is now

prevalent in most public schools. Those transitions led to an overreliance on exclusionary

punishment.

> The theory underlying zero tolerance policies is that schools benefit in both ways
>
> when problem students are removed from the school setting. However, there is no
>
> research actually demonstrating this effect. No studies show that an increase in
>
> out-of-school suspension and expulsion reduces disruption in the classroom and
>
> some evidence suggests the opposite effect. In general, rates of suspension and
>
> expulsion appear unrelated to overall school success for schools with similar
>
> characteristics, levels of funding, and student populations. (CYJ, 2013, 4)

Exclusionary punishments are not inherently wrong. In some cases, educators and

administrators have to use this method for their personal safety and the safety of their

students, teachers, and school community. So, the issue is not exclusionary punishment itself; it is the discretion with which educators administer such punishment. Research shows that exclusionary punishment negatively impacts all students but, in particular, students of color and those identified as having disabilities.

> While it may be justifiable to suspend, expel, or refer a student to law enforcement under some circumstances (for example, when a student harms another student with a dangerous weapon or sexually assaults another member of the school community), schools routinely invoke such extreme disciplinary measures for much less serious offenses. Many have referred to this disturbing trend of schools directly referring students to law enforcement or creating conditions under which students are more likely to become involved in the justice system—such as suspending or expelling them—as the ―school-to-prison pipeline. (Nance, J. P., 2015, p. 1064)

Moreover, exclusionary punishments have deleterious short- and long-term effects on students' academic success and the likelihood of entering the prison system (McIntosh et al., 2014, p 1). The current method of discipline has created an environment that perpetuates inequality. The most vulnerable groups of students are being *systematically* removed from classrooms, being deprived of learning opportunities, and are being set up for failure.

In addition, policies are constructed in gender-blind and race-blind language because the entities constructing them are made with the interests of *all* students.

230

These "gender-neutral" policy and intervention recommendations appear to reflect

two major assumptions that (a) Black male issues of overrepresentation in the

Pipeline are the more pressing problem and (b) Black males and females are

disciplined for identical reasons and, therefore, need similar interventions

(Annamma et al., 2016, p. 5)

Therefore, creating standardized interventions that were designed without considering the unique needs of a population is ineffective. Also, by not including the experiences of Black girls in policy and academic conversations overlook the needs of Black girls "without a philanthropic investment in the status of Black girls that is comparable to that of Black boys, the historical framework associated with the invisibility of Black females persists" (Morris, 2012, p. 9). Black girls have long experienced disparate punishment for school discipline, but only relatively recently has multidisciplinary work began to emerge. Even more, policy interest in Black girls' specific needs only has recently begun to emerge. There may currently be an open policy window to consider addressing this issue in the educational policy field (Stone, 2012).

Education Administration

In regard to the field of education administration, the most important factor to consider is student outcomes after implementing exclusionary punishments. The quantitative findings show that there is a significant and negative relationship regarding students' academic outcomes and receiving school discipline. Given the number of empirical studies finding negative short-term and long-term effects of exclusionary

231

punishments, school leaders might consider the impact on their students and the larger

school community. Studies show that for severe offenses, the punishment is

representatively distributed per group. This is because it is used on a limited basis; "as a

result, expulsion appears to be used primarily in response to more seriously disruptive,

violent, or criminal behavior" (Annamma et al., 2016, p. 643). The majority of offenses

punished by out-of-school-suspensions are not severe, so education leaders should

consider the deleterious effects before using it in their schools

> Children who are suspended or expelled under zero tolerance policies lose
>
> valuable educational opportunities, suffer significant psychological harm, and
>
> often find themselves forced into the adult criminal justice system for minor
>
> infractions that occurred at school. To achieve the goal of creating rational
>
> policies to address school violence, legislators and school officials must carefully
>
> examine not only the legality, but also the sociological issues surrounding zero
>
> tolerance policies. (Insley, 2001, p. 1074)

Most importantly, an overlooked key player in addressing this issue is the educational

leader. The problem is not just related to educators and students because educational

leaders help shape the school community. They also have the final say on approving

school discipline cases. Studies have found that schools with principals committed to

keeping students in the school have fewer issues with exclusionary discipline. "Out-of-

school suspension and expulsion were significantly less likely in schools with a principal

with a perspective favoring preventive alternatives to suspension and expulsion" (Skiba

et al., 2014, p. 659).

Counseling

In addition to using severe punishments for severe misbehavior types, it is important to have necessary personnel in the school building to accommodate students' needs. For example, the need to have programming or a certified counselor in the building to help students. The qualitative study found there is a need for personnel trained in counseling to help students navigate issues. The girls all specified that having a counselor or even programming that gave them the opportunity to talk about their problems and get healthy advice about handling it would improve their school community. Sometimes students act out because it is the only way that they know to express themselves. For this reason, it is important to understand the root of the issue. Removing students who have psychological problems, emotional distress, of toxic home environments could have detrimental impacts on the students.

> Studies suggest that when children are out of school, they are more likely to engage in physical fights, to possess a weapon, and to use alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. In fact, harsher punishments often intensify a student's adversarial feelings toward adults and destroy a student's motivation to learn. When students fear zero tolerance punishments, they may hesitate to confide in teachers, school counselors, or other adults at school because they believe adults will punish them before helping them. (Insley, 2001, p. 1070)

Having trained personnel who can provide tools to help students experiencing those

233

conditions could help in several ways. First, it could be an outlet where girls can share their issues and ask for help about how to process. Next, it helps the school community provide appropriate resources/interventions specific to students' needs. Finally, the counseling personnel could work collaboratively with administrators and educators to facilitate their students' wellbeing. The following section addresses recommendations that could help mitigate the issues addressed in the current study.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study is not to absolve Black girls from taking accountability for misbehavior. Every student should be accountable for their actions, sometimes the intent of an action and its consequence are independent of one another. Meaning that sometimes a person can cause harm without intending to do so. When the goal for educators/administrators is to understand *why* the student acted a certain way rather than simply punishing the misbehavior, the likelihood of overusing exclusionary discipline decreases. Administrators should also create measures/protocols to mitigate opportunities for educators to make decisions based on their implicit biases. Systems like that help ensure that those biases do not impact their capacity to fulfill their role as an educator/administrator.

