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Abstract
Black males represent the largest population of students suspended from school at all grade levels across the US. Rooted in the power theory framework, this study was designed to gain insight into the disciplinary values and practices of public elementary school principals serving students living in impoverished communities across the five counties of New York City and the impact on Black male students. Conducting an explanatory-sequenced, mixed-method research design, a sample of 100 elementary school principals answered questions using the Disciplinary Practices Survey regarding their beliefs on the best approaches to managing student misconduct. Successively, individual interviews were held with seven principals, who were asked to expound upon their survey responses as they related to their Black male populations. Results revealed that principals generally had favorable attitudes toward the use of positive approaches to managing student behavior, embedded in referent and reward power sources. A closer look into various subgroups of the principals revealed that Black and male principals were most inclined to use suspensions as a means of addressing student misconduct. While principals reported Black males students as having higher incidents of misconduct compared to their peers, they did not identify their behaviors to be exclusive to their race or gender. Principals offered mitigating circumstances associated with poverty as contributors to some of the misbehaviors displayed. Recommendations for future research and professional development include exploring the intersection between race, culture, and masculinity on classroom management, as well as how adultified roles at home impact children's conduct in school.

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By

Susan M. Green

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

Dr. Janice Kelly

Committee Member

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Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education
St. John Fisher College

December 2016
Dedication

When God has a plan, no man can come between, derail, or sabotage the outcome. The Lord’s protection was all over me throughout this journey and He surrounded me by many angels who made this process manageable:

My mother, Eunice Green, who loved me, supported me, sacrificed for me, and prayed for me during this journey and every other over the course of my life; this is OUR degree, Mommy.

My Alain L. Locke/PS 208 family, especially Jackie—thank you for loving me through this process and respecting how important it was to me; you are one of a kind.

My committee members, Dr. Janice Kelly and Dr. Byron Hargrove—thank you for coaching me during my labor pains; I appreciate your belief in my abilities and your commitment to my growth as a scholar in my field.

My scholarly colleagues, Dr. Russell Skiba, Dr. Richard Milner, Dr. Patrick Jean-Pierre, and Dr. Stephanie Townsend—thank you for giving so selflessly of yourselves and for contributing to my learning.

My SJFC cohort members and especially Team Certi5ables—Augustina, Jacqueline, and Tony; we remained a team of five thanks to Him. To my favorite and realest Latina imposter, Paola Veras—I could not have asked for a better sounding board! I love you, sis (Phil. 4:13).

All of my godchildren, but especially Chayce, Chloe and Caycie—when things were rough for me, you were the source so much joy and laughter; you re-energized me.
My baby bear child, Brittney Ross—thank you for putting in the long and late hours by my side; you are God’s plan for my life.

To every family member (God-ordained and handpicked) who has loved me, supported me, prayed for me, encouraged me and believed in me throughout this process and beyond—I do not have enough words to express my gratitude. I would never be able to list the names of all those who have been a blessing to me without overlooking someone, and that is a blessing in and of itself. While I cannot acknowledge you all on paper, be rest assured, I acknowledge you in my heart. I give thanks to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ for surrounding me with so many loved ones in such a plentiful way.

I give reverence to my ancestors: my grandmother, the late Albertha Bellamy, who always made me feel secure in her love for me; my grandfather, the late Henry Bellamy, whose denial of social justice impacted the generations that followed him: you are not forgotten; my great-grandfather, the late Henry Evans, a true teacher, who educated my mother in the morals and values that I use to govern my life; my grandfather, the late Nathaniel Green, whose legacy of kindness continues to breathe life through me—I love you without ever having met you; and to my father, the late Willie Lee Green, who raised me to be a “tough cookie,” who set my foundation for a good education, who was a role model for being a hard worker, and who served as a major contributor in the development of my inner strength in ways unimaginable.

Finally, to every child that God has blessed me to influence, the hundreds who have inspired me and continue to do so—especially my boys; I remain forever committed to using my voice in advocacy of your needs, in the name of social justice.
Biographical Sketch

Susan Mae Green is currently the principal of Alain L. Locke Magnet School for Environmental Stewardship-PS 208 in Harlem, New York, where she has worked for 11 years. She holds her Associate of Arts from the City University of New York (CUNY) Borough of Manhattan Community College, her Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts with a minor in Child and Family Studies from the State University of New York (SUNY) Stony Brook, and her Master of Science from Brooklyn College (CUNY) with a degree in Literacy. Susan earned her New York State School Building Leadership credentials from the New York City Leadership Academy. For nearly two decades, Susan worked in the field of education at both the elementary and middle school levels. Ms. Green came to the Executive Leadership program at St. John Fisher College in the spring of 2014, where she explored the disciplinary attitudes and practices of New York City public elementary school principals toward students living in poverty and the impact specifically on Black males, under the leadership of Dr. Janice Kelly and Dr. Byron Hargrove. She earned her Doctorate of Education in 2016.
Abstract

Black males represent the largest population of students suspended from school at all grade levels across the US. Rooted in the power theory framework, this study was designed to gain insight into the disciplinary values and practices of public elementary school principals serving students living in impoverished communities across the five counties of New York City and the impact on Black male students.

Conducting an explanatory-sequenced, mixed-method research design, a sample of 100 elementary school principals answered questions using the Disciplinary Practices Survey regarding their beliefs on the best approaches to managing student misconduct. Successively, individual interviews were held with seven principals, who were asked to expound upon their survey responses as they related to their Black male populations. Results revealed that principals generally had favorable attitudes toward the use of positive approaches to managing student behavior, embedded in referent and reward power sources. A closer look into various subgroups of the principals revealed that Black and male principals were most inclined to use suspensions as a means of addressing student misconduct. While principals reported Black males students as having higher incidents of misconduct compared to their peers, they did not identify their behaviors to be exclusive to their race or gender. Principals offered mitigating circumstances associated with poverty as contributors to some of the misbehaviors displayed. Recommendations for future research and professional development include exploring
the intersection between race, culture, and masculinity on classroom management, as well as how adultified roles at home impact children’s conduct in school.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The term zero-tolerance policy was first introduced during the 1980s, when the federal administration took measures to address the illegal drug importation activity occurring across U.S. borders. Started under the influence of U.S. Attorney Peter Nunez in 1986, the policy was designed to impound sea vessels carrying illegal drugs (Skiba, 2000). In 1988, the term was highlighted under U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese as a national model seizing the vehicles and property of anyone crossing U.S. borders with even a trace amounts of drugs, and those individuals were charged in federal court. Former President Ronald Reagan carried the torch by developing zero-tolerance policies to sternly punish individuals involved with drug possession (Koch, 2000). By the late 1980s, school districts across the country adopted zero-tolerance policies to address drug and gang activities in schools (Rosen, 2014).

This concept was further developed after the adoption of the federal Gun-Free School Act of 1994, signed under the Clinton administration, designed to address the possession or use of firearms in school settings that would ultimately result in expulsion for one full school year (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2004; McNeal & Dunbar, 2010; Skiba, 2000; and U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2014). In a review of literature relating to zero-tolerance policies, studies have reported that only 5% of school suspensions and expulsions directly correlate with the policy guidelines of drug or weapons’ infractions, while the majority of offenses in which students are suspended or
expelled are traditionally for non-violent crimes (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Skiba, 2000; USDOE, 2014; Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, 2013).

Over time, however, school district discipline codes, grounded in what was supposed to be a zero-tolerance policy, have received criticism for the disparities between the policy’s intended purpose and the actual infractions for which students are being suspended, expelled, and in worst-case scenarios, arrested. The policy that was originally designed to protect all members of society from danger, now garners more attention on how it has, in the minds of many, evolved to violate the civil rights of marginalized members of various youth communities in America, causing countless conflicts between the public and policy makers (Gerston, 2015). The overwhelming amount of research indicates that zero-tolerance policies have had the greatest, most adversarial impact on Black males, which is based on their high suspension rates and the disparities that exist when compared with their peers of other subgroups (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2010; USDOE Office of Civil Rights, 2014). Those who oppose the zero-tolerance policy are concerned that the current disparities in disciplinary measures demonstrated toward Black males and the rates at which they are suspended compared to their White peers, serves as a contributing precursor for entry into the juvenile justice system. This is what has become known as the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP).

On a national level, Black students made up 16% of the total population of young people enrolled in Grades K-12 during the 2011-12 school year (USDOE Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Meanwhile, suspension rates for this same population were double for both in and out-of-school suspensions, and nearly triple for multiple out-of-school suspensions—higher than any other race or ethnic subgroup (USDOE Office for Civil
Rights, 2014). Unlike several southern states across the nation, where suspension rates are highest in the country for Black students (Smith & Harper, 2015), New York State has some of the lowest rates of suspension for the same population of students, standing at 14% (USDOE Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Nevertheless, suspension rates for Black students in the State of New York mirror that of the country in being higher than any other racial or ethnic subgroup. The same holds true for the New York City Department of Education, the largest school district in the nation. During the 2014-15 school year, enrollment for Black students attending schools within the NYC Department of Education was 27.8% (New York City Department of Education [NYCDOE], 2016), yet Mayor Bill deBlasio’s Leadership Team of School Climate and Discipline (2016) found the likelihood of suspensions for this population stood three times higher than that of White students during the same time frame (Figure 1.1).

![Figure 1.1. New York City Department of Education Suspension Disparity Index, 2012-13 to 2014-15.](image-url)
According to the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), there were a total of 2,382 suspensions issued by the New York City Department of Education during the 2015-16 school year for students attending public elementary school levels across the city. Table 1.1 outlines the top five infractions for which students were suspended as identified by what is known as the Citywide Behavioral Expectations (2015) for New York City.

Table 1.1

New York City Department of Education Grades K-5 Infractions based on Citywide Behavioral Expectations with Top Five Suspensions Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Suspensions</th>
<th>Infraction Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,171</td>
<td>Altercation and/or physically aggressive behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>381</td>
<td>Reckless behavior with substantial risk of serious injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>326</td>
<td>Minor altercation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288</td>
<td>Coercion/threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>216</td>
<td>Weapon possession (other than firearm)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Additional data collected from the New York City Department of Education Research and Policy Support Group (RPSG) (2016) for the 2015-16 school year, magnifies suspension data by race, grade, and infraction type, as well as rates for students with multiple suspensions (two or more) for all students in Grades K-5 across the five boroughs (counties) of New York City during the 2015-16 school year. According to the data provided by RPSG (2016), the total number of suspensions for students in Grades K-5 totaled 2,475, reflecting a difference of 93 more suspensions compared to the data
reported by the NYCLU (2016). The disparities in the data might suggest students who received multiple suspensions. Suspension rates for male students were 48% higher than for female students (RPSG, 2016). The total percentage of public elementary school suspensions for students living in poverty across all ethnicities totaled 78%. Relative to race, Black students in Grades K-5 had the highest suspension rates amongst all ethnic groups (47%); the data reveals that the suspension rates for Black students was higher than that of Latino and White students combined, standing at 42% (RPSG, 2016).

The disparities that exist regarding the reasons that Black males are suspended in comparison to their peers poses a deep level of concern. Some research offers variations of understanding and interpretation of what actually constitutes zero tolerance, which is another factor contributing to the discrepancies in suspension practices (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002; Dunbar & Villarruel 2004; Losen & Skiba, 2010; McNeal & Dunbar, 2010; NCES, 2015; NYCLU, 2013; USDOE Office of Civil Rights, 2014). Other research cites a double standard when it comes to disciplinary responsiveness toward Black males versus their White male counterparts for similar types of infractions. The research suggests these behaviors are often rooted in biased attitudes often held by educators toward Black students (Cooper, 2003; Jensen, 2009). These variations serve as significant factors that funnel Black males through the juvenile justice system and, in worst cases, the penal system, fueling what has become known as the school-to-prison pipeline.

In an effort to offer alternatives to suspensions and decrease the racial disparities in disciplinary practices, the federal government created the Guiding Principles Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline (Gately, 2014; USDOE, 2014). The
focus of the guide is on combatting the school-to-prison pipeline, which links students’ offenses, primarily those committed by Black males, to judicial involvement. While these efforts are a step in the right direction, it currently remains at the discretion of the states to adopt and mandate such guidelines to reduce the overtly discriminatory rates at which Black male students are suspended or expelled.

In light of the attention the nation has been receiving regarding the disparities in suspension practices, schools have begun to adopt intervention programs as a means of curtailing disciplinary infractions. These programs are traditionally designed in such a way to establish school-wide standards rooted in the characteristics that are deemed to be acceptable behaviors amongst students or between students and adults, including positive communication, respect, and responsibility. Schools with the most successful intervention programs, however, are the ones where the implementation is reinforced by the administration (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; Richards, Aguilera, Murakami, & Weiland, 2014; The White House, 2016). President Barack Obama launched the My Brother’s Keeper initiative to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and teenage men of color to ensure that all young people can reach their full potential (The White House, 2016). As part of this initiative, President Obama established targets that these youngsters should meet, with support from adults, also known as the “keepers.” This includes ensuring that children begin their school day being “cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally” ready (The White House, 2016), as these characteristics are essential for academic attainment and being a successful contributor to the workforce.
These attributes, however, can be difficult for many Black males to attain, particularly those who are plagued with circumstances associated with poverty, and it is even more challenging for those living within inner-city communities. Poverty rates at the state and city level closely mirror those at the national level. In 2015, 32% of Black children were living in poverty in New York State, the second highest ethnic group behind Latinos, according to Kids Count Data Center (datacenter.kidscount.org, 2016). These statistics correlate with those of New York City where Black children also rank as the second-highest population of students living in poverty during the same year (New York City Center for Economic Opportunity, 2016).

In New York City, school districts with the highest suspension rates for Black students also had the highest rates of poverty (NYCLU, 2013). Research has found that suspensions increase a student’s likelihood of being retained within a grade, dropping out of school, and engaging in delinquent behavior and criminal activity—all factors often associated with poverty (Eide, 2014). According to the NCES (2010), 38% of Black children under the age of 18 accounted for the total population of children living in poverty in 2014—the highest of all racial and ethnic subgroups. In 2014, the NCES also reported that 52% of all Black children living in single-family households operated by women were also identified as living in poverty. It is not uncommon for children who come from these households to have roles of *adultification*, where they are prematurely and sometimes inappropriately exposed to adult knowledge and responsibilities (Burton, 2007). Such exposure can impact the ways in which they engage as adults, which can be perceived as disrespectful and defiant.
Former Attorney General Eric Holder cited poverty as a variable that is associated with criminal behavior that includes violence, which can often lead to incarceration (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011). As a result, Holder, along with former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, announced the launch of the Supportive School Discipline Initiative (United States Department of Justice, 2011). The campaign was designed to dismantle the STPP that had specifically targeted young Black males, by creating and maintaining safe school climates that are empathetic to the unique needs of their students. Identifying the direct correlation between the disproportionate suspension rates of Black males across the nation and the number of them in the criminal justice system, Holder and Duncan recognized the need to develop federal guidance to ensure that school discipline policies and practices comply with the nation’s civil rights laws and promote disciplinary options to both keep kids in school and improve the climate for learning (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011).

While school districts are traditionally charged with developing codes of conduct for school officials to implement and for students to abide, disciplinary guidelines can sometimes take a cookie-cutter approach, opening the door for ambiguity and, in some cases, subjective responses from adults relating to student behavior. In an effort to minimize subjectivity in disciplinary practices that historically have had the greatest impact on Black males, the NYCDOE has begun making strategic changes to NYCDOE’s Citywide Behavioral Expectations (2015). Mayor deBlasio’s Task Force for Culture and Climate is comprised of principals, members from the of Office of Safety and Youth Development, as well as members of the judicial system and law enforcement agencies, who have successfully worked to eliminate infractions that have traditionally
been overused by principals, which have resulted in both high suspensions and arrest rates for Black males. Furthermore, new guidelines were established that require principals to supply targeted intervention strategies to address student behaviors before resorting to the most punitive measures of discipline (NYCDOE, 2015).

**Problem Statement**

A preponderant amount of research has focused on the suspension rates of Black males at the middle and high school levels. There has even been a heightened level of concern for the number of suspensions that have begun to impact Black males at the pre-kindergarten school level, as young as 3- and 4-years old. There remains, however, ambiguity surrounding how Black males are impacted by suspension practices for students at the elementary school level in Grades K-5. Given that principals are ultimately the ones charged with establishing the culture of how disciplinary measures are executed, it is worth exploring how their attitudes, values, and beliefs influence their disciplinary practices, in general, for students living in poverty, and how these approaches specifically impact their Black male populations.

**Theoretical Rationale**

In an effort to effectively determine the attitudes and beliefs that shape the disciplinary approaches elementary school principals working in impoverished communities used to tackle student misconduct, this study used the framework of power theory, founded by John French and Bertram Raven (1959). This theoretical framework is grounded in what is referred to as social power; the degree in which an individual perceives an agent or organization to possess power in executing authority over them (French & Raven, 1959; Tauber, 2007; Smith & Hains, 2012). French and Raven (1959)
identify five bases of power sources: coercive, expert, legitimate, referent, and reward. Coercive power refers to one’s ability to delegate punishment to dictate behavior within an individual. Expert power is granted to leaders who are believed to be masters at their craft, based on their knowledge, skills, and experience. Legitimate power comes from having a position of power within an organization and being recognized as an individual with authority and the ability to make decisions. Referent power is gained by an authority figure when leaders are perceived as trustworthy and respected, based on the rapport and relationships that are fostered with the leaders and their followers. Finally, reward power is demonstrated by an individual whose desired behaviors meet the expectation of an authority figure (Tauber, 2007).

Tauber (2007) referenced the five power sources in relationship to classroom management. For purposes of this study, the research focuses on how on three of the five approaches to power are used by school principals: coercive power, reward power, and referent power. Coercive power can be closely associated with the zero-tolerance approach to discipline, using punitive measures to yield desired behaviors. Reward power is strongly associated with positive-behavior intervention systems that are traditionally used in schools to curtail student behavior, often with the use of prizes. Finally, referent power supports a social-emotional and empathic approach to managing student conduct. Survey responses and interviews were used to determine how the attitudes of the principals who fell within one of the three power categories.

**Statement of Purpose**

This purpose of the study is to explore the attitudes, values, and beliefs that inform the ways in which elementary school principals, serving students from
impoverished communities, carry out disciplinary measures and the impact those practices have on Black male student populations. The study assesses the variables that influence the disciplinary approaches inner-city elementary principals use toward their Black male students. Answers to the research questions can shed light on the imbalances that exists in suspension practices across our nation.

**Research Questions**

An explanatory-sequential, mixed-methods study was used to gain insight on the disciplinary approaches utilized by New York City Title I public elementary school principals. On a national level, School-Wide Program (SWP) Title I funding is traditionally issued to local educational agencies (LEA), such as schools where at least 40% of the student population is identified as coming from low-income families (USDOE, 2016). For the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE), that percentage was set at 60% during the 2015-16 school year. For the purposes of this study, public elementary schools where at least 60% of the students came from low-income families and who were eligible for a free or reduced-fee lunch (FRL) qualified as being identified as a *high poverty* or *high needs*. The structure of this design involves quantitative research followed by qualitative research to further inform of the results from the quantitative portion of the study (Creswell, 2014). The research questions used in this are:

1. What are the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices of NYC Title I public elementary school principals serving high-poverty populations?
2. Are there any demographic differences in the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices of NYC Title I public elementary school principals
serving high-poverty populations?

3. What factors influence the disciplinary and suspension decisions of NYC Title I public elementary school principals of high-need schools specifically toward Black male students?

Potential Significance of the Study

The suspension rates of Black males across our country are astronomical and alarming. Black males have the highest rates of out-of-school suspensions—more than any other race or subgroup (USDOE Office of Civil Rights, 2014). In New York City, there is an alignment between the highest suspension rates for Black males in neighborhoods with the highest poverty rates (Eide, 2014; NYCLU, 2013). If true efforts are to be taken in closing the gap between the number of Black males suspended compared to their White counterparts, more research is needed to understand the philosophies that drive principals’ disciplinary practices, and how those philosophies affect Black males, in general, but principally those who come from impoverished communities. This information could potentially shed light on this phenomenon, and open dialogue for addressing the mindsets of school principals who might be contributing to these practices. The findings could lead to changes in educational leadership and teacher training programs, as well as educational policy changes that require all Pre-K-12 educators to become certified in ongoing cultural responsiveness and sensitivity training programming.

Definitions of Terms

Adultification – refers to children who are charged to carry out roles and responsibilities traditionally managed by adults.
Black – refers to individuals with dark skin who originate from countries in Africa, the West Indian islands, and those born in the United States who identify themselves (or are identified by their parents and/or guardians) as African American, Afro-American, Afro-Caribbean, or Black. This does not include individuals identifying as Latino, Latina, or Hispanic.

Empathy – the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person and demonstrate compassion for his or her circumstances.

Elementary School – institution of education serving students in kindergarten through grade 5.