The belief that non-punitive discipline lets students "off the hook" is unfortunate. This mindset is not student-centered and does not address the *why*. For example, if a teenager came home and displayed *insubordinate* behavior towards her parents, it would

234

be considered negligence if the parents' first response was to remove her from their home. When a relationship is built on care and love, the first step would be to find out *why* before deciding the punishment. This is because context always matters. In the example above, a parent who loves their child would respond with care and concern first. They might inquire to learn *why* before deciding on the appropriate punishment. After understanding the context of the problem, the next step should be on successful interventions, in-depth analyses of different demographic groups overrepresented in the data, etc. The following is a list of recommendations per role that could help mitigate the school discipline issue.

Policymakers/Legislators

1. Policymakers often write policies in *vague* language because *precise* policies may not be applicable to a wider variety of populations. However, one way to mitigate the overuse of exclusionary discipline is to designate specific types of punishments that are assigned. Types of misbehaviors that are assigned to exclusionary punishments should be from an objective rather than subjective category.

2. Policymakers should consider the negative psychological and academic outcomes associated with zero tolerance. Thus, disruptive behavior or disobedience misbehavior should be removed as a plausible reason for out of school suspension. Only in extreme cases, as designated by the district, should a school

leader be permitted remove a student for a discretionary offense.

3. Policy makers should legislate steps before students can be removed for subjective misbehaviors. This includes restorative justice practices, calls to parents/guardians, and/or meeting with the parent/guardian & offended party (and their parent/guardian), prior to any final decision.

4. Policy makers should legislate mandatory protocol for school leaders to provide assignments for removed students to receive their missed assignments and tests that will best reduce loss in learning opportunities.

5. Policy makers should legislate incentives and supports to district and school-level administrators who are able mitigate the use of punitive discipline measures, in exchange for more effective models such as restorative practices..

Education Administrators (district-level)

1. District administrators should collect discipline records per district and create annual reports for administrator review. Schools with disproportionate levels of school discipline, along the lines of race, gender, and disability level, will be required to provide a report with a plan to mitigate disparities.

2. Education administrators should establish periodical meetings to discuss rates of school discipline, disparities, areas of improvement, and areas for growth. During those meetings, school leaders will express what they are doing to improve conditions and also share areas where they need help.

3. Education administrators should connect school level leaders with non-profit

programming and resources (in the area) and grant opportunities to help support schools.

4. Education administrators at the district level should ensure that school leaders do not use punitive measures as the primary method of discipline. District-level administrators should be required to move toward restorative practices for all non-severe and subjective misbehavior types.

5. District-level education administrators should provide state or grant-funded resources to support schools in their shift away from punitive discipline practices in schools.

6. District-level education administrators should provide supports and incentives for school-level leaders who are committed to restorative discipline practices in schools.

Education Administrators (school-level)

1. Education administrators play one of the biggest roles in the school discipline issue. Therefore school leaders must understand the demographics of their school community. They must understand the full context of the issue before signing off on discipline that removes students from their building.

2. Education administrators should investigate alternative forms of school discipline, such as restorative justice practices, to help mitigate the school discipline issue.

3. Education administrators should implement restorative practices in their schools with the support from community resources, district-leadership, grant/federal-

funding.

4. Education administrators should move away from punitive discipline for restorative discipline practices.

5. Administrators should incorporate restorative evidence-based measures to best support students and educators.

6. Education administrators should meet regularly with teachers for updates on discipline issues, vulnerable students, and to provide the space for teachers to share areas of need and support.

7. Education administrators should collect and analyze discipline data for their school population.

8. Education administrators should research district resources, apply for grants, and/or look at non-profit organizations that help provide counseling services for students at their school.

9. Education administrators should develop professional relationships with their teachers and their students.

10. Education administrators should establish cultural competency measures in the teacher perceiver questions.

11. Education administrators must assess areas of growth for school staff and should provide supportive resources accordingly.

12. Education administrators should provide programming/resources to welcome parents into their children's educational experiences.

Educators

1. Educators should develop healthy professional relationships with their students. In this way, if there are behavioral issues, teachers can have a better understanding of the *why* and administer appropriate discipline.

2. Educators should establish relationships with their educational leaders and counselor in case that there are ongoing issues with the student. Collaborative relationships can help educators be a resource for their students.

3. Educators should consider speaking with the student about misbehavior, referring them to counseling, and communicating with the parent before suggesting removal from school.

4. Educators should establish relationships with parents and communicate in cases of repeat misbehavior.

5. Educators should consider appropriate measures with parent input to decide remedies to student misbehavior.

Counselors

1. Counselors should establish relationships with students and teachers in the school community.

2. Counselors should assign appropriate services to students and should advocate for them when appropriate.

3. Counselors should collaborate with students to create group programming so that girls can communicate about their lives.

4. Counselors should communicate with teachers and administrators on behalf of students in cases of student removal.

5. Counselors should locate resources to support educators and students so that the most appropriate steps are taken in case of discipline.

Students

1. Students should consider developing relationships with their teachers and talking to them about issues in cases of misbehavior.

2. Students should speak with teachers, administrators, and counselors about their needs.

3. Students should work collaboratively with their peers and teachers to create programming that could improve their community.

Parents

1. Parents should establish relationships with their child's teacher. They should also meet with the teachers in multiple cases of misbehavior.

2. Parents should speak with administrators and teachers to ensure that the punishments are appropriate for their children.

3. Parents of children with higher cases of discipline should check-in with the school counselor and/or educator weekly to assess student misbehavior.

Restorative Justice: An Alternative to Exclusionary Punishment

Ultimately, schools should always aim to be student-centered. Creating an environment conducive to learning should be of the utmost importance for schools. Removing "problem" students from the classroom or school building is a quick fix with disastrous consequences. Exclusion should be utilized as a last resort. Instead of only training teachers on implicit biases, moving towards discipline methods with a restorative model seems to be most promising for the most vulnerable students. Scholars must continue to focus on Black girls in Pre-K through secondary education and explore their experiences under zero tolerance. Policymakers must seek out burgeoning research to create evidence-based programs that will support Black girls. Finally, public schools as a whole must move away from punitive methods towards a model of rehabilitation and restoration. But what do we do now? The section below highlights two case studies of a district and a school (respectively) that used punitive practices and transitioned to restorative practices with positive outcomes for students and their school community.

Jefferson Parish Schools (JPS)

A successful example of restorative practice at work is the Jefferson Parrish School (JPS) district. This school district came under heavy scrutiny for utilizing extreme punitive measures on a student (City Lab, Shen, 2017). In 2015, a black eighth-grader in JPS was arrested and handcuffed in front of his class while taking a social studies test for throwing skittles at a classmate on the bus the previous day. He spent six days in a juvenile detention center before he saw a judge. In response to the negative attention, JPS

created a new discipline plan featuring restorative justice. The handbook now gave

students the right to request a restorative circle before a suspension and offers schools

guidance on how to use restorative techniques. The district also contracts with the Center

for Restorative Approaches (CRA) to facilitate circles or train staff in restorative

practices for any school that wants them **(**City Lab, Shen, 2017).

Marrero Middle school is a part of the JPS school district and was impacted by

the shift in disciplinary practices. Restorative circles became a crucial tool in their school

and helped foster an open and non-judgmental space for everyone affected by the

incident. Instead of having a "standard" punishment imposed upon students, the

alternative method made students active participants in their discipline, and those spaces

could also include parents and teachers. "At the end of a circle, participants come up with

an agreement to repair the harm. They might decide someone needs to post an apology on

Facebook, or a resolution could be as simple as a promise to say hello to each other in the

hallway" (City Lab, Shen, 2017).

Next time when Marrero Middle School experienced a student fight,

administrators turned away from punitive measures and began to implement restorative

practices, with much success. Since its implementation in August 2016, suspensions have

dropped by 56 percent at Marrero Middle School. This school set an example for other

schools in the JPS school district, and schools throughout the district have experienced

lower rates of out-of-school suspensions. Despite the potential positive benefits to

students, there is some pushback from teachers and school personnel because of the

associated time and financial costs. As a response to the shift in school discipline, Ms.

Conforto, principal Marrero Middle School, explained

> Staying home for three days is an easy solution. That's a vacation. …What is a
>
> harder solution is to sit there amongst your peers and their parents and your
>
> parents, and be made to take responsibility for what you did wrong? Being made
>
> to make amends and have to make a contract and have to apologize and shake
>
> hands in front of everybody? That is much more difficult than to stay home for
>
> three days (City Lab, Shen, 2017).

Columbus City Preparatory School for Girls (CCPSG)

Another compelling case for restorative practices is Columbus City Preparatory

School for Girls (CCPSG). CCPSG is an all-girls school, it has a predominantly Black

(76%) student population, and the school is indicated as having students from low-

income families (100%) (NCES, 2018 & 2016). This school has been under the

leadership of Principal Stephanie Patton since 2014. Principal Patton used her shared

cultural understanding and experiences to inform her approaches to their schooling. In

addition, she also committed to using evidence-based approaches to address her students'

holistic needs. For example, in a 2019 interview given by the National Black Women's

Justice Institute (NBWJI), Principal Patton explained:

> There are noticeable differences in learning behaviors for girls and boys. A
>
> strategy to lessen these triggers is to provide girls with clear objectives and

outcomes and safe spaces. In doing so, we can create nurturing environments to

increase our girls' focus, build their confidence, and develop their voice.

One of the most notable changes Principal Patton introduced to CCPSG was the use of

restorative discipline practices. Her commitment to data and evidence-based interventions

were driving forces behind the policy change. Principal Patton understood the issue of

disproportionate punishments for Black girls. She used Monique Morris' (2016) book,

PUSHOUT, as a guiding resource in reshaping the implementation of discipline in her

school. Over the span of Principal Patton's leadership at CCPSG, her school has made

tremendous strides academically and in regard to school discipline. During the 2018-2019

academic year, CCPSG had the *lowest* number of suspensions in their district compared

to other traditional middle schools through Quarters 1 – 9 (NBWJI, 2019)**.** This is

extremely significant, considering the demographic composition of the public middle

school. Statistically, CCPSG *should* have a higher propensity towards punitive

punishments, and Black girls *should* have the highest numbers of exclusionary

punishment. But, fortunately, it is not the case.