Expulsion – exclusion or withdrawing; refers to the removal/banning of a student from a school system or university for an extensive period of time (at least 1 year) due to a student persistently violating that institution’s rules, or for a single offense of appropriate severity in an extreme case.

Inner-City – individuals of a particular group or race living in highly-populated neighborhoods that are plagued by impoverished conditions, usually with high rates of criminal activity.

Microaggression – a brief, commonplace, intentional, or unintentional variety of exchanges delivered in the form of subtle insults, gestures, and tones, that communicate hostile, derogatory insults and slights directed toward a racially/ethnically marginalized individual or group of people.

Paraprofessional – teacher’s aide.

Poverty – individuals receiving public financial assistance, living in overcrowded, temporary, public housing, and/or having a low income.
School-to-Prison Pipeline – refers to policies and practices that push U.S. schoolchildren, especially those most at-risk, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. This pipeline reflects the prioritization of incarceration over education.

School Suspension – a temporary prohibition, removals, and/or exclusion, as from attending school, used as a form of punishment.

Social Empathy – the ability to deeply understand people by perceiving or experiencing their life situations, and as a result, gain insight into the structural inequalities and disparities that they face.

Social Power – the degree of influence that an individual or organization has among its peers and within its society as a whole. The social power of a person or business often results in it being copied by others, and such power can typically be credited to the level of the skill, knowledge, information, or fame that the individual or organization possess in a desirable area of expertise (Tauber, 2007).

Title I Funding School-Wide Programming – Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended, provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all of the children meet challenging state academic standards. In order for an agency to qualify for school-wide programming, 40% of its total population must be eligible for free or reduced-fee lunches based on the parents’ income (USDOE, 2015).
Zero-Tolerance Policy – strict punishment imposed for violation of an infraction, regardless of mistakes, ignorance, or extenuating circumstances. In schools, common zero-tolerance policies include possession or use of illicit drugs and/or weapons.

Chapter Summary

The inequitable disparities relative to the enforcement of zero-tolerance policies are stark. The STPP is a phenomenon that has garnered great attention within the last decade, specifically regarding the impact it has had on Black males across the country. Children living in impoverished circumstances, especially Black males, have been most affected by the trend. While intervention programs are designed to shape the culture of a school community, if there is any hope of change relating to the glaring differences in suspension practices toward Black males, deeper attention must center around the disciplinary philosophies and attitudes that influence principals’ approaches to managing student behavior. It calls for the engagement in a courageous, open dialogue about how school principals’ beliefs and values toward discipline shape their practices in managing student behavior, which impacts all students, but particularly Black male students.

Chapters 2 and 3 respectively discuss the literature reviewed and the methodology used in conducting this study. Chapter 4 reveals the findings of the data analysis of the study, and Chapter 5 outlines a summary and the limitations of the study, as well as implications for future research, policy changes, and professional training.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

Concerned with overwhelming incidents of violence, educators in the early 1990s were eager for a no-nonsense response to drugs, gangs, and weapons in school settings (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Rosen, 2014; Skiba, 2000). School districts in California, New York, and Kentucky began implementing zero-tolerance policies by mandating expulsions for drugs and weapons possession, as well as gang-related activity in school settings. By 1993, zero-tolerance policies had been adopted across the country; however, unofficially, this adoption was broadened by some school districts to include infractions such as smoking, fighting, and other forms of school disruption (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002, Dunbar & Villarruel, 2004; Skiba, 2000). In reviewing the literature pertaining to the policy, studies report that only 5% of suspensions and expulsions directly correlate with students’ failure to adhere to policy guidelines of drug or weapons infractions; the majority of the offenses where students were suspended or expelled were traditionally for non-violent crimes (Juvenile Justice Project for Louisiana [JJPL], 2013; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Skiba, 2000; USDOE, 2014).

One major factor contributing to this disjointed alignment is due to the autonomy that has been given to district administrators and even to school building leaders, who have designed their own menus of infractions that lead to suspensions and expulsions. These allowances have led to inconsistencies in the interpretation and implementation of the zero-tolerance policy (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002, Dunbar & Villarruel, 2004;
McNeal & Dunbar, 2010). As a result, this lack of structure has had the greatest impact on Black males, who have the highest suspension rates in the nation compared to their peers (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2004; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Mendez-Raffaele & Knoff, 2003, NCES, 2015; USDOE Office of Civil Rights, 2014). The same holds true for both New York State and New York City, where the rates of suspension and expulsion for students in Grades K-12 are highest for Black males (Mayor deBlasio’s Leadership Team of School Climate and Discipline, 2016; USDOE Office of Civil Rights, 2014). These statistics do not include the unduplicated data that reflects the actual number of suspensions per student (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Mendez-Raffaele & Knoff, 2003; NCES, 2015). These results contribute to the phenomenon that has become known as the school-to-prison pipeline, which has gained a tremendous amount of attention within the past decade. It speaks to the criminalization this marginalized group of students face within their school settings, where depending on reported behavior, are pushed from their classroom settings into the metaphoric pipeline of suspensions, expulsions, and even arrests (Elias, 2013; Mayor deBlasio’s Leadership Team, 2016; NYCLU, 2013).

Researchers have referenced biased behavior relating to gender, race, and socioeconomics on the part of educators as variables that impact student removal and suspension practices. These biases are largely held due to the limited awareness of the cultural dynamics and lived experiences of the students, as well as assumptions pertaining to students’ abilities that come from certain demographic or geographic locales. As a result, the research asserts that less competent teachers are more inclined to fault children for their low academic achievement versus engaging in reflective pedagogical practice. Furthermore, it is suggested by some scholars that students living
in poverty who often have the greatest needs, are taught by teachers with the least experience and pedagogical expertise (Cooper, 2003; Jensen, 2009). These are significant, yet often overlooked, factors that contribute to the ever-widening academic achievement gap.

Poverty poses a serious challenge to a child’s ability to succeed academically and socially in school (NCES, 2015). Single-parent households, limited access to resources, substance abuse, less-than-adequate housing, and temporary living conditions are just some of the variables associated with poverty (Jensen, 2009; Roy & Raver, 2014). Growing up in such conditions can negatively affect a child’s physical health as well as his or her working memory, due to the chronic psychological stress of living in poverty (Eide, 2014; Evans & Schamberg, 2009; Jensen, 2009; New York Civil Liberties Union, 2013). Furthermore, students facing such conditions are more susceptible to facing academic struggles and are more likely to exhibit inappropriate conduct in school. These behaviors are often responded to with student removals and suspensions.

When it comes to the ways in which school principals execute disciplinary measures, it can be displayed in a variety of forms rooted in their preferred leadership style and the ways in which they utilize their power. Aside from punitive measures, the research reveals that principals can operate from a source of empathy or compassion toward students (Warren, 2014). Other times, their approach might involve the issuance of awards to achieve desired behavior, and whenever necessary, they provide supplemental supports to meet the myriad of needs of their students.
Intersection of Race, Gender, Socioeconomics, and Suspensions

Those in opposition of zero tolerance argue the policy is a violation of civil rights of select groups of people, indicating that, in many cases, the severe punishments fail to match the minor infractions demonstrated by students. Early studies conducted by Dunbar and Villarruel (2002, 2004) and Skiba (2000) focused on attention on how school districts broadened what is described was zero-tolerance policies beyond the scope of weapons to include drugs, alcohol, fighting, and even threats as qualifiers for suspensions and expulsions. Over time, research has uncovered that a major contributing factor for these astronomical suspension rates is associated with the degree to which school leaders comprehend the disciplinary guidelines, if at all, thus impacting the way students are chastised (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002; Skiba, 2000). Likewise, studies also reveal that the subjective perceptions of behavior on the part of teachers and principals lend themselves to disproportionalities in exclusionary practices as well (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002).

In 2002, Skiba et al. conducted a study of a Midwestern middle school districts. The focus of the quantitative study was to assess the disproportionate suspension rates for African American males within the districts. Three dependent variables were included as part of the study: race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Collectively, all three variables were demonstrated as evidence relating to the disproportionate suspensions of Black males. A total of 11,000 students were included as part the study. The results showed that male students had higher rates of suspensions than females, and Black males had higher suspension rates than White males. The results showed differences in the sorts for referrals that were made for White students (i.e., smoking, vandalism, obscene language,
and leaving without permission) versus Black students (disrespect, excessive noise, threatening, and loitering). Skiba et al. (2002) described the behaviors for White students as objective and concrete in comparison to the behaviors demonstrated by the Black students, whose behaviors were seen as biased. The behavioral disparities failed to show greater misconduct on the part of the African American males. Furthermore, the study did not propose socioeconomic status to be as much of a contributing factor when it came to suspension practices as much as gender and race did, but still, it was a factor, nonetheless.

The referral practices of the teachers in this study suggest double standards in how behaviors were managed between Black and White students. The subjective, inequitable disciplinary responsiveness insinuate biased and discriminatory attitudes toward Black students district-wide. Given the way in which suspension rates were significantly higher for Black students than their White counterparts throughout several schools across the district raises concern surrounding the implicit and/or explicit biases of not only the principals operating these schools, but of district leaders as well. School leaders sit at the helm of creating school cultures that are expected to be inclusive and equitable for all students, rather than failing to acknowledge ones that perpetuate the discriminatory practices demonstrated in study. Likewise, given the widespread practice of how inequitable suspensions between Black and White students permeated throughout the district, indicate that the district leaders either (a) do not perceive the data as relevant, (b) are oblivious to the stark contrast in suspension rates based on race and gender within the district, or (c) are in support of the blatant practices that keep Black students, particularly Black males, marginalized. With the plethora of research that mirrors the
findings in this study Skiba et al. (2000) proposes doing more than merely looking at data, but rather challenge researchers to look closer at the attitudes and perceptions of teachers and principals when it comes to disciplining students. Such an analysis could be the first step towards assuring more equitable disciplinary measures for all students.

In a quantitative study of 18 of the largest school districts across the nation, researchers Losen and Skiba (2010) set out to analyze suspension rates of middle school students based on race and gender. Amongst all the discoveries made, the results showed that for 11 of the 18 school districts studied, one out of every three Black males were suspended. Additionally, suspension rates were highest for Black males in 15 of the 18 school districts. An interesting highlight in the study noted that the USDOE Office of Civil Rights (2014) did not account for the total number of suspensions each student received (duplicated data), but instead, tracked only the actual number of students suspended (unduplicated data). As a result, the figures lack authenticity because they under represent the actual number of suspensions that took place across the county.

The results of the Losen’s and Skiba’s (2010) study correlate to data collected by the USDOE Office for Civil Rights (2014). The 2014 report for the OCR revealed that, nationally, Black students were suspended at a rate three times higher than White students. Losen and Skiba (2010) conclude that it is the responsibility of the federal government to identify schools and districts with comparatively high suspension rates and provide them with technical assistance to support these institutions in adopting effective, alternative non-exclusionary strategies to manage student misconduct. Losen and Skiba (2010) also signify that “data alone does not prove discrimination” (p. 12). They therefore, also recommend stronger enforcement from the Office of Civil Right
(OCR) as an authorized governing agency, to investigate and identify certain policies and practices used by schools and districts, which may have abusive and unlawful discriminatory impact on disenfranchised populations, even if the impact is unintentional (Losen & Skiba, 2010).

Mendez-Raffaele and Knoff (2003) conducted a quantitative study of 142 general education elementary, middle, and high schools within one central-Florida school district, tracking the suspension rates across all three grade spans, where race and gender were the populations of focus. Data was collected in two forms: data from the 1996-97 school year was collected from the main database used to record all out-of-school suspensions for the district, and the researchers collected raw data from each of the individual schools included in the study. Unlike the data collected by the USDOE Office of Civil Rights (2014), the information collected in the Mendez-Raffaele and Knoff study included both duplicated (total number) and unduplicated counts (counts based on the number of students, not the number of suspensions per student) of out-of-school suspensions based on race and gender as well as for the types of infractions committed. The outcomes revealed that the Black males had the highest suspension rates amongst all races and genders, having been suspended twice as many times in comparison to their White peers. The authors suggested that additional research should center on preventing the growing number of suspensions from elementary to middle school (Mendez-Raffaele & Knoff, 2003). The researchers of this study suggest that for students with multiple suspensions, educators should seek to conduct a functional behavioral assessment to determine the underlying reasons that may be associated with the child’s adverse behavior. Additionally, for schools with high levels of minor infractions that result in suspensions,
Mendez-Raffaele and Knoff (2003) propose that they adopt preventive school-wide behavioral management structures where standards for conduct are established that can contribute to a healthy school climate.

**Disparities in interpretation and implementation of zero-tolerance policies.**

In looking at the history and controversies of zero-tolerance policies, Skiba (2000) highlighted how local school districts broadened the zero-tolerance policies beyond the scope of weapons to include drugs, alcohol, fighting, and even threats as qualifiers for suspensions and expulsions. After citing several cases varying in nature, the study found that the majority of incidents reported did not align with the criteria for suspensions as outlined by federal zero-tolerance policies, indicating that “school suspension is not always reserved for serious and dangerous behaviors” (Skiba, 2000, p. 10) but for far less egregious infractions as well.

The Skiba (2000) report highlights how school administrators rely on the zero-tolerance policy as a default measure of punitive practice to assure the safety of students, staff, and parents. However, one limitation to the study was that the analysis failed to shed any light on how school leaders utilized other forms of discipline to manage student behavior aside from suspensions and expulsions, especially for minor infractions.

Dunbar and Villarruel (2002, 2004) conducted research that set out to determine how school leaders interpreted and implemented zero-tolerance policies in urban and rural school settings, and the researchers analyzed how the school leaders’ decisions impacted the educational experiences of their students. In a qualitative study using Downey’s policy analysis framework (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002; Dunbar & Villarruel, 2004), the researchers interviewed principals of both urban and rural schools located in a
Midwestern community comprised predominantly of African American and Latino students. A total of 36 principals—eight from schools in rural areas and the remaining 28 from the urban sections of the community—participated in the study. The researchers questioned the teachers about their knowledge of the zero-tolerance policy as they analyzed the responses given.

Similar to Skiba’s (2000) findings, the study conducted by Dunbar and Villarruel (2002, 2004) found inconsistencies in the leaders’ understanding of the policy, ranging from a very specific understanding and application, to principals who did not have any knowledge of the policy whatsoever. The study showed that while urban school leaders were more aware of the specifications of the policy, principals of rural schools admitted that their understanding of the policy was ambiguous as to how and when the term zero tolerance was supposed to be applied. Some principals saw zero tolerance as any and every misbehavior demonstrated, even if it did not pose a real danger. Such mindsets resulted in 25 expulsions during the researched school year, with 92% of the expulsions being of Black students. The principals of the rural schools, as well as 40% of the urban school leaders, stated that they relied on their own school-wide practices and discretion when dealing with adverse behaviors of students. An example of this was when a principal saw one of his students arrive to school with a rifle in the back seat of his car. Because the principal assumed the student planned to use it for hunting—a common practice in this rural section of the school district—the student was instructed to take the rifle home and return to school, with no consequences. The principals of rural schools relied on what they described as common sense and professional judgment to determine the type of discipline that was warranted, taking into account the age and grade of the
student, if the student was a first-time offender, and the magnitude of support the principal believed the student would receive from the parent if the child was sent home for a suspension (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002). Other principals in the study focused their attention on character building, seeing their role as ones who needed to offer nurturing support to their students, as school was possibly the only place where students could expect to receive this type of care.

The lack of cohesiveness in the findings raises concern as to how school districts train school leaders in understanding zero-tolerance policies and how those policies are to be executed. Furthermore, given the high percentage of Black students that were expelled in the Dunbar and Villarruel (2002) study, leaves questions around the ethnic, cultural, and economic status of the school board members that enforced the zero-tolerance policies. What makes the Dunbar and Villarruel (2002) study unique, however, is that the researchers slightly touch upon how shared cultural experiences between school leaders and students can influence the way in which student conduct is perceived and managed, as was the case involving the student with the rifle.

Dunbar and Villarruel (2002, 2004) recommend that district-level liaisons re-evaluate the current infractions associated with zero-tolerance policy and determine those that may need to be expunged, or offer less punitive measures. This approach can serve as one way of reducing suspensions and expulsions. They also charge educators to not penalize students with harsh disciplinary action for behaviors that are typically associated with adolescent development, such as talking back to adults (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2004). Finally, Dunbar and Villarruel (2004) challenge school and district leaders to examine whether suspensions and expulsions bring about the desired outcomes of improving
student behavior, and analyze the impact of the consequences, particularly on students of color who are most inclined to being suspended and expelled.

A wealth of research provides perceptions of zero-tolerance policies through the lenses of school district leaders, principals, and parents, but very little comes from whom the policy impacts the most—the students. In a study conducted by McNeal and Dunbar (2010), the authors interviewed 90 African American and Latino students in Grades 11-12 from 15 urban Midwestern high schools. All students were participants in a college enrichment program. Using the street-level bureaucracy framework, results found what the authors described as a “philosophical difference between what zero-tolerance policy purports to accomplish and the actual policy outcome” (McNeal & Dunbar 2010, p. 301). The study found that students did not feel safe in their schools based on the inconsistent enforcement of zero-policy demonstrated by the administration, teachers, and, most surprisingly, school security. The study also found that despite various security structures, students did not feel safe in their schools, reporting malfunctioning metal detectors and lack of security personnel. A third reason pupils cited not feeling safe in their schools was due to the ways in which security guards befriended students who were known to demonstrate inappropriate behavior, including students being allowed to refer to guards by their first names. McNeal and Dunbar (2010) suggest these interactions diminish students respect for security agents, and their ability to enforce zero-tolerance policies.

McNeal and Dunbar (2010) recommends what they describe as a “bias-neutral” approach (p. 308) to managing student behavior, through the establishment of a district-wide handbook that clearly outlines what constitutes violations of zero-tolerance policy
and appropriate disciplinary recourse, similar to the Guiding Principles for Improving School Climate and Discipline designed by the USDOE (2014). This structure would ensure that all students receive equality in how they are reprimanded for misconduct. A second recommendation is to enhance the quality of security for students by assuring safety agents receive proper professional training (McNeal & Dunbar, 2010). This includes helping guards understand their responsibility in using proper discretion and execution of zero-tolerance policy without partiality amongst students, while setting proper “boundaries with respect to their relationship with students” (McNeal & Dunbar, 2010, p. 309).

The study conducted by McNeal and Dunbar (2010) could be considered groundbreaking research given the fact that student voice was the exclusive focus of this study. Noguera (2007) suggests that one solution in addressing the problems faced in schools can begin by incorporating the voices of students into decision-making processes. His research has found that students often have insight concerning situations that adults are not privy to, particularly when it comes to circumstances that may extend beyond the corridors of the school—ones that contribute to adverse behavior amongst students within the school.

**Biased-based attitudes and actions.** Aside from the ambiguity that exists for some educators on the topic of zero-tolerance policy, there exists yet an equally disturbing issue relating to the suspension and general treatment of Black males. Researchers referenced biased attitudes on the parts of educators and, in some cases, students, as variables that impact the suspension practices of educators based on gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Cooper, 2003; Jensen, 2009) or a combination of any
three. These biases were largely attributed to the limited cultural awareness or sensitivity of the lived experiences of the students, as well as preconceived notions surrounding the abilities of Black male students who come from demographic or geographic locales outside of the local community. Such contrary attitudes have been associated with the adverse ways in which educators interact with their students and manage the students’ misconduct Cooper, 2003; Henfield, 2011; Jensen, 2009; Windsor, Dunlap, and Armour, 2012).

Rather than in an overt fashion, biases are sometimes carried out in the form of what is known as microaggressions. Microaggressions are casual degradations of any socially marginalized group, rooted in the implicit biases one person holds for another, and they are often grounded in norms that have been established for one group by the dominant population or culture (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2014). Those who demonstrate microaggressive behaviors traditionally deny their own bias behaviors and minimize the existence of discrimination. The research asserts that less competent teachers are more inclined to fault children of impoverished environments for their low academic achievement versus engaging in reflective pedagogical practice (Jensen, 2009). These reactions are significant, yet often overlooked factors that not only contribute to the ever-widening academic achievement gap, but they also serve as reasonable factors associated with disciplinary imbalances amongst the races.

Henfield (2011) makes reference to how educators and sometimes students’ peers, perhaps unintentionally, engage in bias behavior toward Black male students. In a qualitative study of five self-identified Black, male eighth-grade students, ranging in ages 13- to 14-years old, Henfield (2011) set out to understand the lived experiences of the
students attending a predominately White middle school located in the Midwest. All students were identified as earning grades ranging from 77-100%. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher asked students to describe what it was like to be one of a few Black students attending the school, in general, and any perceptions the members of the community had of them. The students described how teachers became upset for little things, such as throwing a pencil across the room, tapping on the desk, or having their head down, and the consequences would include being yelling at, sent to the office, or serving detention. While the students did not suggest they were specifically being targeted with these penalties due to their race, there were other instances in which they encountered direct bias and microaggressive behavior on the part of their peers and teachers.