Principal Patton noted that at CCPSG, "we are decreasing at-risk behaviors and

at-risk outcomes for our girls" (NBWJI, 2019). Principal Patton confronted the

disproportionality issue in her school by turning to scholarship, evidence-based practices,

and her school community. Therefore, her school prioritizes understanding the

underlying cause of behavioral issues. This priority can be addressed when healthy

relationships are built within schools. As explained earlier, restorative practices are

244

grounded in creating a community. Therefore, every person in the school is responsible

for themselves and how they treat members in their community. The primary objective

for Principal Patton, and the educational personnel at CCSPG, was to understand *why* the

misbehavior occurred and address those core issues head-on. Deciding to take the more

difficult road by understanding the issue is reflected in a simple metaphor. Medical

professionals are concerned with their patients' symptoms, but it would be ineffective

(and even dangerous) to treat symptoms independent of the larger illness. Only

addressing the symptoms is indeed quicker and results in temporary relief, which is why

it may seem more appealing (NBWJI, 2019). However, taking the time and energy to

understand the root cause can eliminate the symptoms and illness altogether.

 For CCSPG, it could be simpler to address misbehavior by removing girls from

their schooling. However, Principal Patton's commitment to addressing the *why* guides

her along with the more difficult but more effective path. Principal Patton pairs each and

every girl with an adult at the school so that they can be supported and cared for at the

individual level (NBWJI, 2019)**.** Therefore, she explains that "every girl knows exactly

who to see if they have a problem or need to talk" (NBWJI, 2019)**.** In addition to

fostering positive adult relationships, the school also has a Learning Lounge Inspiration

Station and a Student Wellness Center. Those spaces are designated to provide

therapeutic outlets for the girls through art, music, yoga, etc., as a means to re-center

focus on academic experiences despite stressors life and academic stressors (NBWJI,

2019).

One major element of this study is to consider the importance of implementation in the success of a policy. The current study inquiries how implementation could be used as a tool to produce positive outcomes from a policy that is largely ineffective. Regarding school discipline, educators are the key factors in the policy's success or failure. Principal Patton understood teachers' indispensable role in changing the school community, and so she implemented weekly *ongoing* training and programming. Not only are teachers given resources to help them work more effectively in their roles, but they are also given the space to "reset and recharge with popular wellness techniques" (NBWJI, 2019). In addition to providing supports to educators, they provide resources to parents at their schools, including workshops to help understand girls' specific needs as well as another programming. Principal Patton's commitment to addressing Black girls' discipline disproportionality, is in part, embedded in her identity as a Black woman:

> Black women are among the most educated in this country. But, we must be confident enough to show up. It is my life's work to make sure our girls can go to any boardroom and are brave, have a voice, and are ready to make a difference in society. (NBWJI, 2019)

Future Research

This study provides the scope of the school discipline for Black girls in a Midwestern state. It also uses Black girls' voices to consider solutions. The quantitative analysis surveyed all schools, and the qualitative analysis only focused on Black girls. Future scholarship could contribute to the field with an extensive school level by school

246

level analysis. It would also be beneficial to hear the voices of Black girls from various school levels. The difficulty with the lower school levels is students' ability to articulate their thoughts. There, of course, are methods and techniques that are specific for younger children. But the depth of the content or even the questions that are able to be asked will have to be reconsidered. Future research could investigate a longitudinal study of Black girls, school discipline, and alternatives. Including the voices of administrators, parents, and teachers would add an even deeper layer to the study. In addition, focusing on schools that have successfully implemented alternatives (with the positive psychology premise of examining what works) in comparison to those who are using traditional methods of discipline could lead to an interesting study as well.

Final Thoughts

The premise of the study was to understand the scope of school discipline in a Midwestern state and to use Black girls to consider alternatives to the issue. So Black girls were considered more than a subject. They were the experts that played a key role in opening up discussions about discipline alternatives. Black girls are not victims; they are adolescent girls with agency and an intrinsic desire to improve their lives and the lives of their peers. This study is a first step in working with the girls to support them and improve their school.

Bibliography

Allman, K. L., & Slate, J. R. (2011). School discipline in public education: A brief review of current practices. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6(2), n2, 1-8.

Anderson, M. D. (2016, March 15). The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/03/the-criminalization-of-black-girls-in-schools/473718/.

Angen, M. J. (2000). Evaluating interpretive inquiry: Reviewing the validity debate and opening the dialogue. *Qualitative health research*, *10*(3), 378-395.

Annamma, S. A., Anyon, Y., Joseph, N. M., Farrar, J., Greer, E., Downing, B., & Simmons, J. (2016). Black girls and school discipline: The complexities of being overrepresented and understudied. *Urban Education*, 0042085916646610.

Aston, C., Graves Jr, S. L., McGoey, K., Lovelace, T., & Townsend, T. (2018). Promoting sisterhood: The impact of a culturally focused program to address verbally aggressive behaviors in Black girls. *Psychology in the Schools*, *55*(1), 50-62.

Banaji, M. R., & Greenwald, A. G. (2016). *Blindspot: Hidden biases of good people*. Bantam.

Beard, K. S. (2019). Getting on track: aligning the achievement gap conversation with ethical educational practice. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *22*(1), 30-54.

Beard, K. S. (2018). Standing in the gap: Theory and practice impacting educational
opportunity and achievement gaps. *Urban Education*, *53*(5), 668-696.

Bell Jr, D. A. (1975). Serving two masters: Integration ideals and client interests in
school desegregation litigation. *Yale. LJ*, *85*, 470.

Bell, L., & Stevenson, H. (2006). What is education policy?. In *Education Policy* (pp. 23-
40). Routledge.

Blake, J. J., Butler, B. R., Lewis, C. W., & Darensbourg, A. (2011). Unmasking the
inequitable discipline experiences of urban Black girls: Implications for urban
educational stakeholders. *The Urban Review*, *43*(1), 90-106.

Bryan, J., Day-Vines, N. L., Griffin, D., & Moore-Thomas, C. (2012). The
disproportionality dilemma: Patterns of teacher referrals to school counselors for
disruptive behavior. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *90*(2), 177-190.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist
critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. In
University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1(8), 139-167.

Crenshaw, K., Ocen, P., & Nanda, J. (2015). *Black girls matter: Pushed out, overpoliced,
and underprotected*. Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies,
Columbia University.

Creswell, J. W., Plano Clark, V. L., Gutmann, M. L., & Hanson, W. E. (2003). Advanced
mixed methods research designs. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.),

Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research (pp. 209 –240). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Cerrone, K. M. (1999). The Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994: Zero tolerance takes aim at procedural due process. *Pace L. Rev.*, *20*, 131.

Charles, H. (2008). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Contemporary Justice Review, 11(1), 63-65*

Chiang, I. C. A., Jhangiani, R. S., & Price, P. C. (2015). Overview of Nonexperimental Research. Research Methods in Psychology.

Chmielewski, J. F., Belmonte, K. M., Fine, M., & Stoudt, B. G. (2016). Intersectional inquiries with LGBTQ and gender nonconforming youth of color: Participatory research on discipline disparities at the race/sexuality/gender nexus. In *Inequality in school discipline* (pp. 171-188). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Collins, P. H. (1989). The social construction of black feminist thought. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *14*(4), 745-773.

Collins, P. H. (1990). Black feminist thought in the matrix of domination. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*, 221-238.

Crenshaw, K. (1990). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stan. L. Rev.*, 43, 1241.

Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Seligman, M. E. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, *55*(1), 5-14.

Curran, F. C. (2016). Estimating the effect of state zero tolerance laws on exclusionary discipline, racial discipline gaps, and student behavior. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *38*(4), 647-668.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (1995). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (Vol. 20). NYU Press.

Dixon, M., Lee, S., & Ghaye, T. (2016). Strengths-based reflective practices for the management of change: applications from sport and positive psychology. *Journal of Change Management*, *16*(2), 142-157.

Epstein, R., Blake, J., & Gonzalez, T. (2017). Girlhood interrupted: The erasure of Black girls' childhood. Retrieved from https://www.blendedandblack.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/girlhood-interrupted.pdf

Fay, K., Boyd, M. J., & Salkind, N. J. (2010). *Encyclopedia of research design*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Field, L. W. (2008). " Side by Side or Facing One Another": Writing and Collaborative Ethnography in Comparative Perspective. *Collaborative Anthropologies*, 1(1), 32-50.

Fund, C. D. (1975). School suspensions: Are they helping children. *Cambridge, MA: Washington Research Project*.

Gershoff, E. T., & Font, S. A. (2016). Corporal punishment in US public schools: Prevalence, disparities in use, and status in state and federal policy. *Social policy report*, *30*.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The qualitative report*, *8*(4), 597-606.

Gonzales, J. (Producer). (2016). *Episode 47: Black Girls and School: We Can Do Better* [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/episode-47/

Gorman, K., & Pauken, P. (2003). The ethics of zero tolerance. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *41*(1), 24-36.

Gregory, A., & Weinstein, R. S. (2008). The discipline gap and African Americans: Defiance or cooperation in the high school classroom. *Journal of School Psychology*, *46*(4), 455-475.

Harrison, L. (2017). Redefining intersectionality theory through the lens of African American young adolescent girls' racialized experiences. *Youth & Society*, *49*(8), 1023-1039.

Hewitt, D. T. (2011). Reauthorize, revise, and remember: Refocusing the No Child Left Behind Act to fulfill Brown's promise. *Yale L. & Pol'y Rev.*, *30*, 169.

Hines-Datiri, D., & Carter Andrews, D. J. (2017). The effects of zero tolerance policies on Black girls: Using critical race feminism and figured worlds to examine school discipline. *Urban Education*, 0042085917690204.

Honig, M. I. (2006). New directions in education policy implementation. Suny Press.

Insley, A. C. (2001). Suspending and expelling children from educational opportunity: Time to reevaluate zero tolerance policies. *Am. UL Rev.*, *50*, 1039.

Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, L. A. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational researcher*, *33*(7), 14-26.

Kang-Brown, J., Trone, J., Fratello, J., & Daftary-Kapur, T. (2013). *A generation later: What we've learned about zero tolerance in schools*. Vera Institute of Justice, Center of Youth Justice.

Kennedy-Lewis, B. L. (2014). Using critical policy analysis to examine competing discourses in zero tolerance legislation: Do we really want to leave no child behind?. *Journal of Education Policy*, *29*(2), 165-194.

Kitzinger, J. & Barbour, R.S. (1999). Introduction: the challenges and promise of focus groups. In R.S. Barbour and J. Kitzinger (Eds.), Developing Focus Group Research (pp. 1-20), London: Sage.

Kroll, T., & Neri, M. (2009). Designs for mixed methods research. *Mixed methods research for nursing and the health sciences*, *31*.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children. *Harvard Educational Review,* 64, 488-488.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers college record*, 97(1), 47.

Leech, B. L. (2002). Asking questions: Techniques for semi-structured interviews. PS: Political Science & Politics, 35(4), 665-668.

Lee, S., & Smith, C. A. (2012). Criteria for quantitative and qualitative data integration: mixed-methods research methodology. *CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing*, *30*(5), 251-256

Ledesma, M. C., & Calderón, D. (2015). Critical race theory in education: A review of past literature and a look to the future. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *21*(3), 206-222.

Levesque, R. J. (2011). Zero Tolerance Policies. In *Encyclopedia of Adolescence* (pp. 3105-3106). Springer New York.

Lincoln, YS. & Guba, EG. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Linkins, M., Niemiec, R. M., Gillham, J., & Mayerson, D. (2015). Through the lens of strength: A framework for educating the heart. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 10(1), 64-68.Smith, M., & Whyte, B. (2008). Social education and social pedagogy: reclaiming a Scottish tradition in social work. *European Journal of Social Work*, 11(1), 15-28.