One example given was when a student shared how his coach always made remarks to him and other Black members on the football team that they needed to “work harder” (Henfield, 2011, p. 149). The manner in which the student described this statement seemed to be excessive, yet the student observed this sort of attention was never directed to the White players on the team. The student offered a second example, describing how his White male counterparts perceived he and his friends as gangbangers and killers. Culture was another area in which some students did not believe they were represented or respected. One student described how part of his style was wearing his hair braided. He described being targeted by adults about his hair when he was asked, “What are you trying to do by having braids?” (Henfield, 2011, p. 150). Two students spoke of how a White-dominant culture was prevalent in the school, evidenced by the country music being played at school dances, suggesting a lack of diversity in the music
Henfield (2011) suggests that school guidance counselors use their roles to address racial microaggression behaviors on behalf of all marginalized groups within school communities, beginning with Black males. He suggests instituting professional training for all adults in the community, including the school principal and other lead administrators. One way he recommends completing this goal was by having counselors, along with Black male students, lead discussions with the staff about their experiences with their peers and treatment from their teachers. The goal of this would be to help teachers demonstrate greater empathy when executing disciplinary measures. Henfield (2011) also charges school administrators to conduct an inventory of the cultural climate at their schools. He notes that it is the responsibility of principals to ensure cultural representation of all community members of the student body, which can be evidenced in the physical structure of the building, the curriculum, as well as extracurricular activities. Such structures could serve as a catalyst to reducing stereotypical innuendos and microaggressive behaviors directed at their Black male population and other marginalized groups.

Cooper (2003) also sheds light from the standpoint of female parent caregivers, regarding how educators sometimes appear to lack cultural sensitivity toward Black
members of their community and engage in microaggressive behaviors toward both students and their mothers. In a qualitative study conducted by Cooper (2003), 14 low-income and working class African American mothers and grandmothers, raising their grandchildren in Los Angeles, were interviewed. The purpose of the study was to explore the standpoint of the mothers and how they selected schools for their children to attend. At the juncture of when this study was conducted, participants’ children attended four types of schools in Los Angeles: public, charter, catholic, and Afro-centric private schools. The parents were asked to share their experiences in having children attend public schools and the variables that led to their transfers to non-public schools. Standpoint theory was selected as the framework used to conduct this research in an effort to gain insight on: (a) the ideologies the parents held on what quality education should reflect, and (b) the lived experiences of the parents in relationship to the public schools where their children attended.

Specific to what the women believed a quality education should entail, aside from the parents’ belief that teachers lacked the pedagogical competencies to offer effective instruction, the results speak of the mothers’ accounts pertaining to the treatment and lack of emotional connectedness when it came to how teachers related to the students. One grandmother made the following declaration: “If, as a teacher, you don’t have the love and concern for the children, then you don’t do a good job” (Cooper, 2003, p. 112). This statement suggests that the parents valued teachers having compassion for their children. The majority of the mothers believed “that public school teachers often stigmatize and discriminate against inner-city school children based on their biased beliefs and assumptions” (Cooper, 2003, p. 111).
This expressed concern made by the parent does not appear unwarranted, as Cooper’s (2003) study also shed light on how participants in the study believed teachers, specifically in the public-school settings, did not have high expectations for their students. She highlighted how participants described teachers as lacking compassion for children, were quick to remove students from the classroom setting, or sought to have them placed on medication for any signs of misbehavior. The attitudes and actions referenced were indicative of biased behaviors on the parts of teachers toward students, which was possibly rooted in both race and gender.

Cooper (2003) makes several recommendations for educators and other practitioners who serve students coming from low-income households. She places emphasis on the role teacher preparation programs play in properly preparing teachers in becoming more culturally sensitive and self-aware in working in diverse settings. This includes supporting educators in understanding the specific characteristic and needs associated with students and families who come from low-income, urban settings. Cooper (2003) also charges teacher-education programs to provide professional training to student-teachers “about the sociopolitical issues that affect the communities they serve,” in an effort to help them better understand and support the students they are slated to serve (p. 114).

**Impact of Poverty on Family Dynamics and Child Development**

While teachers traditionally receive a plethora of professional development as it pertains to curricula and instruction, especially in the day of Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2016), they may not be as informed as to how the variables associated with poverty can directly impact both a student’s
academic performance and conduct. It is not uncommon for governmental institutions (i.e., educational establishments), to expect participants to meet the established “hegemonic standards to conform to mainstream society by imposing sanctions and punishments” (Windsor et al., 2012, p. 357); in this case, measures driven by zero-tolerance policy. These policies however ignore the complexities of the interaction between poverty, violence, substance, and the impact such plights can have on student development (Jensen, 2009; Windsor, et al., 2012). Since principals sit at the helm of shaping a schools’ cultural and climate, attention to the holistic needs of students—particularly those of facing the double-edged sword of being marginalized by race and socioeconomics—must be made a top priority. This includes gaining awareness and understanding of how poverty can impact the development and behavior of students (Cooper, 2003; Jensen, 2009.

**Poverty and family dynamics.** Educators often presume that lack of parental involvement equates to lack of concern about the academic welfare of children. They often criticize parents for being lackluster or indifferent when it comes to their children’s education (Cooper, 2003; Jensen, 2009). This, however, is not always the case, and research suggests there are often other extenuating circumstances that can impede on a parent’s level of involvement.

In a qualitative study conducted by Windsor et al. (2012), the researchers set out to determine what impact the New York State Rockefeller Drug Laws had on individuals living in poverty. While the study was comprised of 11 women in total, the accounts from of the four women set the tone for the article, which was indicative of all participants. Standpoint and intersection theories were the lenses in which this study was
conducted. The article highlighted the culture of surveillance on impoverished African Americans, and a significant portion of the article spoke specifically to how poverty, coupled with parental substance abuse, crippled the educational attainment for one of the participants in the study. The participant in the study spoke of her mother’s drug addiction, her own lack of supervision as a 12-year-old, and her experiences of homelessness, molestation, and minimal access to food. She described these plights as ones that left her feeling embarrassed, alone, and most importantly, untrusting of adults, including the ones at her school. One of the most significant circumstances she faced was being unable to eat at school because of her mother’s failure to complete the school lunch form that entitled her to free meals at school. She never revealed the circumstances in which she was living to her teachers for fear of being removed from her mother and instead suffered in silence. In an effort to make money so she could feed herself, she eventually dropped out of school and began prostituting and selling drugs.

Windsor et al. (2012) make a point of highlighting how individuals can become distrustful of governmental agencies, as evidenced by the aforementioned accounts from the young woman featured in this study, who expressed feeling so skeptical of the adults within her school setting (as a result of an incomplete lunch form) that she went hungry day after day rather than sharing her personal family struggles. The fact that she would ultimately drop out of school to secure alternative means for supporting herself, raises questions to the level of attentiveness school officials had for its student body, as well as the aspects of the school’s climate that contributed to this student being unable to speak to anyone about her most vulnerable circumstances. This finding suggests that school officials can often be regimented by policy, cultivating atmospheres of rigidity, while
relying on cookie-cutter approaches to address the needs of the students they are charged to serve.

Cooper (2003) found in her study that one of the plights faced by single Black mothers is their inability to be physically present at their children’s schools as frequently as they would like, and how this is perceived by teachers as disinterest in the participants’ children’s academic progress. The matriarchs described the teachers as being non-empathetic of their plight as single parents. The participants explained how they did not have the luxury or flexibility to be at their children’s schools the way they wanted to be, due to their limited financial means and work schedules. They were clear, however, that their absence was not indicative of how they valued their child’s education. As previously mentioned, more than half the number of Black children living in single-family households in America are led by women, and they have been identified as living in poverty (NCES, 2015). Jensen (2009) supported Cooper’s (2003) findings that many caregivers who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds explained being faced with stressful situations, such as long hours at work, searching for employment, and other appointments that occupy their time, which prevented them from being as active in the school setting as they might have liked.

**Poverty and child development.** In his book, *Teaching with Poverty in Mind*, Jensen (2009) discusses research conducted on the impact poverty has on the brains of children. He defines poverty as “a chronic and debilitating condition that results from multiple adverse synergistic factors and affects the mind, body and soul” (Jensen, 2009, p. 6). He identifies several types of poverty: situational, generation, absolute, urban, rural, and relative. He outlines four risk factors afflicting families living in poverty: (a)
emotional and social challenges, (b) acute and chronic stressors, (c) cognitive lags, and (d) health and safety issues. Jensen (2009) proposes that educators seek to deepen their understanding about the many factors associated with poverty and the impact it can potentially have on student behavior and academic performance. He argues that students raised in poverty struggle with managing overwhelming challenges and, as a result, their brains have adapted to the suboptimal living conditions that impede academic performance and ignite misconduct. He cites how behavioral research indicates that children who come from impoverished homes often develop psychiatric disturbances and maladaptive social functioning.

Jensen (2009) asserts that children raised in poor households often fail to learn appropriate ways to respond when it comes to interacting with their peers or other adults, indicating they are likely to display behaviors typically identified as *acting out*. This can include, but is not limited to, impatience and impulsivity, gaps in politeness and social graces, limitations in their range of behavioral responses, inappropriate emotional responses, and less empathy for others’ misfortune. Some teachers misinterpret students’ emotional and social deficits as a lack of respect. However, Jensen declares that students simply do not have the repertoire of alternative responses due to lack of exposure. He offers action steps educators could take when working with students who come from impoverished circumstances, which include making a shift in one’s mental model as to how they manage and approach student behavior. Jensen (2009) cautions teachers who seek to demand respect from students who conceptually do not understand what it should look like. He charges teachers to model desired behaviors for children by keeping a calm voice, resisting the urge to overexert one’s power of authority, and avoiding
condescending and sarcastic undertones or combative approaches that could exacerbate situations. Finally, teachers are encouraged to embed social skills as part of their pedagogical practice to support the students in developing both their social and academic needs.

Burton (2007) offers a deeper assessment of the impact of poverty on child development. In her ethnographic longitudinal study, which ranged from 2-7 years, she set out to study the lived experiences of children and adolescents growing up in low-income families. The children identified in her study were ones who represented all ethnic backgrounds and engaged in what she described as adultification behaviors. These children demonstrated adult-like mannerisms, and they took on responsibilities in direct response to what they personally believed to be their families’ needs. Four levels of adultification were described: precocious knowledge, mentored-adultification, peerification/spousification, and parentification.

Burton (2007) describes *precocious knowledge* as children witnessing situations and acquiring knowledge that is advanced for the child’s age. She explains that for many children, lack of privacy and poorly constructed and spatially inadequate low-income housing makes it difficult to shield children from overhearing such exchanges. The same holds true for students living in what are known as *doubled-up* and even *tripled-up* situations, with multiple extended family members living together in a home or apartment designed for a single family. As a result, it becomes challenging for parents to conceal adult content from children. Children residing in such settings are more privy to conversations about parents’ financial problems, causing them to be concerned about these matters as well (Burton, 2007).
Mentored-adultification involves a child assuming an adult lifestyle and role, with limited supervision from parent or adult caregiver. According to Burton (2007), in this arrangement, the parent does not relinquish their role as the authority figure; however, the parents do give the children extensive responsibilities that they expect to be carried out with little to no supervision. Mentored-adultified children in the study described feeling needed and appreciated by their parents, and they “gain confidence from useful domestic and social skills as they take them along into adulthood” (Burton, 2007, p. 338).

Burton (2007) describes peerification/spousification as the intersection between how parents engage their child as one of their peers relative to the support they are expected to extend within the household, while still expecting the child to behave age appropriately, especially in instances when the child challenges their authority. When parents peerify their children, they tend to confide in or seek advice from them, usually regarding financial and other household issues. Burton (2007) indicates that some peerified children see themselves as a teammate with their parents. Conversely, children, depending on the level of responsibility they have in supporting their households, can tend to believe they have the same rights and freedoms as their parents, without the obligation of seeking permission for anything from their adult caregiver. This can present a challenge for children who walk the tightrope of these two worlds: having to navigate when they are expected to behave as an adult and when they should conduct themselves as children.

For the child operating in the parentified role, Burton (2007) describes them as a “full-time quasi-parent” (p. 339), to both siblings and parents alike. The responsibilities include advocating at school for the needs of their siblings, facilitating and in some cases,
translating meetings at social service agencies, negotiating rental payments with landlords, or earning money to pay bills for household items, all on behalf of their parents. In some cases, children are even required to assume parentified roles for parents who struggle with drugs and alcohol addiction (Burton, 2007).

Burton (2007) recommends that schools develop programs to educate teachers and school leaders about identifying and contextualizing adultification behaviors demonstrated by students. She suggests that professionals who are not sensitive to adultification issues may misinterpret students’ behaviors as being disrespectful and defiant. The students may require support in shaping their adultification experiences within the context of school (Burton, 2007). Burton recommends that teachers optimize the leadership skills of adultified children by creating activities and opportunities that allow them to effectively use their abilities in constructive ways, relative to the context of school. Such tasks, however, Burton suggested, should differ from the requirements and expectations of their daily family-related tasks.

**Disciplinary Power Sources**

The findings from Skiba and Edl (2004) and Skiba et al. (2014) reveal that principals’ practices—whether rooted in exclusionary measures, preventive services, or getting to know students as individuals—are associated with forms of power. Theorists French and Raven (1959) created the power theory framework to describe the ways in which leaders utilize and are seen by others, to utilize power. The framework contains their five sources of power: coercive, expert, legitimate, referent, and reward, as spelled in Table 2.1.
### Table 2.1

**French’s and Raven’s (1959) Power Theory Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Power</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>Based on the perception that the authority figure has the ability to mediate rewards toward a subordinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercive</td>
<td>Based on the understanding that the authority figure has the power to mediate punishment upon the subordinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimate</td>
<td>Based on the perception of the subordinate that the authority figure has the reasonable right to prescribe behavior for them to adhere based on their position as a leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>Based on a subordinate’s admiration for an authority figure driven by prestige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Based on a subordinate’s perception that the authority figure has special knowledge or expertise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Raven and French (1959) “define power in terms of influence and influence in terms of psychological change” (p. 151). In essence, the authority figure or informant seeks to impart change amongst a subject or subordinate by executing power. Change is defined by adjustments made to one’s attitude, opinions, behaviors, needs, values, goals, or other aspects of one’s psychological framework (Raven & French, 1959).

Raven and French (1959) describe *reward power* as the ability of the authority figure to administer positive compensation upon a subject in an effort to remove or decrease undesirable behavior demonstrated by an individual. Its use is designed to control a subject, traditionally with some form of tangible compensation. With consistent use of this power source, over time, the subordinate is likely to increase their attraction for the authority figure (French & Raven, 1959). As a result, the relationship can potentially evolve from one that is reward-driven to one that is referent-based (see...
referent power) where the individual demonstrates desired behaviors without receiving any reward.

Coercive power is seen as similar to reward power, in that it is used to manipulate change of undesirable behavior within the subordinate, but with punishment rather than with compensation (Raven & French, 1959). Essentially, the subordinate understands that he or she will be punished if they fail to confirm to the desired behavior of the authority figure. Raven and French (1959) indicate that ambiguity can sometimes exist when it comes to distinguishing between coercive power and reward power: “Is withholding a reward equivalent to a punishment? Is the withdrawal of a punishment equivalent to a reward?” (p. 152). The perception of the situation by the subordinate is what drives whether they are influenced by reward or punitive measures. The theorists make a point of noting that the actions of a subject driven by coercive power are dependent on punitive measures, versus those individuals driven by reward power, whose desire to change will eventually occur more organically, without the influence of reward (French & Raven, 1959).

In legitimate power, the subordinate respects the positionality of the authority figure, be it an individual or organization, and feels a sense of obligation to abide by and adhere accordingly. Raven and French (1959) provide basis for how legitimate power is acquired: (a) culture, (b) social structure and (c) designation. Cultural beliefs and traditions can influence how legitimate power is attained. In some cultures, elders are granted the right to prescribe behaviors for younger people to follow. In other cultures, females may see males as holding legitimate power based on the established, prescribed roles for men. Raven and French (1959) offer social structure for a basis of legitimate
power, relative to a “hierarchy of authority” (p. 154). They highlight how the relationship in a social structure may not necessarily be a personal one, but instead one that is respected based on its superiority, that is, in a political office, with rights to execute action and influence change. Finally, the theorists offer designation as the third characteristic associated with legitimate power. Designation involves an individual who is assigned to a specific role, operates in that capacity, and as a result, carries the ability to execute and/or influence change. An example of this would be a department head that accepts the authority of the vice president (VP) because the president of the company has specifically delegated him or her to carry responsibilities associated with the role of being a VP (French & Raven, 1959).

Referent power lies in how the subordinate feels a sense of closeness with the authority figure. French and Raven (1959) explain that this oneness relies deeply in how the subordinate figure seeks to conform to the attitudes, beliefs and practices of the authority figure without being threatened (coercive power) or without being enticed (reward power). Instead, the authority figure is often seen with prestige and is reverenced by the subordinate, which drives their desire to be associated with their company. The greater the attraction a subordinated has for an authority figure, the greater the likelihood of influence the authority figure will have of the subordinate, resulting in a high level of referent power (French & Raven, 1959). Fundamentally, this power lies in the level of respect a subject has for an authority figure. French and Raven (1959) point out that in referent power, the subordinate may not even realize that he or she is being influenced by an authority given the elusiveness of how the respect is garnered.
Finally, *expert power* is driven by the extent of knowledge a subordinate believes an authority figure to have within a given subject matter rooted in an established standard (French & Raven, 1959). Positionality is a variable that can impact magnitude of how a subject perceives an expert, ranging from attorney who gives legal advice, to a resident who is able to provide directions to a tourist in his neighborhood (French & Raven, 1959). French and Raven (1959) propose that one’s “initial acceptance of the validity of the content” (p. 155) serves as the foundation for how a subordinate will respect an authority figure as possessing expert power. They note however, that an informant merely possessing content knowledge does not automatically influence change on the part of a subordinate (French and Raven, 1959). While a subordinate may acknowledge the expertise held by an authority figure, there can still be a delay in the acceptance of information or advice if the subordinate lacks respect for the informant (French & Raven, 1959). It is only after the gradual release of reasons associated with the lack of respect can the subordinate begin to appreciate and retain the content provided by the authority figure who operates from expert power.

French and Raven (1959) show how one’s perception of an authority figure is equally important as to the way in which an authority figure sees himself or herself. Furthermore, the theorists illustrate how power sources do not necessarily operate in isolation of one another but instead can show interdependency (French & Raven, 1959). There are periods where the authority figure’s ability to influence change lies a combination of perceptions a subordinate holds for the informant, rooted in multiple power sources. An example might be a subordinate’s respect for an authority figure rooted in what is perceived as both expert and legitimate power combined. Such regard
held on the part of the subordinate has the potential of influencing change, while garnering referent power for the authority figure as well.

Tauber (2007) references these same five sources of power in relationship to classroom management. He makes a point of highlighting that no individual relies exclusively on one power source all of the time; that circumstance will influence the type of power an authority figure will tap into. For the purpose of this study, the research centered its attention on how three of the five approaches to power are used by principals: coercive, reward, and referent. Table 2.2 outlines the elements of coercive, referent, and reward power and aligns each of them to principals’ approaches toward discipline.

Table 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Power</th>
<th>Disciplinary Approach</th>
<th>Disciplinary Attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coercive – Based on the understanding that the authority figure has the power to mediate punishment upon the student</td>
<td>Zero tolerance</td>
<td>Punishment as a means of correcting behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward – Based on the perception that the authority figure has the ability to mediate rewards toward the student</td>
<td>Positive behavior intervention support</td>
<td>Establishing standards for behaviors with rewards for good behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referent – Based on an individual’s ability to identify/relate to the authority figure</td>
<td>Using empathy; getting to know students</td>
<td>Establishing relationships to manage behaviors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Coercive power.** The zero-tolerance approach to managing student behaviors aligns directly with leaders who operate from coerciveness as a power source, because coerciveness relies on the most extreme punitive measures—suspensions and expulsions.
According to the research, which highlights the discrepancies in how zero-tolerance policies are often misinterpreted and discriminatively implemented by teachers and principals, it is reasonable for students to be concerned that nearly any behavior they engage in can be translated by those in authority as disrespectful, disruptive, or defiant, resulting in some sort of punitive outcome (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002; Dunbar & Villarruel, 2004; McNeal & Dunbar, 2010).

Principals who rely primarily on coercive power as their default method to correcting pupil misconduct are more inclined to use fear as a means of trying to force or pressure students (“do as I say, or else”) into the conduct they deem acceptable as the authority figure.

**Referent power.** Referent power is described as an individual’s ability to identify or relate to the authority figure. In a study conducted by Sun (2004), where he explored teacher commitment based on the perceived styles of principals, he found that positive relationships increased teacher enjoyment and increased their willingness to support the school community beyond the scope of their responsibilities. French and Raven (1959) indicate that “the desire to please a person toward whom one feels strong affection is an important source of leadership capacity, which is rooted in what is known as referent power” (Sun, 2004, p. 28). The same can be said for the ways in which principals foster relationships with students as a means of managing their behavior. Students who feel greater connections to an adult member of their school community are less inclined to engage in disrespectful and defiant behaviors.

It can be said that leaders operating from a place of referent power are those who operate from a place of empathy. However, it is impossible for one to demonstrate
genuine empathy for another without having knowledge of the constituent and his or her plights. Research suggests that administrators place greater emphasis on professional training to assist teachers in developing creative ways to build awareness of their students’ social and cultural personal lives in order to effectively meet their social and emotional needs, particularly those students demonstrating behavioral difficulties (Cooper, 2003; Mowat, 2010; Warren, 2014). This however, can only be achieved through forging relationships that are embedded in trust (McNeal & Dunbar, 2010; Mowat, 2010; Warren, 2014; Windsor et al., 2012).

Having an awareness of students’ social plights places teachers and school leaders one step closer to understanding of the variables that may correlate with the adverse behaviors demonstrated by students. Specific to disenfranchised populations, Segal (2011) referred to what is known as social empathy, which is the ability to understand people from different socioeconomic classes and racial/ethnic backgrounds with a specific concentration on disenfranchised and marginalized populations. This awareness has the potential to influence how school personnel relate to their students, particularly within inner-city settings, as well as those working for agencies that designed to provide support services for traditionally ostracized children.

**Reward power.** Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) was established by the U.S. Department of Education and operates under the Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center. With an emphasis on addressing the social-emotional and academic needs of students, PBIS offers a multi-tiered approach toward meeting students at their respective tiers of development (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, 2016). Tier 1 intervention focuses on the establishment of
schoolwide behavioral expectations and rewarding students when they demonstrate desired behaviors (e.g., being respectful, demonstrating kindness, no bullying). Tier 2 interventions are designed to address a smaller, more concentrated population of students who may demonstrate more chronic behavioral issues. These students can be given behavioral plans that are developed with teachers or school leaders, which allow the students to improve self-regulation habits. The plans are communicated with parents in an effort to engage them as stakeholders and to improve accountability for the student. Tier 3 interventions are designed to support the neediest population of students, which are the top 5% of students who are non-responsive to intervention measures at Tiers 1 and 2. Tier 3 involves having “specific problem-solving teams that are unique to supporting the needs of each student with severe and intensive behaviors” (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, 2016). It is at the Tier 3 stage that additional support services including (but not limited to) possible referral for mental health services.

Richards et al. (2014) conducted a study about the implementation of school-wide PBIS programs in an urban inner-city community. The participants were administrators at the district level as well as school principals. The setting of this study took place in the Central City School District in Texas, using a total of 56 schools. Using a mixed-methods approach to the research, the authors set out to determine (a) the challenges of implementing PBIS systems in large urban inner-city school districts, and (b) the level of principal focus needed to achieve successful PBIS programs. For the qualitative portion of the study, the researchers used an exploratory case study approach, and for the quantitative portion, they annually administered the Benchmark of Quality assessment. The findings revealed a decrease in punitive practices used by teachers who traditionally
used exclusionary methods as their means of discipline, showing a significant difference between the first fourth year of the implementation. Teachers reported seeing improvements in the ways in which they managed students’ behaviors that once would have resulted in greater amounts of student removals.

There are core practices and systems delineated in the implementation of the PBIS processes, which are based on important logistics, concepts, and guidelines (Fixsen et al., 2005). Principals play a critical role in the successful implementation of PBIS structures within the school setting in order to reap maximum benefits in managing student behavior. Richards et al. (2014) found there was stronger fidelity on the part of principals toward the implementation of the PBIS programs in years one and two over that in the subsequent years, which speaks to the impact and influence school principals have on the level of success intervention programs can have within a given community.

**Results from Studies Using the Disciplinary Practices Survey**

Skiba and Edl (2004) conducted a study where they set out to understand the attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices of school principals toward discipline. The survey was administered to all principals across the state of Indiana during the 2002-03 school year. It comprised 60 questions organized into seven domains: (a) attitude toward discipline in general, (b) awareness and enforcement of disciplinary procedures, (c) beliefs concerning suspension/expulsion and zero tolerance, (d) beliefs about responsibility for handling students misbehaviors, (e) attitude toward differential discipline of disadvantaged students or students with disabilities, (f) resources available for discipline, and (g) attitude toward and the availability of prevention strategies as an alternative to exclusion.
A total of 325 principals completed the survey. The researchers found that many of the principals surveyed believed “getting to know students individually is an important part of discipline” and that “disciplinary consequences should be called in proportion to the severity of the problem behavior” (Skiba & Edl, 2004, p. 2). Results showed that one-third of the principals who completed the study supported preventive work, believed in working with families before suspending, and believed that discipline should be adapted for the students with disabilities and those who came from disadvantaged situations. The objective of these principals was to keep their students in school and to use discipline as a means of teaching appropriate skills to students for self-regulation of behavior. Contrarily, the second third of the principals interviewed believed that the zero-tolerance policy was a significant contributing factor in maintaining an orderly environment at their schools. These principals were more inclined to believe that lack of time prevented them from getting to know their students on an individual basis, and lack of time also prevented them from implementing intervention programs to address disciplinary issues. These same principals also felt that most problems relating to school discipline stemmed from inadequate home situations, and they believed that most disciplinary problems could be solved if the most persist troublemakers were removed from the school.

The final third of the principals polled, which Skiba and Edl (2004) identified as the pragmatic prevention group, believed that suspensions made students less likely to misbehave in the future. However, they believed that strict enforcement of the disciplinary policies and adequate teacher training in classroom management contributed to the containment of school violence at their school. Finally, these principals believed
that nothing could be done at the school level to address adverse behavior if students themselves were not willing to take responsibility for their actions.

Skiba and Baker (2008) modified the Disciplinary Practices Survey in 2008 from the original 2004 version, by reducing the number of questions from 60 to 42, and they included items concerning views on race and culture. The 2008 version of the survey was used by Skiba et al. (2014) to examine the “contributions of students . . . students’ characters, and school level variables that lead to exclusionary discipline and racial disparities” (p. 648). Just like the original survey, this 2008 version was divided into the same seven content areas. This survey yielded a response rate of 57% from the 1,875 principals who were invited to participate across the state of Indiana.

The findings of this study revealed that race was one of the strongest predictors when it came to out-of-school-suspensions: the higher the percentage of Black students attending the school, the higher the suspension rate. A significant discovery from the study was that socioeconomic status did not serve as a variable in the suspension practices of principals: “in rich and poor schools alike, regardless of one’s gender, one’s school achievement level, or the severity of one’s behavior, simply attending school with more Black students substantially increases one’s risk for receiving and out-of-school suspension” (Skiba et al., 2014, p. 661). The study also found that out-of-school suspensions were based on a wide range of ambiguous behavioral infractions, such as defiance or disrespect, which allowed for greater subjectivity in disciplinary measures executed by authority figures. Contrarily, more serious offenses, such as carrying weapons, yielded more objective reactions to discipline, as state and federal guidelines reduced the opportunity for bias reactionary behaviors on the parts of the principals.
Ohara (2015) replicated the original study conducted by Skiba and Edl (2004), also using principals from Grades K-12 in the state of New Jersey. The purpose of this study was to determine how principals perceived suspensions based on socioeconomic status, gender, and years of experience of the principals (Ohara, 2015). The study used a total of 13 principals. The schools were ranked lowest to highest, according to their socioeconomic status. Ohara (2015) hypothesized three outcomes for the study: (a) that female principals were more inclined to disagree with suspension as the most effective way of dealing with student misconduct, (b) that principals of schools located in low socioeconomic areas tend to favor suspension as a mean of discipline and would most likely be in support of zero-tolerance policies, and (c) that high school principals with little years of experience would be more inclined to suspend students and favor zero-tolerance policies. The results found that both female and male principals overwhelmingly responded negatively (84.6%) to suspensions as a means of disciplining students. Instead, 76.9% of the principals strongly believed preventive programming would reduce the need for suspensions and expulsions. A normal distribution could not be conducted between the principals for the second and third hypotheses because of the small response rate; therefore, a statistical analysis could not be performed. The most significant limitation to this study is the total number of principals. The reliability of the findings could not be generalized, given the sample size of principals, as 13 principals cannot give an accurate representation for the 1,300 principals who operate schools at all grade levels in the State of New Jersey (State of New Jersey Department of Education [DOE], 2014).
Chapter Summary

Federal zero-tolerance, school-related policies were originally designed at the national level to offer protection and make schools safer as it related to drugs and weapons possession. Over the course of time, however, the interpretations, modifications, and executions of this policy, made at both the school and district levels, have yielded disjointed practices relative the ways in which students are disciplined. Consequently, African American male students have persistently had the highest rates of suspensions and expulsions for incidents far less egregious than the intended design of zero tolerance. Sadly, there is a multitude of research that suggests that this policy has not proven effective in managing student misconduct. If the issue of disproportionality is to be addressed with authenticity, the research suggests that structures are needed to assure that those in the position of implementing zero-tolerance policy are trained accordingly, and refer to guidelines that outline appropriate disciplinary measures to prevent ambiguity and promote equality. Furthermore, the research suggests that more work is needed to combat the biased attitudes held by educators—both the intentional and unintentional alike—toward African American male students.

For young people residing within inner-city communities, factors contributing to their adult-like dispositions and perceived misconduct in school can often times correlate to characteristics associated with poverty. Homelessness, overcrowded housing, limited resources in the form of food and clothing, and substance abuse are just some of the factors many of these students face on a daily basis. These variables in and of themselves serve as barriers that prevent students from accessing academic content with equity. The research refers to how some leaders rely on structures such as preventive services and
reward systems as a means of meeting students’ needs and managing their behaviors. However, without awareness of the social plights faced by students living within challenging circumstances, it is impossible for educators to truly and adequately support students both academically and socially. This awareness is key to the relationship building that can serve as the beginning stages toward reducing suspensions for children of color, primarily African American male students. Studies suggest the ways in which school leaders and teachers can begin to increase their awareness of the social circumstances experienced by their pupils is by fostering climates that value their voices. This requires that educators become active listeners, while adopting the idea that students should be both seen and heard. Research has established the elements of trust and compassion to be vital ingredients in building student-teacher relationships, as well as improving student behavior and academic outcomes. Given these results, it is worth exploring how awareness of students’ social plights influence the ways in which principals working within inner-city communities manage misconduct, particularly that of African American males.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design that was used in this study. This is inclusive of the problem statement and research questions, descriptions of the research context and research participants, the instrument used for data collection, and the process for data analysis. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the process.

The national suspension and expulsion rates recorded by USDOE Office of Civil Rights (2014), include all students enrolled in Grades K-12, disaggregated by gender, race, and ethnicity (Appendix A), while the National Center for Educational Statistics (2010, 2015) captured suspension rates at a more granular level at Grades 6-12. Recently, however, there has been a heightened level of concern about the number of suspensions that have begun to impact Black male students at the Pre-K level, as young as 3 and 4 years of age (USDOE Office of Civil Rights, 2014) where suspension rates for Black male students is three times their enrollment rate. The existing data, however, fails to address suspension rates exclusively for students in Grades K-5 in a disaggregated fashion. This makes it difficult to determine the types of occurrences in which students engage within this school level and the magnitude to which they are reprimanded for their actions by their school principals.

Unlike in previous studies that used the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Ohara, 2015; Skiba & Edl, 2004; Skiba et al., 2014), which have only used quantitative approaches to understanding principals’ attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices toward
discipline, the explanatory-sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2014) was used to gain insight of the disciplinary dispositions and approaches used by principals. The benefit to conducting an explanatory-sequential mixed-methods design for this study was that it allowed the principals to expound in detail upon the responses they gave to scale items on the Disciplinary Practices Survey. This allowed the researcher to have greater insight behind the thinking and philosophies of the principals, which influenced the responses provided on the survey, as well as to expand on the disciplinary recourse utilized in a given situation, particularly when managing the behaviors of Black males.

While principals are primarily responsible for establishing the culture of how disciplinary measures are executed, the empirical literature continues to provide limited data on how the attitudes, values, and beliefs of New York City principals shape their disciplinary practices, specifically at the elementary school level and with specific populations, that is, Black males living in poverty. This study comprised exclusively NYC Title I public elementary school principals, and sought to have the following research questions answered:

1. What are the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs and practices of NYC public elementary school principals serving high-poverty populations?
2. Are there any demographic differences in the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices of NYC public elementary school principals serving high-poverty populations?
3. What factors influence the disciplinary and suspension decisions of NYC public elementary school principals of high-need schools specifically toward Black male students?
The research design and research questions sought to extend this field of study by interviewing principals from the largest school district in the country. As previously mentioned, the quantitative portion of the study aimed to discover the trends in attitudes, beliefs, and practices amongst NYC Title I public elementary school principals and to determine any correlations amongst principals, based on race, gender, tenure as principal, and geographic locations of their schools within the five boroughs of New York City. Eligible principals who elected to participate in the qualitative portion of the study were asked to reflect deeper on the responses they had given on the Disciplinary Practices Survey, by elaborating on the factors that influenced the ways in which they disciplined their students, particularly their Black male population.

Previous researchers who used the Disciplinary Practices Survey performed statewide quantitative studies of principals leading schools at all levels—elementary, middle, and high—within the states of Indiana (Skiba et al., 2014; Skiba & Edl, 2004) and New Jersey (Ohara, 2015). The studies cited some demographic differences amongst the principals’ beliefs and disciplinary practices relating to their gender and school type, with a majority of female and elementary school principals using preventive measures to manage students’ behavior. Male principals, particularly at the high school level, most frequently utilized suspensions and policies rooted in zero tolerance. However, since the studies were conducted at the state and not at district levels, the principals were not governed under any uniformed guidelines or policies regarding managing student misconduct. Alternatively, the New York City Department of Education, which is the largest school district in the nation, has more than 1,800 public schools within the five boroughs of NYC, which are all governed under the same guidelines and structures of the
Citywide Behavioral Expectations (Appendix B and Appendix C) regarding the use of progressive discipline for managing student misconduct, and has a uniformed protocol for issuing in-school or out-of-school suspensions (see Research Context section). Yet, even with this structure, suspensions within the NYCDOE remain highest for Black students, even though they only make up 27% of the city’s total student population (NYCDOE, 2016). These rates mirror those proportions for both New York State and for the United States (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2013; USDOE Office of Civil Rights 2014).

Recognizing the disparities that exist in the suspension and arrest practices impacting Black males in Grades K-12 within the largest school district in the nation, NYC Mayor Bill deBlasio (2016), in collaboration with the NYCDOE, began taking measures to address this issue. One significant change now requires that principals of Grades 6-12 seek permission from the NYCDOE’s Office of Safety and Youth Development (OYSD) to execute a Principals’ Suspension against a student for “defying or disobeying authority,” (p. 16) as this category has been “associated with high rates of disparity not only in New York City, but also in other school districts across the nation” (Mayor deBlasio’s Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline, 2016, p. 16). Another measure the City has taken is to launch what is known as the Warning Cards Program, which empowers school safety agents to issue warning cards to students in lieu of summonses that traditionally lead to arrest for minor infractions. Despite these efforts, the Council for Supervisors and Administrators (CSA)—the union that represents the rights of principals, does not completely support the approach to some of the reforms to the Citywide Behavioral Expectations (2015) being made by the City to reduce suspensions and arrests of students. Instead, they suggest that principals and their staffs
are “the best arbiters of what disciplinary action suits the offense, the circumstances under which the offense occurred, and the student involved” (Mayor deBlasio’s Leadership Team, 2016, p. 1). This is a vital assertion; particularly when there is no practical research that actually solicits the voices of New York City public principals regarding their personal values and beliefs that influence their disciplinary practices. This study provided NYCDoe public elementary school principals, operating schools where at least 60% of their student bodies were eligible for free and reduced lunch, an opportunity to offer insight into the types of disciplinary measures they deemed to be most effective in addressing students’ behavior and the philosophies behind their decisions.

Appendix D highlights neighborhoods within the five boroughs of New York City, which have the highest suspension statistics (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2013). Many of these same communities, which are predominantly occupied by Black families (i.e., Central Harlem in Manhattan, and the Brownsville and East New York sections in Brooklyn), have also been identified as some of the most impoverished areas within the city (Eide, 2014; NYCDOE, 2015). This data suggests intersections between suspension, race, socioeconomic status, and gender. Despite this data, there still remains ambiguity as to (a) why suspension rates are highest in these areas, (b) how these rates are depicted at the elementary school level, and (c) the magnitude to which the aforementioned intersections extend to specifically Black males attending public elementary schools within these communities. Given the obscurity within the data, it is important to understand how the marginalized population of impoverished Black males is
impacted by the disciplinary philosophies and practices of their principals, specifically at the elementary school level.

The data collected from the quantitative and qualitative portion of the study was analyzed separately. For the quantitative portion of the study, principals completing the Disciplinary Practices Survey answered questions regarding their attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices surrounding discipline, unrelated to any specific identifiers of students’ race or gender. The results of the Disciplinary Practices Survey informed the interview questions that were asked of principals who elected to participate in the qualitative portion of the study, which was the second phase of the study (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative portion of the study comprised one-on-one interviews with a subsample of the principals who completed the survey. The interviews expounded upon the responses given by these same principals on the Disciplinary Practices Survey and explored more deeply the variables that influenced their decisions to suspend students, particularly Black male students. The results assisted in determining the variables that accounted for similarities and differences amongst principals with Title I populations, regarding their disciplinary attitudes, beliefs, and practices, specifically toward Black male students.

Research Context

The New York City Department of Education is the largest school district in the world (American School & University, 2014; NCES, 2013). There are a total of 1,875 schools within the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE, 2016). This is comprised of both public and charter schools at all grade levels ranging from Pre-kindergarten through grade 12. Its lead administrator is identified as the Chancellor of
Public Schools, operating under the auspices of the Mayor of New York City. Over 1.1 million students are enrolled in the city’s public schools, covering the boroughs of Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island (NYCDOE, 2016). Within NYCDOE’s larger school district, there are 32 sub-districts geographically located throughout the five boroughs (Appendix E). Each of the individual 32 sub-school districts is overseen by what is known as a Community Superintendent, where they can supervise anywhere from 20-30 elementary and middle schools within their jurisdiction. High school superintendents exclusively manage the public high schools within the same 32 school districts. Each school within the districts is assigned a principal who reports to the Community Superintendent.

The quantitative portion of this study included all 527 NYCDOE public, Title I, K-5 schools located throughout the five boroughs. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2015), Title I funding provided under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) refers to the federal financial assistance provided to local educational agencies (LEA) serving students living in poverty. Generally speaking, agencies that serve children where at least 40% of the population comes from families with low-incomes are eligible for what is known as Title I School-Wide Programming (SWP). Title I SWP allows for all students of the institution to benefit from programs and resources, regardless of their family’s financial status. However, during the 2014-2015 fiscal year, a decrease in the number of eligible low-income students attending NYC public schools resulted in a reduction of Title I funding (NYCDOE, 2014). As a result, the NYCDOE raised the criteria for schools receiving Title I SWP funds to 60% (NYCDOE, 2014). The formula for determining a school’s Title I SWP eligibility is
based on (a) the number of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (FRL) divided by (b) the total number of students enrolled in any given school. Eligibility requirements for students receiving FRL are based on one or more of the following: parents’ income, temporary housing status, and support received from Human Resources Assistance (HRA), such as food stamps (District 3 Equity in Education Task Force, 2016).

The Citywide Behavioral Expectations (2015) outlines a range of infractions classified in the following categories by levels: Level 1 – Uncooperative/Noncompliant Behavior, Level 2 – Disorderly Behavior, Level 3 – Disruptive Behaviors, Level 4 – Aggressive or Injurious/Harmful Behavior, and Level 5 – Seriously Dangerous or Violent Behavior. For each level of infraction, there are ranges of what is known as Guidance Interventions, which include approaches such as parent outreach, peer mediation, counseling services, and behavioral intervention plans. Also, for each level of infraction, there are ranges of possible disciplinary responses to be used in addition to guidance intervention. These include, but are not limited to: admonishment by pedagogical school staff, parent conference, classroom removals, and after a progression of disciplinary measures, principal or superintendent suspensions. In a principal’s suspension, students serve their suspensions in their home school, usually between 1 and 5 days, whereas for a superintendent’s suspension, students must serve their suspensions away from their home school at an Alternative Learning Center (ALC), for a minimum of 6 to 10 school days. This number can be as high as 180 days, depending on the infraction and number of previous suspensions on a student’s record (NYCDOE Citywide Behavioral Expectations, 2016). All suspensions are requested through a NYCDOE centralized system called the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS). The system requires
that principals log in their credentials, and indicate an infraction code as outlined by Chancellors Regulations on Discipline (Appendix B and Appendix C). All infraction codes are listed in a dropdown menu where the principals select the coordinating code with the demonstrated behavior. The principals must provide a detailed description of the incident, including the location, principals, injuries if any, and adult respondents to the situation. A feature within OORS called Suspensions and Office of Hearing Online (SOHO) is where principals must make request for both principal and superintendent levels.