MacAllister, J. (2016). *Reclaiming Discipline for Education: Knowledge, relationships and the birth of community*. Routledge Press.

Martin, J., & Smith, J. (2017). Subjective Discipline and the Social Control of Black Girls in Pipeline Schools. *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research*, v13, 63-72.

McIntosh, K., Ellwood, K., McCall, L., & Girvan, E. J. (2018). Using discipline data to

enhance equity in school discipline. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, *53*(3), 146-

152.

Monroe, C. R. (2005). Why are" bad boys" always black?: Causes of disproportionality

in school discipline and recommendations for change. *The Clearing House: A

Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, *79*(1), 45-50.

Morris, M. (2016). *Pushout: The criminalization of Black girls in schools*. The New

Press.

Morris, E. W. (2007). "Ladies" or "loudies"? Perceptions and experiences of black girls

in classrooms. *Youth & Society*, *38*(4), 490-515.

Morris, E. W., & Perry, B. L. (2017). Girls behaving badly? Race, gender, and subjective

evaluation in the discipline of African American girls. *Sociology of Education*,

90(2), 127-148.

Namey, E. (2017). Riddle me this: How many interviews (or focus groups) are enough.

*blog], Research for Evidence< https://researchforevidence. fhi360. org/riddle-

me-this-how-many-interviews-or-focus-groups-are-enough>[accessed 16 June

2019]*.

Nance, J. P. (2015). Over-disciplining students, racial bias, and the school-to-prison

pipeline. *U. Rich. L. Rev.*, *50*, 1063.

NBWJI Staff. (2019, January, 2019). Freedom Work Profile: Columbus City Prep School
    for Girls. Retrieved from https://www.nbwji.org/single-
    post/2019/01/21/FreedomWork-Profile-Columbus-City-Prep-School-for-Girls.

Okilwa, N. S., & Robert, C. (2017). School discipline disparity: Converging efforts for
    better student outcomes. *The Urban Review*, *49*(2), 239-262.

Okonofua, J. A., Walton, G. M., & Eberhardt, J. L. (2016). A vicious cycle: A social–
    psychological account of extreme racial disparities in school discipline.
    Perspectives on Psychological Science, *11*(3), 381-398.

Payne, A. A., & Welch, K. (2015). Restorative justice in schools: The influence of race
    on restorative discipline. *Youth & Society*, *47*(4), 539-564.

Payne, A. A., & Welch, K. (2018). The effect of school conditions on the use of
    restorative justice in schools. *Youth violence and juvenile justice*, *16*(2), 224-240.

Peterson, C. (2006). *A primer in positive psychology*. Oxford University Press.

Rumel, J. E. (2013). Back to the future: The in loco parentis doctrine and its impact on
    whether K-12 schools and teachers owe a fiduciary duty to students. *Ind. L. Rev.*,
    46, 711.

Seligman, M. E., Ernst, R. M., Gillham, J., Reivich, K., & Linkins, M. (2009). Positive
    education: Positive psychology and classroom interventions. *Oxford review of*
    education, *35*(3), 293-311.

Shoshani, A., & Steinmetz, S. (2014). Positive psychology at school: A school-based

    intervention to promote adolescents' mental health and well-being. *Journal of*

    Happiness Studies, *15*(6), 1289-1311.

Skiba, R., & Peterson, R. (1999). The dark side of zero tolerance: Can punishment lead to

    safe schools?. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, *80*(5), 372-382.

Skiba, R. J., Horner, R. H., Chung, C. G., Rausch, M. K., May, S. L., & Tobin, T. (2011).

    Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino

    disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology Review*, *40*(1), 85-108.

Skiba, R. J., Chung, C. G., Trachok, M., Baker, T. L., Sheya, A., & Hughes, R. L. (2014).

    Parsing disciplinary disproportionality: Contributions of infraction, student, and

    school characteristics to out-of-school suspension and expulsion. *American*

    Educational Research Journal, *51*(4), 640-670.

Sommet, N., & Morselli, D. (2017). Keep calm and learn multilevel logistic modeling: A

    simplified three-step procedure using Stata, R, Mplus, and SPSS. *International*

    Review of Social Psychology, *30*(1).

Sperry, P. (2015). How liberal discipline policies are making schools less safe. *New York*

    Post.

Staats, C. (2014). Implicit racial bias and school discipline disparities. Retrieved from

    http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/implicit-bias-training/resources/ki-ib-argument-

    piece03.pdf

Staats, C. (2016). Understanding Implicit Bias: What Educators Should Know. *American
Educator*, *39*(4), 29.

Taylor, U. (1998). The historical evolution of black feminist theory and praxis. *Journal of
Black Studies*, *29*(2), 234-253.

Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2006). A general typology of research designs featuring
mixed methods. *Research in the Schools*, *13*(1), 12-28.

Theodoulou, S. Z., & Cahn, M. A. (Eds.). (1995). Public policy: The essential readings.
Pearson College Division. Uprichard, E., & Dawney, L. (2019). Data diffraction:
Challenging data integration in mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed
Methods Research*, *13*(1), 19-32.

US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2014). Civil rights data collection
data snapshot: School discipline. *Issue brief no. 1*. Retrieved from

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-discipline-snapshot.pdf

Welch, K., & Payne, A. A. (2010). Racial threat and punitive school discipline. *Social
Problems*, *57*(1), 25-48.

Willis, A. I. (2008). Critical race theory. *Encyclopedia of language and education*, 432-
445.

Wun, C. (2016). Unaccounted foundations: Black girls, anti-Black racism, and
punishment in schools. *Critical Sociology*, *42*(4-5), 737-750.