When requesting a principal suspension, principals must put in the recommended number of days for the suspension, not to exceed 5. Once the request is made at either level, the principal receives an email from the Office of Suspensions, indicating if the suspension request is approved or denied. If a request for a principal’s suspension is approved, the principals are responsible for notifying and meeting with parents to discuss the incident, the punishment, and interventions moving forward. For a Principal’s Suspension, the student serves the suspension within their home school, but is removed from their official classroom for a fixed number of days, usually not to exceed 5.

If a superintendent’s suspension is approved, the parents receive a written notification from the Office of Suspensions (which serves a liaison for the superintendent), informing them of a date to appear for a hearing to discuss the incident with an arbitrator. The parent has the right to plead “no contest” to the charges, forfeiting a hearing, and proceed to take the consequences as determined by the Office of Suspensions. The principal can make a recommendation on the number of days the child should be suspended, but the Office of the Suspension makes the final decision of the
total number of days the child will be suspended. Traditionally, the maximum number of
days given to students at the elementary school level for suspension is 10. Should a
parent seek to contest the charges and move forward with the scheduled hearing, all
parties involved in the incident—respondents, victims, witnesses, and school
administrator (principal or assistant principal), must testify before the arbitrator, who,
after hearing the testimony and reading witness statements, makes the final determination
as to whether the student deserves to be suspended or not. If it is determined that the
student is to be suspended, the child attends what is known as an Alternative Learning
Center (ALC), away from their home school, typically anywhere from 6 to 10 school
days. Contrarily, if there is insufficient evidence to support the allegations, the charges
are dropped, and the student returns to his or her home school with recommendations for
intervention.

**Research Participants**

Eligible NYC Title 1 public elementary school principals were identified by using
two separate databases: the website, SchoolDigger.com (2016), and the Research and
Policy Support Group, a division that operates under the auspices of the New York City
Department of Education.

When accessing information via SchoolDigger.com (2016), the tab entitled *view
columns*, allowed the researcher to filter schools by various categories, including school
name, grade levels, school districts, grades levels from lowest to highest, Title I status,
percentage of students eligible for FRL, percentages of students by racial affiliation, etc.
For the purposes of this study, schools were filtered based on their percentages of
students eligible for FRL. In order to access NYC public schools, the researcher typed the
following information into the search engine: *New York City Geographic District*, followed by the number sign and numeric digit (e.g., NYC Geographic District #3). Once this information was collected, qualifying school leaders were identified as using the New York City Department of Education school portal. The home page contained a link entitled, *Find a School*. Clicking here led to a page where the names of the schools were typed into a search engine. Once the name of the school became populated, it led to the school’s individual portal, where the principals’ names, school addresses, and school phone numbers were accessed.

The second source of information came as a result from a request made to the New York City Department of Education Research and Policy Support Group (RPSG). A formal appeal was made to this division requesting the following information: (a) a list of all NYC Title I K-5 public elementary (non-charter) school principals where at least 60% of the student body were eligible for free or reduced-fee lunches, including schools that catered to students in Pre K-2, K-2, 3-5, or Pre K-5, K-5, but not K-8 or 3-8; and (b) the suspension rates for all aforementioned schools during the 2013-14, 14-15, and 15-16 school years. Schools catering to students in Grades K-8 or Grades K-12 were not included in this study in an effort to attain uniformity in results, as the 2015 Citywide Behavioral Expectations on discipline contain different infraction codes and are weighted differently for students in Grades 6-12. Charter schools that fall under the auspices of the New York City Department of Education were not included in this study, as they are not required to follow the same protocol relative to the Citywide Behavioral Expectations (2015) for disciplinary practices, and have autonomy regarding the ways in which they execute disciplinary and suspension measures.
The RPSG division was able to supply the list of K-5 schools that met the criteria of having at least 60% of student bodies that were eligible for FRL, however, no verification of Title I status. The data provided by this department provided a list totaling 527 public elementary schools serving students in Grades K-5, that had populations where at least 60% of each school’s population was eligible for free or reduced-fee lunch. In conducting a comparative analysis to the list provided by SchoolDigger.com (2016), the RPSG provided 57 additional schools that met the criteria for this study. Part of the disparities between the two lists were due to newly opened schools and K-2 schools that did not have testing grades as the schools listed on SchoolDigger.com (2016). The list provided by RPSG was ultimately used as the final distribution list for the principals to receive the survey.

To gain access to suspension data, an online request to the New York City Department of Education Institutional Review Board needed to be completed. In addition to the online application, the researcher was required to answer several supplementary questions relating to the research objectives and detailed information as to how the data would be used (Appendix F). Lastly, the request for suspension data required that the researcher sign a notarized Non-Disclosure/Non-Use Agreement form, where the researcher agreed not to share any information obtained beyond the scope of work relating to this study (Appendix G). The emails of all principals were obtained using Outlook WebApp via the NYCDOE for which the researcher had direct access, serving as an active principal at the time of this study. To maximize principals’ participation for this study, recruitment took place using several methods. First, the researcher sent announcements via email through the principals’ NYCDOE Outlook
WebApp account. Next, to assist with solicitation to principals, an outreach was also made to the President and Executive District Leaders at the Council for Supervisors and Administrators (CSA), which is the union that represents principals. Finally, principals who elected to participate in the interview portion of the study received library books valued at $100.

Following the explanatory-sequence, mixed-method approach, the principals for this study encompassed two groups. The first group comprised the population of NYCDOE SWP Title I public elementary school principals ($N = 527$) who serve students in Grades K-5 within the five boroughs of New York City. This population was invited to complete the 2008 version of the Disciplinary Practices Survey via Qualtrics, which comprised 42 questions divided into seven themes, and designed to assess principals’ attitudes toward discipline. The goal for this portion of the study was to have at a minimum response rate of 30%, however, a response rate of 19% was achieved with a total of 100 respondents.

For the qualitative portion of the study, there were a total number of seven principals who participated in face-to-face interviews, with at least one principal representing each of the five boroughs of New York City (Table 4.11). This group was selected based either on their expressed interest to participate as indicated on their Disciplinary Practices Survey ($N = 2$), or was invited directly by the researcher to participate ($N = 5$). The principals who were selected to participate in the interview portion of the study were the ones who led schools where at least 60% of their student body was eligible for FRL, and at least 40% of the student body identified as Black, including Black males. All interviews took place on the respective campuses of the
principals. During the interviews, the principals were asked to expound upon the responses given on their Disciplinary Practices Survey as to how their attitudes, values, beliefs, and disciplinary practices impacted their Black male student bodies.

While schools within Mott Haven, Hunts Point, East Harlem, Jackson Heights, and Corona-Elmhurst are ranked as neighborhoods with some of the high rates of poverty in NYC (Eide, 2014; New York Civil Liberties Union, 2013), their neighborhood schools serve populations that are comprised of predominantly Latino students (SchoolDigger.com, 2016); therefore, the principals of these schools were not eligible to participate in the qualitative portion of the study. Eide (2014) and New York Civil Liberties Union (2013) identified neighborhoods with the highest poverty rates for Black families, which include Brownsville, East New York, East Flatbush, and Coney Island sections of Brooklyn, and Central Harlem in Manhattan. The principals for this study included principals operating schools in the South Bronx, the Canarsie and East New York sections of Brooklyn, the Central Harlem section of Manhattan, the Far Rockaway section of Queens, and the Stapleton section of Staten Island.

**Instrument Used in Data Collection**

The Disciplinary Practices Survey is a Likert scale survey originally designed by Skiba and Edl (2004) and later adapted by Skiba and Baker (2008). The overarching purpose of the Disciplinary Practices Survey instrument is to describe principals’ attitudes toward the purpose, process, and outcomes of their school disciplinary practices (Appendix H).

The 42 items on the Disciplinary Practices Survey are organized into seven subscales: (a) attitude toward discipline in general (“I feel that getting to know students
individually is an important part of discipline”), (b) awareness and enforcement of disciplinary procedures (“My school keeps detailed records regarding student suspension and expulsion”), (c) beliefs concerning suspension/expulsion and zero tolerance (“Out-of-school suspension makes students less likely to misbehave in the future”), (d) beliefs about responsibility for handling students misbehaviors (“The primary responsibility for teaching children how to behave appropriately in school belongs to parents”), (e) attitude toward differential discipline of disadvantaged students or students with disabilities (“Teachers at this school were, for the most part, adequately trained by their teacher-training program to handle problems of misbehavior and discipline”), (f) resources available for discipline (“Suspensions and expulsions hurt students by removing them from academic learning time”), and (g) attitude toward and availability of prevention strategies as an alternative to exclusion (“Students with disabilities who engage in disruptive behavior need a different approach to discipline than students in general education”).

The 41 of the 42 questions were designed to assess principals’ opinions about various aspects of discipline, using a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree (Skiba et al., 2014). For the purposes of this study, higher numbers represented more favorable attitudes about using preventive disciplinary approaches as a preferred practice (“I believe suspension is unnecessary if we provide a positive school climate and challenging instruction”). One question (“Please rate the extent to which the following programs are used in maintaining discipline and promoting safety in your school”) asked principals to estimate how frequently they used disciplinary or preventive resources (i.e., in-service training and
workshops for teachers on classroom management; security guard, resource officer, or police presence) using a 5-point Likert scale ranging between 1 = never used to 5 = frequently used (Skiba et al., 2014). The scale does not indicate what the weight of the scales represent in between the two extremes; therefore, the researcher modified the scale to reflect the following: 1 = never used, 2 = rarely used, 3 = occasionally used, 4 = frequently used, 5 = very frequently used. On the original study, principals were presented with four multiple-choice demographic questions, and they were asked to identify themselves in relation to their: (a) race/ethnicity, (b) total number of years working as a principal, (c) number of years as principal in the current school, and (d) highest degree completed (Skiba et al., 2014). For the purposes of this study, the researcher modified the demographic questions to reflect the following: (a) gender, (b) race, (c) total number of years working as an elementary school principals, and (d) district where school is located. For the final analysis, district data was consolidated and analyzed by their respective boroughs, not individually.

The 2008 version of the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Appendix I) was used for this study. During a telephone conference with the R. Skiba (personal communication June 8, 2016), it was revealed that the scale items had not been tested for reliability, but instead, hypothesized to fit with the subscales, (Appendix J); therefore, reliability and face validity analysis were conducted as part of this study. Permission to conduct a descriptive statistics analysis using the Disciplinary Practices Survey instrument was granted (Appendix K), differing from the cluster analysis performed during previous studies using the instrument. The principals were able to complete an online version of Disciplinary Practices Survey using a link provided by Qualtrics, which took most
principals approximately between 10 and 20 minutes to complete. Once the survey was closed, the results were immediately downloaded from Qualtrics into the SPSS system, which disaggregated principals’ responses for patterns (see Data Analysis). While Skiba and Edl (2004) and Skiba et al., (2008) offered principals from their studies an option to complete online and paper/pencil versions, the online version of the Disciplinary Practices Survey was the preferred version for this study, in order to retrieve data in the most expedient fashion.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Once all qualifying principals were identified:

1. IRB approval was granted from the New York City Department of Education to conduct the study (Appendix L).

2. A distribution list was created in Qualtrics and Outlook WebApp.

3. The researcher sent emails to qualifying principals 1 week prior to the launch of the Disciplinary Practices Survey, alerting them to the purpose of the study, and encouraging their participation, as this was the first of its kind being conducted within NYCDOE by one of their fellow colleagues (Appendix M).

4. The Disciplinary Practices Survey was launched by the researcher and was opened for 42 days. Weekly reminders went out to principals, asking them to complete the survey until the survey closed.

5. The principals interested in participating in the qualitative portion of the study were provided an email address where they could contact the researcher directly to schedule an interview. Outreach via email was made to principals by the researcher as well to solicit interest in participation.
6. All interviews were conducted at the principals’ schools. All elementary school principals who participated in interviews signed informed consents to participate and be audio recorded (Appendix N) and the New York City Department of Education Approval to Conduct Research in Schools principal signature page (Appendix O). Neither names of principals, their schools, nor the school districts were included in the study to maintain confidentiality; only race, gender, geographic location by neighborhood and borough, and tenure as principal were included as part of the data collection.

7. All interviews took a minimum of 1.5 hours to complete. Appendix P includes the open-ended questions asked during the interviews.

8. Content from the interviews was captured on a recording device and uploaded and transcribed by the online service Rev.com, which offers a 24-hour turn-around time for transcriptions.

9. Data was stored in a secure location. Data will be kept for up to 3 years after the publication of this research and shredded and deleted following this period.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

**Preliminary analyses.** To begin the data analysis process, the SPSS database was set up to enter principals’ responses provided on the Disciplinary Practices Survey, which was powered by Qualtrics. A total of 100 elementary school principals responded to the survey. Once the survey was closed, the results were directly exported into the SPSS database. After setting up and inputting data into the database, items were reverse coded where agreement suggested a negative attitude or opinion (Vogt & Johnson, 2011). For
the purposes of this study, higher numbers (4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree) represented more favorable attitudes toward the use of preventive disciplinary approaches as a preferred practice. To determine demographic differences by borough, sub-school districts were collapsed into their respective boroughs as outlined in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1

New York City Department of Education Sub-School Districts Collapsed by Borough

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Borough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>Manhattan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Bronx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-23; 32</td>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-30</td>
<td>Queens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Staten Island</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Face validity analyses.** Because the authors of the measure performed no reliability testing on the instrument, this study began by examining the face validity of the questions. Face validity assesses, based on expert opinion, whether the questions appear to be assessing what they are intended to assess. In the absence of any validity or reliability testing by the authors of the measure, face validity was also applied to the assignment of items to subscales. Based on expert opinion and knowledge of prior research, the author of this study assessed the face validity of the subscales proposed by the authors of the measure. This process resulted in the elimination of question/statement #14: “Most if not all discipline problems come from inadequacies in the student’s home situation,” because there was a not a clear conceptual connection between how agreement with this statement would be related to the ways in which principals would carry out his
or her disciplinary measures. It was also determined that two items were better suited in being reassigned to a new subscale. Table 3.2 outlines the changes. Finally, because Awareness and Enforcement of Disciplinary Procedures was measured by a single question (#19) and did not constitute a scale, it was eliminated from the analyses. Using this same analysis, it was also determined that two scale times were better suited in being reassigned to a new subscale (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

Reassignment of Scale Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Item (Question)</th>
<th>Original Subscale Assignment</th>
<th>Reassignment of Scale Item to New Subscale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(17) In my experience, students from certain racial/ethnic backgrounds choose to be less engaged in class</td>
<td>Attitude toward and availability of prevention strategies as an alternative to exclusion</td>
<td>Beliefs about responsibility for handling student misbehaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(34) At my school, students from certain racial/ethnic backgrounds are the ones who are more likely to be disrespectful toward teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability analysis. According to Skiba (personal communication, June 8, 2016), the scale items associated with the seven subcategories, as outlined in the 2004 and 2008 versions of the study, were not tested for inter-item association. Instead, the scale items were only hypothesized to associate with the seven subcategories Skiba (personal communication, June 8, 2016) provided the researcher with a document entitled, Categories Outlined in Disciplinary Practices Survey, where he provided the subscales and their hypothesized correlating scale items. As a result, a reliability analysis using Cronbach’s alpha was conducted to determine the inter-correlation of the scale items.
(Vogt & Johnson, 2011) within each of the subcategories. This measure of inter-reliability was deemed most appropriate, as it tests items that have more than two answers, such as a Likert scale (Vogt & Johnson, 2011).

Cronbach’s alpha results range from 0 to 1.0. A Cronbach’s alpha of .70 or higher is usually considered to be sufficiently reliable (Urdan, 2010). Table 3.3 shows the results of the reliability analysis showing the Cronbach’s alpha score for each subscale on the Disciplinary Practices Survey. As shown here, the inter-item reliability for these scales was lower than desired. This is a limitation of the existing measure. Measurement development was outside of the scope of this study; therefore, some caution should be exerted when interpreting the results of any analyses that used the mean scores for the subscales.

Table 3.3

Results of Reliability Analysis for Subscales of Disciplinary Practices Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscales</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Attitudes</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension/Zero Tolerance</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differential Discipline</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After all preliminary analyses were run, the first descriptive quantitative research question was analyzed. Research question 1: What are the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices of NYC Title I public elementary school principals serving high-poverty populations?
In order to analyze this question, descriptive statistics (minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation) were calculated for each subscale to describe principals’ attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices toward discipline. The minimum score represented the lowest mean in each subscale; the maximum was based on the highest mean in the subscale. The mean score provided the average score for all the principals in each category, while the standard deviation provided an indicator of how far the scores were relative to the mean score.

This information was used to determine how this sample representation of principals felt about discipline relating to the following six subscales: (a) attitude toward discipline in general, (b) beliefs concerning suspension/expulsion and zero tolerance, (c) beliefs about responsibility for handling students misbehaviors, (d) attitude toward differential discipline of disadvantaged students or students with disabilities, (e) resources available for discipline, and (f) attitude toward and availability of prevention strategies as an alternative to exclusion (Skiba & Edl, 2004). In correlation with the power theory framework, for the purposes of this study, higher numbers represented more favorable attitudes regarding preventive disciplinary approaches (reward or referent power) as a preferred disciplinary practice, whereas lower scores suggested principals were in favor of exclusionary and punitive measures (coercive power) when disciplining students.

Next, the second research question was analyzed. Research question 2: Are there any demographic differences in the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices of NYC Title I elementary school principals serving high-poverty populations?
In order to answer this question, the MANOVA test was used. The MANOVA was deemed as the most suitable analysis because it generalizes the ANOVA by looking for significant differences between various groups on multiple-scaled dependent variables. This test was used based on the sample size and whether the scores for the subscales were close enough to a normal distribution. For number of years as a principal, a Pearson correlation was used to analyze the differences based on the principals’ years of tenure and whether the scores on the subscales were close enough to a normal distribution.

Lastly, the final research question was analyzed. **Research question 3: What factors influence the disciplinary and suspension decisions of NYC Title I elementary school principals of high-need schools specifically toward Black male students?**

Following the explanatory-sequential mixed-methods design, the results from the quantitative portion of the Disciplinary Practices Survey informed the types of interview questions asked of principals who elected to participate in the qualitative portion of the study (Creswell, 2014). Responses from the interviews were analyzed using the analytic induction process (Erickson, 1986). Analytical induction involves a systematic, 6-step process designed to gain a holistic understanding of the context of a topic based on individuals’ lived experiences. First, audio-recorded interviews were organized by an online service called Rev.com, who offered a 24-hour turnaround time to provide transcriptions. Second, the transcripts were broken into smaller sections, where passages were read, coded, and summarized. The third step involved developing and listing assertions based on the collection of codes and determining resounding themes, particularly any related to power theory and the types of behaviors associated with power.
sources that school principals use to address student behavior. Step four was to compile all supporting data in order to (a) justify each assertion, (b) contradict each assertion, (c) offer or infer possible explanations for the data attained and (d) identify any new ideas that emerge from the data that might require further exploration. Step five involved an analysis of the assertions that included: (a) determining if there was adequate evidence to support the assertions, (b) determining a variety in the kinds of evidence (verbal and non-verbal) to support the assertions, (c) assessing for any doubts about the accuracy of the data, (d) analyzing evidence that did not affirm the assertions, and (e) identifying any data that was seen as completely contrary to the assertions. Following this analysis process, assertions were maintained, modified, or eliminated. The sixth step in the analytical induction process was to report the assertions, summarized with supporting evidence of each, which included quotes and illustrations of the findings.

In accordance with the explanatory-sequential mixed-methods design, the data collected from the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study were analyzed separately. The goal of the quantitative portion of the study was to analyze responses from the principals, determine any trends in attitudes, beliefs, and practices amongst certain principals based on race, gender, tenure, and geographic locations of schools within the five boroughs. For the qualitative portion of the study, the goal was to analyze all that the principals expounded upon their responses from the survey in an effort to gain deeper understanding of their disciplinary attitudes and practices, and how their values and beliefs impacted their Black male population of students.
Summary

An application was made to the Institutional Review Board of the New York City Department of Education and approval was granted. The St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board approved the study. SchoolDigger.com and the New York City Department of Education division for Research Policy and Support Group were used to identify names of eligible elementary school where 60% of the student body were eligible for free and reduced-fee lunches across the five boroughs. Outreach was made to the President of the Council for Supervisors and Administrators, which is the union that represented principals employed by the New York City Department of Education public school system. All eligible principals received electronic invitations to complete the online Disciplinary Practice Survey through Qualtrics.

For the qualitative portion of the study, seven principals participated in one-on-one interviews with the researcher. The principals were asked to delve deeper on their responses given on their Disciplinary Practices Survey, and to describe how their Black male population, in particular, were impacted by their disciplinary attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed with written consent. Names and identifying information of principals were kept confidential.

Quantitative results were downloaded into SPSS. A face validity analysis was used to check for reliability of scale items to subscales. A descriptive analysis was used to measure the principals’ general dispositions toward discipline. Finally, a MANOVA was used to determine demographic differences amongst principals relative to the six disciplinary subscales. Qualitative results were analyzed using the 6-step analytical indication process. This included audio recordings of the interviews, uploading of
transcripts, coding of content, developing assertions and assessing those for contradictions, eliminating assertions as necessary, and developing themes based on the remaining assertions.
Chapter 4: Results

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs and practices of New York City public elementary school principals working within impoverished communities and the impact their approaches had on their Black male student population. Qualifying principals were those leading schools where at least 60% of the student body was eligible for free/reduced lunch, and where at least 40% of the student body was comprised of Black students. This chapter will report the findings of the three research questions guiding this study:

1. What are the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices of NYC Title I public elementary school principals serving high-poverty populations?
2. Are there any demographic differences in the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices of NYC Title I public elementary school principals serving high-poverty populations?
3. What factors influence the disciplinary and suspension decisions of NYC Title I public elementary school principals of high-need schools specifically toward Black male students?

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine general attitudes. A MANOVA analysis was run to test for differences amongst the four demographic groups identified in the study and on the disciplinary subscale scores.
Data Analysis and Findings

Demographic profile. For the quantitative portion of this study, 527 New York City public elementary school principals were invited to take the Disciplinary Practice Survey. All principals selected were those operating schools across all five boroughs of NYC-Bronx (BX), Brooklyn (BK), Manhattan (M), Queens (Q), and Staten Island (SI), where at least 60% of the student bodies were entitled for free and reduced-fee lunches, making them eligible to receive federal SWP Title I funding. A total of 100 elementary principals responded to the survey, resulting in a 19% response rate.

Table 4.1

Demographic Profile of the Participating New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>81.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronx</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staten Island</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. There were seven biracial, Native American, and Asian school principals. They were not included in the final count, as the low number would not reflect an accurate representation of their respective populations.
The majority of the respondents to the survey were female principals. Regarding race, most respondents were Black or of African American descent. Most responding principals had more than 10 years of experience, whereas principals with less years of experience in the role were distributed evenly. Across the city, principals from Brooklyn represented nearly twice the number of respondents from the Bronx and Manhattan, and almost three times more than principals in Queens.

**Quantitative results.** The 100 elementary school principals responded to 40 questions revealing their attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices toward discipline. The six theoretically-based dependent variables within the survey were: (a) General Attitudes Toward Discipline, (b) Beliefs About Suspension/Zero Tolerance (c) Beliefs About Responsibility, (d) Attitudes Toward Differential Discipline, (e) Resources Available, and (f) Attitudes Toward Prevention. Table 4.2 provides a descriptive analysis for this study, summarizing the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of the principals’ responses to the Disciplinary Practices Survey. For each of the six subscales, a mean score was calculated.

In response to the first research question, which sought to understand the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices of NYC Title I elementary school principals, overall, the survey results indicate that the principals generally had favorable attitudes toward positive approaches when it came to managing student behavior. This is evidenced by the standard deviation in all six subscale areas, which were all greater than .05.
Table 4.2

*Descriptive Statistics of the Disciplinary Practices Survey Responses Amongst Participating New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Attitudes</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension/Zero Tolerance</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differential Discipline</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 shows a wide range of attitudes reflected by minimum and maximum scores across most of the subscales. With the exception of Attitudes Toward Differentiated Discipline, which had the lowest mean score 2.91, and suggests neutral attitudes in this area, all mean scores were above the midpoint of the Likert scale. The maximum scores in nearly all areas suggest that the principals had strong feelings about the use of positive approaches toward managing student behavior. The greatest disparity, however, is reflected in the wide range of scores on the scale of Attitudes Toward Suspension and Zero Tolerance. The minimum score of 1.89 in this area implies there were principals who agreed with the use of exclusionary measures for managing student misconduct. The scaled scores were screened for a normal distribution by looking at the skew and kurtosis statistics. The statistics were found to be within acceptable limits for
all six scales. Therefore, group differences could be tested using parametric statistics, specifically MANOVA, which served well in answering the second research question surrounding the demographic differences in the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices of NYC Title I elementary school principals.

The MANOVA generalizes an ANOVA to a situation that looks for a significant difference between groups on multiple-scaled dependent variables. In this case, it was the six scaled items relative to discipline attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices, which were abbreviated and labeled as (a) general attitudes, (b) suspensions/zero tolerance, (c) responsibility, (d) differential discipline, (e) resources, and (f) prevention. Using a mathematical combination of the multiple individual scale items, a MANOVA creates a new, single-composite dependent variable that maximizes group differences.

When multiple dependent variables are examined simultaneously, the MANOVA increases the probability of uncovering significant effects that are more likely to be overlooked by examining each dependent variable separately. When the alpha (i.e., the \( p \)-value cut-off) is set at .05, there is a 5% chance that when the null hypothesis is rejected (i.e., the researcher concludes that there is a statistical significant difference between the groups, when in fact there is not), the drawn conclusion is incorrect.

When a multiple comparisons test is conducted at an alpha level of .05, eventually some of variables will be found significantly different merely by chance alone (i.e., due to a Type I error). As a group of variables, where each one is tested individually, the chances of making a Type I error somewhere within all of the tests increases with each test. So, with the case of principals’ disciplinary attitudes and beliefs, where there were the six subscale variables to compare if six separate ANOVAs were run with the alpha set
at .05, together as a group there would be a potential for a Type 1 error rate 30% of the time instead of 5% of the time. To bring that Type I error rate back down to 5%, the MANOVA clusters all six subscale variables into one composite dependent variable. When the data is filtered into the SPSS operating system, the MANOVA runs a significance test on that composite dependent variable. If that multivariate composite is statistically significant, the univariate tests will determine if, separately, the dependent variables are significantly different and where the differences occur.

In order to answer the second research question surrounding demographics, the researcher sought to determine if there were any differences in disciplinary attitudes and practices amongst the participating principals in four demographic areas: gender, race, years specifically as an elementary school principal, and school location by borough as outlined in Table 4.3.

Apparent differences in the means cannot be interpreted without first knowing if they are statistically significant. Table 4.4 represents the multivariate test results that highlight independent variables that reflect statistical significant differences. The $p$-values located within the table determine whether the composite dependent variables (calculated based on all six scales simultaneously) show statistically significant differences based on gender, race, years’ experience, and borough.
Table 4.3

Means (Standard Deviations) of Scaled Scores by Demographic Groups Amongst Participating New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Suspension/Zero tolerance</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Differential Discipline</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Prevention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.79 (.52)</td>
<td>3.66 (.62)</td>
<td>3.76 (.48)</td>
<td>2.91 (.42)</td>
<td>3.61 (.34)</td>
<td>3.31 (.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.26 (.61)</td>
<td>3.66 (.78)</td>
<td>3.71 (.45)</td>
<td>2.90 (.44)</td>
<td>3.45 (.50)</td>
<td>3.30 (.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>3.67 (.53)</td>
<td>3.47 (.54)</td>
<td>3.71 (.51)</td>
<td>2.84 (.42)</td>
<td>3.55 (.30)</td>
<td>3.38 (.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>3.50 (.71)</td>
<td>3.75 (.73)</td>
<td>3.81 (.42)</td>
<td>2.96 (.44)</td>
<td>3.68 (.43)</td>
<td>3.18 (.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>3.89 (.51)</td>
<td>3.95 (.73)</td>
<td>3.76 (.48)</td>
<td>2.96 (.43)</td>
<td>3.58 (.45)</td>
<td>3.18 (.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years’ Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>3.60 (.80)</td>
<td>3.50 (.74)</td>
<td>3.76 (.51)</td>
<td>2.98 (.37)</td>
<td>3.52 (.40)</td>
<td>3.4 (.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>3.65 (.62)</td>
<td>3.87 (.66)</td>
<td>3.82 (.48)</td>
<td>2.78 (.47)</td>
<td>3.49 (.35)</td>
<td>3.2 (.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>3.80 (.41)</td>
<td>3.69 (.50)</td>
<td>3.79 (.38)</td>
<td>2.94 (.38)</td>
<td>3.66 (.30)</td>
<td>3.5 (.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>3.68 (.54)</td>
<td>3.65 (.67)</td>
<td>3.70 (.51)</td>
<td>2.92 (.44)</td>
<td>3.61 (.43)</td>
<td>3.2 (.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronx</td>
<td>3.72 (.50)</td>
<td>3.73 (.82)</td>
<td>3.71 (.52)</td>
<td>2.83 (2.9)</td>
<td>3.64 (.45)</td>
<td>3.22 (.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>3.75 (.63)</td>
<td>3.62 (.59)</td>
<td>3.69 (.49)</td>
<td>2.90 (.47)</td>
<td>3.54 (.36)</td>
<td>3.48 (.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>3.55 (.62)</td>
<td>3.56 (.50)</td>
<td>3.79 (.46)</td>
<td>2.92 (.50)</td>
<td>3.61 (.44)</td>
<td>3.27 (.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>3.71 (.57)</td>
<td>3.71 (.71)</td>
<td>4.00 (.37)</td>
<td>3.08 (.33)</td>
<td>3.52 (.32)</td>
<td>3.00 (.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staten Island</td>
<td>3.68 (.44)</td>
<td>4.47 (.47)</td>
<td>3.75 (.43)</td>
<td>2.75 (.19)</td>
<td>3.65 (.19)</td>
<td>3.28 (.42)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4

Multivariate Test Results by Demographics Amongst Participating New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High Poverty Populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years’ Experience</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borough</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The multivariate test revealed statistical significance differences in the areas of gender ($p = .014$) and race ($p = .038$) where the $p$-values were less than .05. The multivariate test for the principals’ years of experience ($p = .776$) and geographic location based on borough (.86) were found to be not significant. Because gender and race were the only independent variables reflecting significant differences, the univariate and means/standard deviation tests presented in Table 4.5, measured those two areas exclusively. The results show that the statistical significance between male and female principals lies in their general attitudes toward discipline where the $p$-value was less than .05 ($p = .001$).

When it came to general attitudes towards discipline, the means results suggest that male principals have a more favorable approach toward exclusionary measures of discipline in comparison to their female counterparts, as outlined in Table 4.6.

Next, we looked at the results of the univariate test in the area race to determine where the disparities in attitudes and practice fell, highlighted in Table 4.7.
Table 4.5

Univariate Tests for Effects for Gender Amongst Participating New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Attitudes</td>
<td>12.18</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension/Zero Tolerance</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differential Discipline</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6

Means (Standard Deviation) by General Attitude Amongst Participating New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale/Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.7

Univariate Tests for Effects for Race Between Black, Latino, and White New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Attitude</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension/Zero Tolerance</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differential Discipline</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 4.8 show that a statistical significant difference between the principals based on race lie in their attitudes toward suspensions and zero tolerance, where the \( p \)-value was less than .05 \( (p = .03) \). Because there were more than two groups, the final analysis was to conduct a planned, pairwise comparisons analysis, as outlined in Table 4.8, to determine specifically where the differences lie within the groups.

Table 4.8

Planned, Pairwise Comparisons Test by Race Amongst Participating New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High Poverty Populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Comparison</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black v. Latino</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black vs. White</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino vs. White</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were no statistically significant differences between Black and Latino nor Latino and White principals. There was a statistically significant difference found, however, between Black and White principals, where the $p$-value was less than .05 ($p = .03$). Table 4.9 provides more granular analysis of the principals’ attitudes and values relative to suspensions and zero-tolerance procedures, by way of means and standard deviation.

Table 4.9

*Means (Standard Deviation) by Suspensions/Zero Tolerance and Race Amongst Participating New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale/Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspensions/Zero Tolerance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the mean and standard deviation scores, the data suggests that Black principals who participated in the survey valued the use of more exclusionary approaches to managing student misconduct at a greater rate than White principals.

**Qualitative results.** In adherence to the explanatory-sequence mixed-methods design, following the principals’ completion of the online Disciplinary Practices Survey, data was collected in the form of one-on-one interviews with the researcher to answer the third question in this study, *What factors influence the disciplinary and suspension*
For the qualitative portion of the study, a total of seven school principals were interviewed, with at least one principal representing each of the five boroughs of NYC. The qualitative data were analyzed using analytic induction, as described in Chapter 3. Table 4.10 outlines the qualitative demographic data of principals who participated in interviews divided by gender, race, number of years working as an elementary school principal, and borough.

**Table 4.10**

*Demographic Profile of the New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations Who Participated in One-on-One Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Years' Experience</td>
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<td>3-5</td>
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<td>Staten Island</td>
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</table>
Given the range of principals participating in the interviews and the relevancy their demographics played in relationship to their contributions to the qualitative portion of this study, Table 4.11 provides a disaggregated outline of participating principals according to their gender, race, years of employment as public elementary school principals, and school location within the boroughs. In an effort to answer the third research question, the principals were asked to share how they believed their disciplinary attitudes, values, and practices specifically impacted their Black male population. All of the principals had student bodies comprising predominately Black and Latino students, with no less than 40% of the population including Black students and no less than 20% of that population being Black males.

Table 4.11

*Itemized Descriptions of the New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations Who Participated in One-on-One Interviews (N = 7)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
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<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
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<td>Queens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staten Island</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Several assertions were generated as a result of the data collected from the interviews. These assertions were grouped accordingly and categorized by themes and subthemes. Table 4.12 outlines the four resounding themes, associated assertions, and subthemes.

Table 4.12

*Themes, Assertions and Subthemes Based on Interview Data Collected from the New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Assertions</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Culture</td>
<td>Principals observe that Black students in general; but specifically, Black males are targets of discriminatory and biased attitudes and behaviors from teachers, regardless of the teachers’ race and gender.</td>
<td>Discriminating behaviors of teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generally speaking, most K-5 behaviors consist of “defiant” behavior, such as vandalism, physical and verbal aggression, and leaving the classroom without consent. The behavior is predominantly demonstrated by Black male students.</td>
<td>Student behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty and Beyond</td>
<td>Principals attribute students’ misconduct to factors beyond the scope of poverty.</td>
<td>Mitigating circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Development</td>
<td>Students’ behaviors are occasionally mistaken for misconduct or defiance.</td>
<td>Cultural, social, gender, and implications for maturity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals’ Disciplinary Philosophies and Frameworks of Power</td>
<td>Principals’ personal experiences and awareness of the social plights faced by their students and families influences the ways in which they execute disciplinary measures.</td>
<td>Empathy, cultural connectivity, and trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principals are committed to using various resources to meet both their academic, mental health, and social needs and to minimize disruptive behaviors.</td>
<td>Structures for academic, social, and therapeutic intervention services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Variations exist in how principals and teachers define zero tolerance and the impact of disciplinary responsiveness.</td>
<td>Discretions used for student removals, suspension, and incident reporting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School culture. School culture can be a very broad topic, and it can mean different things to different people. School principals are charged with shaping school community cultures to ensure safe learning environments for students. However, the constituents—being the students, and the stakeholders—being the teachers, faculty, parents, etc., all play a role in cultivating a healthy atmosphere. However, many of the principals interviewed for this study shared occasions when teachers responded to students’ misconduct in manners that were not deemed most appropriate, and at times, often rooted in what they believed were biased attitudes and low expectations. The data collected during the interviews led to the construction of the following assertion: The principals observed that Black students, in general, but specifically Black males, are targets of discriminatory and biased attitudes and behaviors from teachers, regardless of the teachers’ race and/or gender. Table 4.13 provides examples shared by principals that perpetrated biased attitudes based on race and gender.

Table 4.13

School Culture Relating to Teacher Bias Based on Interview Data Collected from the New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discriminating behaviors of</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>My White teachers . . . I feel like there was a level of discomfort for them on a subconscious level in terms of “Do Black and Brown children really deserve the same opportunities as White children?” (Principal 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>But I saw him treat females, Black, Latino females, totally differently than the males. He was really good when working with the female population, but you put him with a male population, and he did not know how to . . . he was not secure enough in himself as a male, because we know that when adolescent boys are of a certain age, they will challenge. (Principal 6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The principals also shared experiences of teachers sometimes exacerbating situations with students:

The boy raised their hand [and] said to the teacher, “I need to use the bathroom.” And teacher says, “No.” And the kid says, “I need to spit; I need to use the bathroom.” Teacher says, “No.” The kid gets up out of his seat, and he goes to the garbage can, and the man was neat freak, and he said, “Don't you dare spit in my garbage can.” And the kid spits in the garbage can. The teacher told the kid, “You spit in my garbage can, your coat’s going to wipe that up.” What happens was, the kid spit in the garbage can, and the guy took the coat and wiped the garbage with this boy’s coat. (Principal 6)

This second scenario provides a vivid description of how a White male teacher intensified a situation with a Black male student, which led to a volatile outcome:

This teacher picks up his class from the cafeteria. A couple of male students were in the small gym, shooting hoops; they shouldn’t have been there. He told them “Come with me.” One boy did, one boy did not. [The one who did not] We knew that S had oppositional defined behavior. [Later] S then went to the classroom. The teacher blocked him from entering the room. Kid sneaks in under his arm, and he goes to put himself in a chair in his desk. The teacher runs over and he shoves the chair under the desk and blocks the boy from sitting in his own desk. Then the boy goes to another chair. The teacher pulls the chair out so the kid can’t sit. The kid then wedges himself between a television and a bulletin board. Now the bulletin boards are in the back of the room; the television’s there, there’s a couch, and he wedges himself between all of this. The teacher, rather
than picking up a phone, goes after the kid: “Get out of there,” and the kid’s now screaming at him. The teacher grabs the kid, actually gets him into a headlock, and shoves him into the closet to restrain this kid, all over the fact that he didn’t come to class on time. The parent coordinator is now between S and the teacher. S is now screaming at the teacher “You pussy,” and the teacher is now screaming back at him: “Something you’ll never see in your life!” Now I’ve got school safety, who came in, and the parent coordinator says, “Just get S . . . just take him out . . . you have to physically hold him!” They don’t listen. The teacher goes and he’s sitting in his desk now, leaning back, like “Okay, yeah. You take the kid.” The kid winds up escaping from the school safety agent and tackles the teacher backwards out of his chair. (Principal 6)

The two scenarios are examples provided by a principal of the ways in which the adults involved exacerbated the situations unnecessarily. Since the teachers in both scenarios were men (the latter one being a White male), and the students were Black male students, it leaves a question of how the intersections of race and gender play a part in how male teachers manage student behavior in males, and more specifically, Black males.

The literature speaks to incidents of racially biased behaviors on the part of White teachers toward minority students (Losen & Skiba, 2010). However, principals in this study made a point of acknowledging that not all biased behaviors demonstrated on the parts of teachers toward Black and Latino students were based on race, as highlighted by Principal 4:
I've worked in Harlem almost all of my career . . . when we sat around to talk about kids, it was people [teachers] that looked just like them, and they had kids that looked just like these kids, and they were already counting those kids out . . . “Oh, they can’t and they this, and they this, and their mama, you know . . . and their baby daddy don’t . . . he went to jail.” It was people [teachers] that looked like them [students]. (Principal 4)

The sentiments expressed above are suggestive of biases toward students by teachers, rooted in anything from low-academic and behavioral expectations, family dynamics, or socioeconomic status.

A principal operating a school in a section of Brooklyn, who spoke of the conditions she inherited upon being hired, reinforced this sentiment. She described how upon arrival to the school, the whole team of leaders and teaching staff—predominately Black—accepted, and possibly created, a culture where there were no expectations for learning:

They used to have this main office right here, used to be . . . I call it the “holding place,” because it wasn’t an office. We’re talking about an average, and I’m not kidding with you about the grade level; I’m talking about from Grades 1-5. We had first graders, too! There would be an average of 60 to 70 kids that was . . . if they weren’t here, and they kind of drifted out, and they were roaming the halls. It was chaos. There was no understanding of, “We’re in a place to learn.” That’s what was going on . . . [the students] really got accustomed to it. “I’m going to walk around . . . I’m going to go in the hallway, and there’s nothing that is going
to happen. You’re going to write me up, I’m going to get these suspensions, and I’ll come back and I’m going to do it again.” That’s what it was. (Principal 2)

The culture described here is one where school personnel did not have standards for positive behavior or learning, nor did they have a structured system for managing misbehavior. The statement “They really got accustomed to it,” suggests that students did not believe the staff expected more from them in terms of conduct. Racially speaking, the majority of the staff was a reflection of the predominately Black student body.

It is impossible to speak of school culture without giving attention to the sort of behaviors in which students engage that warrant principals’ attention. The second assertion developed in the area of school culture speaks to the types of behaviors in which the students actually engage: Generally speaking, most K-5 behaviors consist of defiant behavior, such as vandalism, physical and verbal aggression, and the defiant behavior is predominantly demonstrated by Black male students. Table 4.14 provides examples of the behaviors that the principals described as having been demonstrated by the students.