Yvonne Feilzer, M. (2010). Doing mixed methods research pragmatically: Implications for the rediscovery of pragmatism as a research paradigm. *Journal of mixed methods research*, *4*(1), 6-16.

Appendix A. IRB Approval

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

**Behavioral and Social Sciences
Institutional Review Board**

300 Research Administration building
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1063

orrp.osu.edu

03/08/2019

Study Number: 2018B0504
Study Title: Voices of the Unheard: Black Girls and the School Discipline Gap

Type of Review: Initial Submission

Review Method: Expedited

Date of IRB Approval: 03/08/2019
Date of IRB Approval Expiration: 03/08/2020

Expedited category: #6, #7

Dear Karen Beard,

The Ohio State Behavioral and Social Sciences IRB **APPROVED** the above referenced research.

In addition, the following were also approved for this study:

- Children

As Principal Investigator, you are responsible for ensuring that all individuals assisting in the conduct of the study are informed of their obligations for following the IRB-approved protocol and applicable regulations, laws, and policies, including the obligation to report any problems or potential noncompliance with the requirements or determinations of the IRB. Changes to the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before implemented, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects.

This approval is issued under The Ohio State University's OHRP Federalwide Assurance #00006378 and is valid until the expiration date listed above. *Without further review, IRB approval will no longer be in effect on the expiration date.* To continue the study, a continuing review application must be approved before the expiration date to avoid a lapse in IRB approval and the need to stop all research activities. A final study report must be provided to the IRB once all research activities involving human subjects have ended.

Records relating to the research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 5 years after the study is closed. For more information, see university policies, Institutional Data and Research Data.

Human research protection program policies, procedures, and guidance can be found on the ORRP website.

Daniel Strunk, PhD, Chair
Ohio State Behavioral and Social Sciences IRB

Appendix B. Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Introductory Meeting:
Focus Group Questions (Introductory meeting): *30-90 minutes*
[Introduction] Hello ladies, my name is Alexis Little, and I am a third year Ph.D. student in Education Policy at Ohio State University. I appreciate that you were willing to meet with me and help me with my research by talking about your experiences at school. My research would be incomplete without your feedback, this research will be confidential meaning your identity will not revealed. You can use fake names for this or I can just assign each person a new name when I do my write-ups. This will be a low-pressure and enjoyable experience for everyone. I'm going to be asking about your experiences in school, the activities and clubs that you're a part of, your favorite subjects and teachers, who you can talk to your problems to, as well school discipline and supportive resources for students.

- Can everyone go around and introduce themselves? Let's start with name, age/grade, favorite tv show and book
- What's your favorite snack?
- What things are you good at? What do you like to do outside of school?
- What type of career would you like are you type of career do you aspire to?

First Formal Interviews:
Goals are to learn more about the general experiences at school, relationships peers and teachers, their engagement in school, and to start talking about supports at their school.

Focus Group:
- What's your favorite class/subject?
  - Why do you like this class/subject? (Structure, activities, subject matter etc.)
  - **Describe the teacher's style in that class**
    - What do you like about them?
- **Are you involved in school activities**/Do you feel that you have a role in your school?
  - What clubs/after-school activities are at your school?
    - Are you all involved in any? Why? Why not?
- **How do you feel about your identity at school?** Do you feel valued? Do you feel that you can contribute to your class and your school?
  - Do you have a sense that you are valued and respected? By whom?
- Do you have people to talk to? Classmates, teachers, administrators?
  - Take me through the process of reporting a personal issue at your school?
  - Is there someone designated for you to speak to?
  - Do you see action or follow-up?
- Are there **supports that you would like to see in place to make your schooling experiences better?**

- ○ Programs to talk about
- *Think about for next time:* If you could change the structure of school discipline, how would it look? If you could provide supports, specifically for Black girls, at your school what would it look like?

Second Formal Interviews:
Goals are to learn more about discipline at their school, how the girls would imagine effective school discipline would look like, the support measures in their school, what they need in supports at their school.

Focus Group:
[Introduction] This is our last focus group. This is the most crucial one. All of you ladies are experts in knowing what specific support would be beneficial for you in school. I think it's so important to go to the source and learn what you all need, what you would like more of, and things should be changed and gotten rid of. If you remember last time we met I gave you these questions to consider for last time: If you could change the structure of school discipline, how would it look? If you could provide supports, specifically for Black girls, at your school what would it look like?

Today we will explore you've been thinking about. Your voices are so important, because you will help researchers, scholars, teachers, administrators start to consider what is best for girls like you.

- Describe your school environment/climate? General classroom climate?
- How do the teachers and administrators deal with misbehavior?
    - ○ Take me through how your most strict teacher handles misbehavior?
    - ○ **How is behavior best handled? Can you describe a teacher who handles discipline well? Can you give me an example of an example of when discipline could have been handled better?**
- What do you think schools could do to support the non-academic needs of Black girls?
- Do you have a counselor? Are there people in the school to talk to about major issues going on in your life?
    - ○ What do they do to follow-up on your issues or needs?
    - ○ Do you find them useful?
- Describe what discipline should look like in your public school?
- If you could speak with an administrator, education policy maker, or teacher, what would you tell them to keep in mind for Black girls when it comes to discipline *and* providing support?
    - ○ For example, what recommendations?

Study Title:	Voices of the Unheard: Black Girls and the School Discipline Gap
Researcher:	Alexis Little, M.S.Ed.| Ohio State University Education Policy Ph.D. Program (3rd year student)
Sponsor:	*This study is not sponsored*

This is a parental permission form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you permit your child to participate.

Your child's participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to discuss the study with your friends and family and to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to permit your child to participate. If you permit your child to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:
My study explores educational experiences of Black girls in Ohio's urban public schools and their perspectives about effective discipline and supportive resources for their school. This study centers Black girls as experts in their experiences as well as knowledgeable about resources that would best support them at school.