Table 4.14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student behaviors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>He just looked down, and he just bit into the [paraprofessional], and wouldn’t let go . . . it was broken skin and . . . I couldn’t . . . There was nothing I could do about that. I had to then say, “I have to go according to the regulations.” (Principal 2)</td>
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<td>One year we did have an issue of vandalism where we had students writing graffiti . . . curse words on the wall. They spray painted curse words on the outside wall like, “Fuck you . . . Fuck off . . . Kiss my ass . . .” that kind of stuff. (Principal 1)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yeah. This group is more physical, and it is only the Black males that are upending desks, and throwing desks and chairs. (Principal 5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I literally remember students fighting themselves out of classroom doors into the hallway when I first got there. (Principal 4)

The principals identified vandalism of school property as an area of concern, with most incidents occurring amongst students in Grades K-2. This included destruction of areas such as bathrooms, classrooms, and bulletin boards located in the corridors of the school buildings. Below is one example of a principal’s account describing the sort of behaviors demonstrated by students in the early childhood grades at his school:

Number one is tearing down a classroom. They’ll throw chairs over, pull down bulletin board work, flip bookshelves, things like that. Maybe turn a table. This is mostly in kindergarten and first grade that these things are happening. We’re probably good for two or three incidents a month where a student will kick a staff member or get physical with a staff member to try to get away from them, or something like that. (Principal 3)

Another principal described behaviors demonstrated by students in her K-2 population:

Ripping up the books, throwing them, pulling . . . . Things that are somewhat dangerous, pulling buckets of books off shelves, and throwing the books around. Invading other kids space and taking their books and pencils out of their hands. In a way, that’s all threatening behavior, and I think that that’s pretty egregious, but I wouldn’t suspend them for it. (Principal 5)

Another principal described the vulgar language used by K-1 students upon the arrival of her school:

I got there in October, and I think they were on teacher number four at that point. The students would curse . . . they cursed each other out, with real curse words. Like mf; calling the teachers B’s. Real curse words, not like baby curse words.
(you sucker). It was very difficult to even address the academic issues because the behavioral issues were really something that had to be addressed first.

(Principal 4)

In the upper elementary grades, Black male students tended to be more verbally and physically aggressive with both peers and adults. One principal described his personal encounter with a Black male student that resulted in a suspension:

This kid, one time, was like, “Fuck you, Mr. B.! No, fuck you, K!” (referring to the principal by his first name). I was like, “Oh …” That’s a suspension.

(Principal 1)

Other principals referenced instances when Black students became physically aggressive with staff members in the building. Principal 2 illustrated a time when a Black male student actually tried to fight her:

Once you get to that point where you are not just destroying bulletin boards but you are attacking teachers; fighting me? You’re punching me up; you’re trying to throw me down. I’ve got to grab you? We’re fighting like I’m your age? Superintendent suspensions for that. That’s the only time I ever went that route.

(Principal 2)

Poverty and beyond. The next theme derived from the interviews was centered on the topic of poverty. As part of the interview process, the researcher set out to determine if the principals made an association between student misconduct, especially that of Black male students, and the element of poverty. A few principals did reference poverty having some impact on behaviors in isolated cases. Principal 5 described an
exchange she had with a student whose academic behavior was directly associated with poverty:

I had a boy who wasn’t doing his homework. His teacher had a rule: you don’t do your homework, you don’t go out to play and whatever; so he got punished every day. He’s like, “Miss, I can’t take it anymore.” What’s the matter, why aren’t you getting your homework done? “Oh, we don’t have any electricity. So, the lights go out.” (Principal 5)

Principal 1 described how poverty impacted the student’s interaction with her peers:

I do think poverty plays a big role in it. In terms of the behaviors that I see now . . . Okay, let’s talk about the boy who is stealing. He’s in a house where the house was not meeting the needs. It’s four boys and a dad. They’re all within 2 or 3 years of each other. There’s probably a constant battle of who is going to eat the food first? Who is going to get the last Pop Tart? There’s no woman in the house to balance that out. Poverty is impacting the house. He’s stealing stuff because he sees other kids, who even look like him, who have more than he does.

(Principal 1)

A significant discovery made, however, was that most of the principals did not identify poverty as a singular variable that attributed to delinquent behaviors demonstrated in their Black male population. Instead, the principals identified several variables—mitigating circumstances—they believed to intersect with poverty that accounted for misbehavior in students. As a result, the following assertion was generated: The principals attribute students’ misconduct to factors beyond the scope of
poverty. Table 4.15 provides examples of factors that can intersect with poverty that may have contributed to students’ misconduct.

Table 4.15

*Mitigating Circumstances Impacting Student Behaviors Based on Interview Data*

*Collected from the New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mitigating Circumstances</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>If the family is in denial about their own issues, then the children suffer as a result. I have some moms who are living in poverty, who are just so wonderful with their children, and just really living in tough, tough situations. Then I have the moms who have become so depressed, that they're turning to alcohol and drugs as a way to deal with their depression. (Principal 6)</td>
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<td>I think the discipline problems come from inadequacies in the school structures to support students who come from different places. We come from different place economically. We come from different places with regard to our cultures, and our religions, and our histories, and our orientations, and we don't have a school system that's ready to do that, ready to support everybody. (Principal 3)</td>
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*Mental illness and emotional instability.* Principal 6 attributes the mental illness of parents as a contributing factor that can impact students’ success in school:

I see that these children are in crises . . . you have children who are coming from insane households, and then being expected to perform sanely. I have a mom, bipolar mom, who doesn’t take her meds regularly . . . the child is a carbon copy of mommy. (Principal 6)

The principals described some of the behaviors they believed to be associated with students’ social, emotional, and mental instability.
Out of control behavior, not getting to school, threatening suicide, abuse . . . behaviors that are violent towards their classmates or themselves. Whatever it is in place that’s preventing them from learning and preventing them from socially moving forward because without the social, there’s no learning. (Principal 7)

Family dynamics. The principals made references to how disturbances to households can reveal themselves in student behavior:

Not only am I 12 going on 13, but I’m in foster care, and my mother lives two blocks from the foster care lady where I’m staying, and sometimes when I go home, I pass my mother on the street. My foster mother lets me stay out until 10 o’clock at night, so what the fuck? That’s real. (Principal 1)

Cultural values imbedded in respect. The principals acknowledged that disagreements can sometimes exist between how parents teach their children to respond when violated by their peers, which is often rooted in respect, compared to what is taught by school officials, leaving the students in a compromised position. Below is an example of a principal’s experience:

I guess their family’s attitude, because of where they live, you can’t afford to be the person that other people pick on; so, their parents teach them to stand up for yourself; somebody touches you, you touch them back. Somebody hits you, you hit them back, harder. That’s the way they’re being raised. That’s something that we do have to take into consideration, especially because I know that’s what they’re being told, because the parents will sit here and tell them. I had a boy before at lunchtime crying because he didn’t hit the boy back. His father is going
to be mad at him because his father told him (if) “Somebody puts their hands on you, you hit them back.” (Principal 5)

The principals also cited the parents’ value of materialism, which shape students’ mentality of what is important and what is worth defending, which are their belongings. They spoke of what they believed were the parents’ desire to have their children fit into mainstream society and use material goods to perhaps validate their self-worth and that of their children:

(Mom) Dad or uncle that will say, “you know you better not let anybody touch your sneakers or step on your sneakers because that’s a sign of disrespect. If anybody steps on your sneakers, you’d better react. You don’t let anybody do that to you . . .” Now somebody stepped on my sneakers, now I’m going to react because that’s the message that I got about this . . . He stepped on my sneakers. You can’t step on my sneakers. He stepped on my sneakers . . . my mother said that nobody can step on my sneakers. These sneakers cost $150. (Principal 4)

Another principal highlighted the differences in parental practices for shopping, which is suggestive of cultural values:

Yes. I have working-class poor in the building who have come from the islands, who have come from South America. I have a lot of working-class poor in the building. They are not as focused on the brand names for the sneakers. They want to make sure that their kids have their books, their pencils, their uniform, etcetera. I’m finding that many of my parents who have been here in this country, who are living in poverty, the kids are walking around in sneakers that I would
never be able to afford. It’s as though almost if the outside looks good, then it’s good. (Principal 6)

*Societal constructs.* Principal 3 described in depth how lack of resources at the school level and beyond prevents him from being able to support students to the degree needed.

An under-resourced school in an under-resourced community. I think our average income is about $14,000 a year [referring to average family income]. If we go about 6 miles from here, the average income is $140,000 a year. They’re [the NYCDOE] not giving me 10 times the amount of money per student that the income would suggest I need in order to do the same job that needs to be done there (referring to the wealthier neighborhood). That’s probably my beginning point on that work. It is unfair. The system we live in is unfair. (Principal 5)

Principal 1, a Black male, shared similar sentiments relating to societal paradigms that intersect with poverty and negatively impact student attitudes toward school, indirectly influencing their behaviors:

If there are people around me in my household . . . you see adults around you, who actually got an education but they’re still poor and their job prospects are low or they get unemployed . . . they get laid off, then you’re like, “Why should I get an education?” We’re disproportionately unemployed, sometimes regardless of education. (Principal 1)

Similar sentiments were shared by another principal in the following quote, who described the lack of hope students have, as depicted in the previous quote, which can impact the way students engage in school:
I can’t speak to being to African American, but when you look at history and the
fight that has been going on, and it’s still continuing, that it almost becomes
shame-based when you’re not moving and not changing. I remember one girl.
Her name was K. I kept saying to her, “K, come on girl. You can do better . . . I
know you can do better. She looked at me, and I said, ‘Ms. G, I was born in the
projects, and I’m going to die in the projects.” (Principal 6)

Principal 5, who cited how neighborhood culture can indirectly negatively impact
students’ behaviors in school, illustrated the intersection of poverty and societal
constructs in the following quote:

We’re living right now in this community in a very violent time. [The police]
came in here to talk about putting a gunshot indicator on the roof of this building,
because there are so many shootings going on in this area. And at night, people
know, [so] they just don’t go out. My kids are all living like that. What concerns
me is the Black males [students] are living with the fact that it’s maybe their dad
or their brother, or someone else that is going out with the guns and taking part in
this violence. That’s part of their life. (Principal 5)

Finally, Principal 6 demonstrated how the intersection of poverty and community
resources impacts the livelihood of not merely the student, but the parent as well:

The infrastructure on [location] is that there’s not much to do around here. There
are no movie theaters [in the area]. They’re no bowling alleys [in the area].
Shopping is very limited down [here]. If you land here from the shelter system,
you have no familial supports, you have no friends, you get on that [X]-train, and
you feel as though you are being dumped into the corner of the world . . . I see that these children are in crisis. (Principal 6)

**Child development.** Several principals made reference to student behaviors that they did not necessarily believe were embedded in disrespect or defiance, and offered alternative explanations for their adverse behaviors that were demonstrated in students. As a result, the following assertion was generated: *Students’ behaviors are occasionally mistaken for malice or defiance.* Table 4.16 provides vivid examples offered by the principals as to why students engage in what is perceived as unsuitable behaviors.

Table 4.16

*Factors of Cultural, Social, Gender and Age Development Based on Interview Data Collected from the New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural, social, gender, and implications for maturity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>If you have a child whose parent is working two, three jobs and as a young child to have to take on that parentified role, that's going to affect the child. I'm cooking for my siblings. I'm trying to get my homework done, but I need to make sure that my siblings go to bed at nine o'clock. (Principal 4)</td>
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<td>He lacked socialization skills, and [he] didn’t know how to seek that attention in a positive way, so that’s when he’s in the cafeteria, he’s bothering the other kids. He doesn’t know how to interact with them the right way. (Principal 6)</td>
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<td>If you're a first-grade teacher and you might think, if you don't know better, you might classify the child’s behavior as being something that’s not normal and what they shouldn’t be doing when, in fact, that’s what first graders do. (Principal 1)</td>
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</table>
Principal 5 expounded upon the sentiments found in Table 4.16, which was shared by Principal 4, as it related to children whose lifestyles are rooted in parentified roles. Principal 5 went on to explain how problems can arise when educators fail to acknowledge the behaviors as assets when they are translated into the classroom setting:

We have kids who know how to get along, they know how to deal with problems, they know how to read adults; they’ve been around more adults than children. These kids are survivors, they’re resilient, they know how to get what they have to get. Sometimes the teacher tries to treat these kids like a child, and they are children, but you can’t treat them that way . . . you have to take into account they have some levels of maturity that other kids don’t have. . . . You have 5-year olds, 6-year olds changing diapers and taking care of the baby. How many 5-year olds have those skills? I watched this 5-year old translate those skills in the classroom where she’s taking care of other kids in the classroom, where she’s signaling the class to be quiet, because they’re talking too much, and they can’t hear the teacher. Those are skills that we don’t give the kids credit for having. When you try to deny it, you’re going to have a problem . . . because the child is treated like an adult, accepted as an adult at home, and they come here, and the teacher is saying “because I said so,” and the child can’t handle “because I said so.” We have to take that into account, we can’t talk to children like that. Especially when you’re dealing with these kids who have this other knowledge, these other skills.

(Principal 5)

On the opposite side of maturity are students whose social skills are underdeveloped for their age. Principal 2 shared similar sentiments that align with
Principal 6 (Table 4.16), noting that while students’ underdeveloped social skills sometimes lead to inappropriate behaviors, their actions were not necessarily rooted in malicious intent, and they certainly were not related to poverty.

[He] start[ed], going over and putting his hand in people’s food, pushing people off the seat, just doing too much, because [he] wanted that attention. That’s what I saw. He’s a fifth grader; he’s also a student with disability. At the time, what I found out, and just by (observing) . . . “Oh, you’re not trying to be mean. You’re trying to make friends, and you don’t know how to do it.” Good grief. To him, he thought it was funny. He thought he was making friends. I said, “Okay, he’s a bit of a misfit with his age group.” (Principal 2)

Principal 1 spoke of how male students and girls behave differently in their mannerisms and interactions:

Typically, the girls respond to more of a traditional role in education. You sit at your desk, you’re quiet, you don’t move around, you’re not rambunctious. Whereas, the boys, a lot of them are more active. Some people would categorize that as being aggressive, right? Our boys, a lot of times, they roughhouse. This idea of playing is rough. Play fighting. That’s that physical thing because you’re worth, initially, for better or for worse, a lot of time is vested in your physical prowess. Who is the biggest, strongest, lion in the jungle? (Principal 1)

Principal 6 referred to how educators need to be mindful of their approach to young men, regardless of race, who are maturing into their adolescent phase of development and may demonstrate defiant behaviors when they feel threatened or targeted by authority figures:
[Referring to teachers] . . . and it’s your approach and your response, because it’s a very normal adolescent behavior. Because this is the time where you’re [referring to adolescent males] now going through your separation from your reliance on family, towards being more cognizant of peer relationships. You have to know that adolescent males, when challenged in front of peers, will react negatively. For the most part, if you’re calling them out in front of their friends, and you’re making them look small in front of their friends, then they’re going to go at you because it’s a defense, because they are themselves finding their own masculinity and their own place in the world, and their own relationship with their peers. It’s about adolescent development. (Principal 6)

**Principals’ disciplinary philosophies and frameworks of power.** For most of the principals, their sources of power rested in mostly in referent and reward approaches in managing student behavior. The driving forces for nearly all of the principals were rooted in relationship building, or in what the researcher describes as cultural connections with both students and families. As a result, the following assertions was generated: *The principals’ personal experiences and awareness the social plights faced by their students and families influence the ways in which they execute disciplinary measures.* Table 4.17 illustrates a trend in the principals’ philosophies on supporting students’ holistic needs through a lens of empathy.
Table 4.17

Disciplinary Techniques Grounded in Compassion Based on Interview Data Collected from the New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations

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<th>Subtheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy, cultural connectivity and trust</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>My whole thing is to talk to children, to listen to children . . . That two-way conversation, it’s not me telling them what to do; it’s us having a conversation. (Principal 5)</td>
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<td>We had a boy here, he's in fifth grade now . . . he’s constantly in denial: he’s constantly lying, he’s stealing, just [that] kind of stuff. We found out he’s one of like four brothers living in the house with the dad; there’s no woman in the house; the mother is in Haiti. Long story short, we figured out he missed his mother. He needs to get hugs. (Principal 1)</td>
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<td>I think sometimes I was looked at as being too soft on the kids. For me, it’s not about being soft, and I try to tell people all the time; don’t mistake compassion for softness. Having compassion for people does not mean you’re soft. It means you’re caring. When you’re dealing with a child who’s in crisis, taking that angry, mean road doesn’t get you results. (Principal 7)</td>
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<td>My philosophy in a nutshell is that all children have an innate goodness and want to do the right thing. In all my years, I don't think there was a single child that I couldn’t find something that I liked about them. Because everybody has their gifts and everybody has their talents, and you have to tap into those things. You have to have kids believe that you believe in them. Children need to feel safe. (Principal 6)</td>
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It could be said that a part of quality leadership is being able to relate to the constituents and stakeholders on a personal level, or at least be able to demonstrate the ability to show compassion. Principal 3 shared a personal experience when he was
addressing a group of Black and Latino fathers at an event in which he opened up about some personal childhood experiences:

Both my parents went on a very special vacation sometimes and didn’t come back for extended periods . . . and we had flying spaghetti dinners, and everybody knew what I was talking about because once the food’s flying off the table, you know what your household is like, but that’s real. When I talked to the fathers about this, it just opened things up . . . “Yo, Prince [short for principal], I didn’t know that that’s . . . so you’re like us.” I'm like, “No, I AM you. I’m not LIKE you. We’re the same.” I said, “It's not exactly the same. I'm not Black. I look like an old, fat, White guy, but the things that keep us from being successful are the same things, and what we have to do to get past them are support each other.” That’s what it’s really about. When you open up that way to anybody, they’ll come back and then, “All right, this is what I need help with,” because then they’re not embarrassed. (Principal 3)

Describing his childhood in a household with domestic violence and lack of proper supervision were topics that made him relatable to his parent population, despite the differences in race. Another principal described her childhood experiences that shaped the ways in which she engaged her students:

I’m not kidding you, this is just who I am. I just believe in listening to kids. That’s how my mom and dad was with me, and I just believe that that’s what helped me . . . We would come in the house with failing grades, my brothers and sisters, and we would turn that into a moment for us to sit at the table and talk about it. They were never angry with us about it. It was, “Okay, you do good
with this math, so you help him with it.” This is how I was brought up.

(Principal 2)

Principals referenced using internal and external resources to support the holistic needs of students. As a result, the following assertion was developed: The principals are committed to using various resources to meet the academic, mental, and social health needs of students to minimize disruptive behaviors. Table 4.18 highlights some of the school-based support structures the principals had in place to support the social-emotional development and mental health needs of their students.