Procedures/Tasks:
Your child will participate in 2-3 focus group and 2-3 individual interviews (time permitting). Focus groups and individual interviews will address similar questions. Your child will be asked to reflect on their perceived role at school, relationships with teachers/administrators, how they imagine effective discipline & supportive resources, and their recommendations for improving how their school handles discipline and effective resources that would help them feel supported.

Duration:
There will be 3 focus group interviews and 3 individual interviews from September 2019 through January 2020. Each interview session (both group and individual), will be for a duration of 20-60 minutes. Over the course of the study, focus group interviews will be a total of 1-3 hours and individual interviews will be a total of 1-3 hours, for a grand total of 2-6 hours of group and individual interviews. The variation in time is dependent participant contribution. Your child may leave the study at any time. If you or your child

decides to stop participation in the study, there will be no penalty and neither you nor your child will lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Risks and Benefits:
This is a minimal risk study given that research consists of individual interviews and focus groups related to general school discipline improvement and recommendations for supportive measures in school. You child will benefit by working with researchers to create supports and influence school policy for high school women of color. In addition, your child will have the opportunity to share their unique insight in a way that may have tangible impacts on educational policy. Your child will also receive a gift card at the conclusion of the study.

Confidentiality:

Your child's information will be **de-identified** (name, school, city etc.) in this study. **Your child's direct answers in the interviews and focus groups will not be shared with teachers/ personnel at their school.** Efforts will be made to keep your child's study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your child's participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your child's records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):
- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Will my child's de-identified information be used or shared for future research?

Yes, it/they may be used or shared with other researchers without your additional informed consent.

Incentives:
Your child will receive a gift card at the conclusion of the study. The amount on each card has not been determined but could range from $10-$20. The dollar amount will depend on the total number of participants who complete the study.

Participant Rights

264

You or your child may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you or your child is a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you and your child choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights your child may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

<div align="center">Contacts and Questions:</div>

[Identity information omitted]

For questions about your child's rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact [Identity information omitted]

<div align="center">Signing the parental permission form</div>

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to provide permission for my child to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to permit my child to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form**.**

_____
Printed name of subject

_____   _____
Printed name of person   **Signature of person authorized to**
authorized to provide permission   **provide permission for subject**
for subject

_____   _____ **AM/PM**
       Relationship to the subject   **Date and time**

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

_____   _____
       Printed name of person   **Signature of person obtaining**
       obtaining consent   **consent**

                                    _____ **AM/PM**

266

Appendix D. IRB-Approved Student Assent Form

The Ohio State University Assent to Participate in Research

Study Title:	Voices of the Unheard: Black Girls and the School Discipline Gap
Researcher:	Alexis Little, M.S.Ed.| Ohio State University Education Policy Ph.D. Program (3rd year student)
Sponsor:	*This study is not sponsored*

You are being asked to be in a research study. Studies are done to find better ways to treat people or to understand things better.

This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to participate.

You should ask any questions you have before making up your mind. You can think about it and discuss it with your family or friends before you decide.

It is okay to say "No" if you don't want to be in the study. If you say "Yes" you can change your mind and quit being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.

If you decide you want to be in the study, an adult (usually a parent) will also need to give permission for you to be in the study.

1.   What is this study about?
My study explores educational experiences of Black girls in Ohio's urban public high schools and their perspectives about effective discipline and supportive resources for their school. This study centers Black girls as experts in their experiences as well as knowledgeable about resources that would best support them at school.

2.   What will I need to do if I am in this study?
You will be asked to participate in 2-3 group interviews and 2-3 individual interviews (time permitting). Focus groups and individual interviews will address similar questions.

3.   How long will I be in the study?
There will be 3 focus group interviews and 3 individual interviews from September 2019 through January 2020. Each interview session (both group and individual), will be for a duration of 20-60 minutes. Over the course of the study, focus group interviews will be a total of 1-3 hours and individual interviews will be a total of 1-3 hours, for a grand total

of 2-6 hours of group and individual interviews. The variation in time is dependent participant contribution. You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participation in the study, there will be no penalty and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

4. Can I stop being in the study?

You may stop being in the study at any time.

5. *What bad things might happen to me if I am in the study?*
This study will not present any harm. We will meet and I will ask you about your experiences in school, how you imagine effective school discipline, and your recommendations about what types of resources would help you feel supported and valued in school. I will keep your identity confidential and will not share your interviews with parents, teachers, or administrators.

6. What good things might happen to me if I am in the study?
You will help education policy makers, teachers, administrators, and the community by sharing your experiences: what works well, what does not, and what schools need more of. You benefit by working with researchers to create supports and influence school policy for high school women of color. In addition, you will have the opportunity to share your unique insight in a way that may have tangible impacts on educational policy. You will also receive a gift card to thank you for your contribution to the study.

7. *Will I be given anything for* being *in this study?*
If you are able to participate and complete the study, you will receive a gift card as thanks for your contribution. The amount on each card has not been determined but could range from $10-$20. The dollar amount will depend on the total number of participants who complete the study.

8. Who can I talk to about the study?
For questions about the study you may contact:

To discuss other study-related questions with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact [Identity information omitted].

Signing the assent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form. I have had a chance to ask questions before making up my mind. I want to be in this research study.

_____	_____ **AM/PM**
Signature or printed name of subject	**Date and time**

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant before requesting the signature above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

_____	_____
Printed name of person obtaining assent	**Signature of person obtaining assent**
	_____ **AM/PM**
	Date and time

This form must be accompanied by an IRB approved parental permission form signed by a parent/guardian

Appendix E. Quantitative Research Question 2: Additional Graphs and Table