Table 4.18

Targeted Supportive Intervention Measures Based on Interview Data Collected from the New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations

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<tr>
<td>Structures for academic, social and therapeutic intervention services</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>At the end of the day, the teachers who volunteered, they came up with this idea of TRI, which is T-R-I, which around the idea of tolerance, respect, and integrity. We had TRI wristbands. We gave students TRI stamps. At the end of the month, if you got a certain number of TRI stamps, you went to the TRI store. Over time, it’s almost evolved into a value-based system, which is what we wanted anyway. We still do the incentives of go to the TRI store, but it’s more of recognizing them for the positive behavior and giving them praise for you show tolerance, you show respect, and acknowledging students for positive behaviors. (Principal 1)</td>
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We have two full-time (NYCDOE) guidance counselors. I have three social workers, two of them clinical, working with us out of an organization called Partnership With Children, and another clinical social worker working with us out of Staten Island Mental Health. Staten Island Mental Health has onsite offices for family support. (Principal 3)
One principal spoke about honoring the voice of a third-grade male student, where she allowed him to articulate his academic needs:

I had a young man whose mother was totally against having her son diagnosed. She was totally against it. I had a conversation with the young man to find out what was going on with him, and he told me that he has a really hard time in the class, and that he really wishes that he had someone that would be able to work with him immediately. I said, “What would that look like?” He said, “Oh, I like when I go to . . . ” [and] he named one of the other teachers [as a] resource. I said, “Okay, you like the resource piece?” He said, “Yes, it helps me to read better.” I had him tell his mom that, and the mom went ahead to have him evaluated. It was just as simple as that. Now, we don’t have any more problems with this young man, because he literally is receiving what he wants. It’s not a stigma. (Principal 2)

She went on to describe the cultural taboos parents have around special education:

I explained to the parents, I said, “You guys have to stop doing that . . . stop believing that there’s a problem with children receiving assistance. Let’s try to get rid of that, especially with my young Black males. They need the help, because guess what? If you wait until something happens, and now they didn’t receive what they needed, they become law-breakers. What’s going to happen when they put them in jail? They’re going to receive those same services that they should have had when they were younger. They’re going to get the anger management. They’re going to get the one-to-one. They’re going to get the, “You can’t be in this area, so I’ve got to put you . . . (referring to isolation) ”.
Why do that in a prison setting when we can just give them what they need? It doesn’t have to have no negative connotation to it. They [students] shouldn’t feel bad about that. They feel bad about it because the adults feel bad about it. Allow them to grow up; it’s okay. (Principal 2)

Principal 7 shared that she had a partnership with external organizations to support her school community. She shared how responsive they were in meeting the needs of her community, which had been instrumental in the last two years. When an incident occurred where the child or the parent was in crisis, within 24 hours, they had services in place:

When an incident occurs where the child or the parent is in crisis, within 24 hours they [visiting nurse] have services in place . . . they will go to the home. They will meet with the family. They will identify the need. They will set up services. Crisis Mobile does the same thing. Now you call Crisis Mobile, and they make a determination whether or not the child is in such crisis that they may harm themselves or someone else, and they need to go to the hospital. (Principal 7)

Although used far less frequently, there were some instances in which coercive power was also used as a power source for infractions the principals deemed as non-negotiables, and suspensions were issued. Regarding punitive measures taken to address student misconduct, there were both similarities and differences in disciplinary beliefs and practices, leading to the following assertion: Variations exist in how principals and teachers define zero tolerance and impact disciplinary responsiveness. Outlined in Table 4.19 are examples the principals provided for when suspensions were warranted.
Table 4.19

*Similarities and Disparities in Disciplinary Responsiveness Based on Interview Data Collected from the New York City Public Elementary School Principals Serving High-Poverty Populations*

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<tr>
<td>Discretions used for student removals, suspension</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>No. We don’t suspend (superintendent or principal). It’s about de-escalating and correcting unwanted behavior, poor choices. (Principal 7)</td>
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<td>and incidence reporting</td>
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<td>Fighting. Really that’s pretty much it, fighting. One of them pushed a teacher. To me, once it starts getting violent and really aggressive, that’s when it reaches that level of being suspended. (Principal 5)</td>
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<td>We rarely suspend children with a superintendent's suspension unless it's major like you brought a knife to school or you made a fire. A lot of that [is] just going by the DOE discipline code. (Principal 1)</td>
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All principals interviewed expressed using superintendent suspensions where a weapon was involved, even in cases where they believed the student did not intend to use the weapon. In two cases, the principals identified situations where students were found with either a knife or razor, and they were left with no alternatives other than to suspend the students. Neither of the students had prior reported incidents of misbehavior: “A kid brought in a razor . . . second grader . . . picked it up and put it in her school bag. I think it [the suspension] was 6 days. After they [parents] plead no contest, we had her return immediately to the school.” (Principal 3)

A second principal offered a similar account involving a weapon that resulted in suspension:
I only had one superintendent suspension. That’s because I had no choice. Kid had a knife. He’s a really nice boy. He took out of his brother’s backpack, because he was afraid his brother was going to use it. Of course, the brother denied all knowledge of it. (Principal 5)

Nearly all of the principals cited violence toward an adult as a reason for suspending a student:

I had a student yesterday put his hands on a [paraprofessional]. You can't do that. That’s a no go. He’s getting 3 days in the conflict resolution room with that teacher, and there’s an apology letter that he has to write to the [paraprofessional]. We already had a sit down with them. That was a principal suspension. (Principal 3)

Finally, some of the principals reported using a ladder of referral before getting to the point of suspension, even in cases of physical assault. Principal 4 delineated the process at her school:

We use progressive discipline. We do start with a removal at the classroom level. Teachers have, first of all, developed explicit behavioral expectations within the classroom and rewards and consequences for those . . . that they notified a parent or had a family engaged, if necessary, and have documented those opportunities . . . A principal’s removal is where after the teacher has exhibited all of these . . . able to prove that they’ve done these things. This is when I would then conference with the child. I would give them a [principal’s] removal and have a meeting with the parent myself . . . different from a principal suspension, where then I would go the next step of actually putting the word “suspension” into the
system. [It’s] the same process of suspension but that’s how it’s different.

(Principal 4)

The greatest disparities came when describing how incidents were recorded in the Online Occurrence Reporting System. The principals were divided in their practices for how incidents were recorded; which ones were and were not, by whom, etc. Nearly all Level 4 and Level 5 infractions were recorded by the principals, which included throwing furniture, assaulting an adult, or being in a possession of a weapon. While some of the principals only recorded major incidents, others reportedly recorded all incidents, having as many as 400 or more recorded infractions, Levels 1-5, in 1 school year. The principals with the highest recordings, particularly those with numerous instances of Levels 4 and 5 infractions, found themselves on the [Potentially] Persistently Dangerous List, which gets cited by New York State and that could lead to a school’s closure.

**Summary of Results**

**Summary of quantitative results.** Overall, most of the principals responding to the survey generally had favorable attitudes toward the use of positive approaches toward managing student behaviors. With respect to gender, based on the means and standard deviation, the results show that the statistical significant difference between male and female principals lay in their general attitudes toward discipline, and the women outscored the men in their belief of using more positive methods in addressing student misconduct. The survey results show that when it came to the principals’ values surrounding suspensions, White principals over Black principals were less inclined to use exclusionary measures in managing student behaviors. On the contrary, there were no significant differences in the approaches used between Latino and White principals, nor
were there any differences between Black and Latino principals in their disciplinary beliefs and methods. Finally, the results reveal there were no statistical differences amongst the principals’ disciplinary attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices across the five boroughs of NYC, or in the years of experience working as elementary school principals.

**Summary of qualitative results.** The principals interviewed for this study utilized power sources that were predominately embedded in referent and reward approaches when it came to their efforts in meeting the academic, social-emotional, and mental-health needs of their student bodies. Empathy and compassion, cultivated by respect for student voice, as well as personal experiences, were large contributors in the approaches used by most of the principals interviewed. All of the leaders saw the value in utilizing school-based staff members and community-based organizations that specialized in meeting the needs of students and families. From this portion of the study, a pertinent discovery found that nearly all of the principals did not identify poverty as a sole factor contributing to student misconduct. Instead, they were able to cite several mitigating circumstances they believed to intersect with poverty that, in turn, can sometimes negatively impact students socially and also leave them misunderstood.

The principals in this study placed great emphasis on the importance of confronting behaviors and attitudes of staff members who had low expectations and biased dispositions regarding student achievement and behaviors, particularly toward Black male students. This certainly held true for the teachers, who stood at the front line of serving students. Part of building an emotionally-safe learning environment calls for educators to meet students at their entry point of development—not just academically, but socially as well, while still holding them to high standards of excellence.
There were two noteworthy discoveries made while conducting the interviews. First, while most of the principals did acknowledge that, in many cases, their Black male students were largely responsible for the disruptive behaviors demonstrated within their respective school communities, they did not believe the behaviors were exclusive to these youngsters based on their race. They acknowledged occasions when members of their Latino populations, as well as Black female populations, were responsible for inappropriate and, in some cases, egregious and/or defiant behaviors at times as well. Second, none of the principals expressed the belief that their Black male population required any types of unique interventions beyond the sort of support they would give to any of their student populations.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This purpose of this study was to describe and explore the attitudes, values, and beliefs of New York City public elementary school principals who work within impoverished school districts. Using an explanatory-sequence mixed-methods design, this study also examined how the elementary principals implemented certain disciplinary practices and explored the unique impact of disciplinary practices on their poor, Black male students, one of the most at-risk populations in the school districts. This study set out to answer the following three questions:

Research question 1: What are the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices of NYC Title I public elementary school principals serving high-poverty populations?

The quantitative results revealed that NYC public elementary school principals leading and managing schools within impoverished communities were generally more inclined to use preventive measures, for example, (a) putting structures in place to teach students how to behave appropriately in school and in the classroom, and recognizing them for demonstrating such desired behaviors; (b) keeping all students in school, regardless of the severity of a student’s behavior, and working collaboratively with parents as a means of preventing suspensions; and (c) providing positive school climates and offering challenging instruction, rather than employing exclusionary or non-supportive measures (i.e., (a) using suspensions to remove persistent troublemakers to
maintain order in school so others could learn, (b) beliefs that suspensions make students less likely to misbehave in the future, and (c) the belief that there is nothing the a school can do if the students, alone, are not willing to take responsibility for their behavior) to address elementary student misconduct over suspensions.

The qualitative results revealed that: Having a schoolwide Positive Behavior Intervention & Support protocol was a structure that all elementary school principals valued having in place as part of their schools’ cultures (e.g., posting Random Acts of Kinds, the promotion of T-R-I for tolerance, respect and integrity, and recognizing students who demonstrate the seven habits of highly effective people). Additionally, recognizing that children may have mitigating circumstances, which can impact behavior, the principals believed that getting to know the students and their families was an important part of managing student behavior to best support their needs, including: (a) providing homework support at school when there was no electricity at home, (b) offering classes and workshops for parent to assist them with employment to reduce stressors at home, and (c) allowing students to articulate areas of academic and social struggles, which prompted the leaders to institute necessary support via human capital.

Research question 2: Are there any demographic differences in the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices of NYC Title (public elementary school principals serving high-poverty populations) serving high-poverty populations?

The quantitative results revealed that:

1. There were no statistical significant differences amongst the elementary school principals with varying years of experience or by NYC borough.
2. Gender differences were found amongst the elementary school principals in
general attitudes. The male elementary school principals reported using more exclusionary and non-supportive measures (e.g., believing that suspensions solve disciplinary problems, or believing out-of-school suspension were necessary to maintain a positive school climate) than the women elementary school principals.

3. Regarding race, while there were no statistical significant differences between Blacks and Latinos or Latinos and Whites, there were significant differences between Black and White NYC public elementary school principals. The White principals were more inclined to use favorable, non-punitive approaches (e.g., having conversations with students as part of their consequences for misconduct, and employing school community service as a consequence for infractions) compared to the Black elementary school principals when it came to managing student misconduct.

Research question 3: What factors influence the disciplinary and suspension decisions of NYC Title I public elementary school principals of high-needs schools specifically toward Black male students? The qualitative results revealed that:

1. The seven NYC public elementary school principals utilized power sources predominately embedded in referent approaches (e.g., using their own personal life experiences to relate to students and their plights of poverty, the age or maturity of the students, and matching consequences according to their level of comprehension) when it came to their efforts in meeting the academic, social-emotional, and mental-health needs of their students.

Empathy, respect for student voice, and personal experiences served as
significant influencers for NYC public elementary school principals when
determining disciplinary measures.

2. These elementary principals reported utilizing school-based staff members
and community-based organizations that specialized in meeting the needs of
Black male students and their families.

3. Most of the interviewed elementary principals reported that their Black male
students were slightly more responsible for the disruptive behaviors that were
demonstrated within their respective school communities. However, these
principals did not believe that the disruptive behaviors were exclusive to these
youngsters based solely on their race, but the disruptive behaviors could be
attributed to mitigating circumstances they faced, including family dynamics
and lack of stability in living situations believed to impacted social
development.

4. None of the interviewed elementary school principals believed that their Black
male students required any new or special interventions beyond the
interventions given to all students.

**Implications of Findings**

Given the mixed-methods findings of this study with NYC public elementary
school principals, there are number of research, practice, and policy implications:

1. Future research studies need to explore how socioeconomic and cultural
   factors impact the disciplinary approaches of principals from all racial and
   ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.
Traditionally, based on similar cultural backgrounds, Black and Latino families share close correlations in the ways in which they discipline children in the home, as it pertains to expectations relative to respect of authority figures, restrictive disciplinary approaches, etc. (Dixon, Graber, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008). This could explain why there was no statistical significant difference found between these two groups in their disciplinary approaches, based on the results of the quantitative portion of the study. Given this data, it is surprising to discover that while there was no statistical significant difference between White and Latino elementary school principals, there was a difference between Black and White principals in their disciplinary approaches. A presumption might be that Black principals are more inclined to better relate to students living in poverty, while White principals might be more inclined to have more discriminatory practices toward students based on race and class. These findings, however, raise a question as to how the intersections of race, culture, and parenting styles influence the ways in which elementary public school principals discipline students. This is an area for further exploration.

On the other hand, discipline rooted in referent power was prominent in the qualitative portion of the study. Out of the seven principals interviewed, six made reference to personal experiences, whether from their childhood (living in low-income housing, witnessing domestic violence) or adulthood (single parenthood, recipient of public assistance). Their experiences shaped the way in which they engaged both students and parents. This supported the findings of Skiba (2000) that touched upon how shared experiences between school leaders and students can influence the ways in which student conduct is perceived and managed.
Generally speaking, principals across the city find training in positive-behavior support measures, as well as resource allocations for mental-health and social-emotional development services beneficial for students.

The quantitative results did not yield any statistically significant differences amongst the principals with varying years of experience as principals. Nearly all of the principals interviewed for this study made reference to having some sort of school-wide intervention system in place to reinforce positive behavior in students. Over the past few years, the DOE has been promoting the use of more behavioral-intervention social-emotional support structures for students. Mayor deBlasio allocated more than 5 million dollars to the New York City Department of Education to support the implementation of PBIS structures as a means of developing healthy school-wide cultures and to reduce punitive measures in managing student misconduct. This includes the expansion of de-escalation measures, such as Therapeutic Crisis Intervention training and restorative techniques, which promote reducing infractions through dialogue, and the expansion of social-emotional learning, which is focused on self-reflection and impulse control (Mayor deBlasio’s Leadership Team, 2015). This overall citywide focus on culture and climate development may account for the similarities noted across the varying years of principal’s experience as it related to their respective positive approaches to managing student behaviors.

Disparities exist amongst principals in the reporting practices of incidents in the Online Occurrence Reporting Systems (OORS).

Cases where all seven elementary school principals were unified in their reporting practices involved situations where students assaulted an adult, threw furniture, or
brought a weapon to school. However, great disparities existed in several other areas when it came to principals’ management of occurrences. In at least three schools across the city, principals indicated reporting all incidents in the system. At the time these interviews occurred, one principal had more than 200 reported incidents. Meanwhile, principals in three other boroughs indicated not reporting every incident into OORS. Disparities also existed in the recording practices amongst the principals in cases where students left the classroom without permission. Some principals saw this as a safety concern, particularly with the heightened awareness of legislation known as Avonte’s Law, designed to safeguard children with autism or other developmental disabilities from wandering (Autism Speaks, 2016).

Student removals was another area where the principals lacked uniformity in recording practices. Some principals did not see pushing or shoving as incidents that warranted formal recording but rather, required immediate de-escalation and resolution. Such disparities speak to how principal discretion is paramount when it comes to statistical reports regarding suspensions: in some cases, even when principals thought student removals were warranted, they were not always officially recorded in the OORS database. One can surmise that if all occurrences were recorded, suspension rates for Black males at the public elementary school level would potentially be higher than what the existing data reflects. This can be perceived as another measure used by some elementary school principals to derail Black male students from the school-to-prison pipeline.
Limitations

There were two noteworthy limitations to this study. First, all of the Cronbach’s alpha scores were below .70 for the subscales measured in the study. This indicates that the Disciplinary Practices Survey had limitations in its existing structure, and it would benefit from further measurement development to increase its reliability for measuring principals’ attitudes and disciplinary practices toward managing student misconduct. Therefore, the reliability of the results found in the quantitative portion of this study may be low, and caution should be taken when interpreting the results. A more thorough analysis of the measurement’s reliability would involve undergoing both an explanatory analysis followed by confirmatory-factor analysis with two separate groups of principals. However, given the time constraints to complete the study, as well as the unique population of principals, this process was omitted.

The second limitation was that the qualitative portion of this study focused on school settings where 40% of the student body was comprised of Black students and at least 60% were eligible for free or reduced-fee lunch. All seven principals led schools whose population were 95% Black and Latino, and six out of the seven schools had populations where at least 80-100% of the student body were eligible for FRL. Although the majority of the principals indicated most disruptive behaviors was demonstrated by their Black male population, they were not able to say definitively that their intervention approaches were specific for Black males, because they saw their student population as communities of color with similar needs.

An expansion to this the study could be to include all public elementary schools across New York City, and remove the criteria of 60% Title I enrollment as an eligibility
requirement for participation, thus making the factors associated with poverty less prevalent. Additionally, a reduction in the minimal requirement of Black males could be considered to see how their behaviors and the principals’ disciplinary approaches toward this population differ in more ethnically diverse school settings. This new approach to the research would widen the opportunity for a researcher to potentially hear from those Black and male principals who had higher preferences for the use of more exclusionary measures to manage student behaviors, as found in results from the Disciplinary Practices Survey. It would also shed light on how the percentage of Black male suspensions at the elementary school level with more racially diverse student bodies that include compare to those that are comprised of predominately Black and Latino populations.

**Recommendations**

Based on the results from the study, the following are recommendations for future considerations relative to policy, research and professional training:

1. Develop a more reliable tool to measure attitudes of principals about discipline.

To make the Disciplinary Practices Survey a more reliable instrument, further research using an exploratory factor analysis should be conducted. This would require a researcher to administer the survey to a group of no less than 100 principals (preferably 300) to do an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to look for the statistical patterns in how people respond to the questions. Based on the results of the EFA, the questions would be grouped into subscales by looking at the factor loadings for each item. Then, the researcher should administer to a second sample of 100-300 principals (different from the first group) the revised survey based on the EFA to conduct a confirmatory factor
analysis (CFA). CFA is the stage where the researcher specifies exactly what questions should go together on which scales, and the analysis tests for whether that structure actually works would be in a second sample. Further revisions to the questions and scales may be needed but, at this point, any anticipated revisions would be minimal. Finally, by using both the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to determine the subscale structure, the inter-item reliability can be determined and should, at that point, be sufficiently high. At that point, it is expected that the Cronbach’s alpha scores would be above .70 on the subscales, yielding more reliable results for answering the research questions relating to: (a) principals’ general attitudes and practices toward discipline, and (b) the demographic differences amongst principals in managing student misconduct.

2. Policy changes are needed in the ways schools identified incidences as potentially/persistently dangerous.

Of the seven principals interviewed for this study, five made reference to having been designated, or narrowly escaping the designation, of being identified as a persistently dangerous school. There has been controversy surrounding the current formula used to determine how a school is given this designation (Appendix Q). The current formula paints a broad picture in its method of identifying schools as persistently dangerous, without taking mitigating factors into consideration. Based on the current formula, schools with smaller populations but more serious infractions (even if only a few), stand a greater chance of being labeled as dangerous than schools with larger populations but with the same amount of infractions or even more. A school being identified with this designation can be misleading to many, especially parents. At the time of this study, four out of five schools on the New York State Education Department
2016-17 list of Persistently Dangerous Schools Designation Based on Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting were New York City public elementary schools (Appendix R). The enrollment sizes for the schools ranged from approximately 283 to 503 students (NYCDOE, 2016), all with predominately Black and Latino populations. If the reported infraction and suspension rates were more prevalent at the high school level, where the enrollment for some high schools are over 3,000 students, then it is reasonable to question why none of these schools were on the State’s list for being persistently dangerous. Modifications are needed to address the current policy for identifying persistently dangerous schools, by creating a list that is more equitable for small schools. With the current formula, some principals may be less inclined to report incidents that occur for fear of being placed on this list and suffering the repercussions that could follow.

3. Further research should consider exploring the intersections of race, masculinity, culture, and classroom management of Black males.

The examples provided in this study of the male teachers who engaged in degrading and confrontational acts with their Black male students were indicative of apparent power struggles, primarily on the part of the teachers. These accounts, coupled with the results from the quantitative portion of the study, revealed that men had a higher inclination to use punitive measures to manage student behavior. Given these data, consideration should be given to discovering answers to the following questions:

- How does the prowess traditionally associated with men, based on their gender, influence the ways in which they approach disciplinary practices toward male students at all age levels?
• What are the attributes of a White-dominate culture that influence the expectations male educators have of Black male students?

• How do the life experiences of male educators impact the ways in which men manage student behaviors of Black males?

These questions are timely, particularly now when New York City has an initiative where they are looking to recruit 1,000 men of color to become teachers by 2018 (New York City Young Men’s Initiative, 2016). This came, in part, as a result of data that revealed that young men of color (Black, Latino, Asian, Native American) make up approximately 43% of the student population in NYC public schools, but only 8% represent teaching community (NYC Young Men’s Initiative, 2016). While NYCDOE seeks to have greater ethnic diversity of male teachers who reflect the students it services, consideration should also be given to understanding the philosophies these men hold not only about education in terms of academics, but specifically what they believe are the most effective measures for managing student behavior and how they will respond when challenged by their male students, Black males in particular.

4. In-depth and ongoing professional development and training on the stages of child development is highly recommended.

Research from the literature review (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002; Dunbar & Villarruel, 2004) highlighted how no differentiation in disciplinary measures was used between younger children in early childhood and elementary school levels, versus those for students in the middle and high school levels. Given the stark differences in the developmental stages of children, it is expected that there would be diversity in the ways in which school leaders manage student behavior. While Dunbar and Villarruel (2002,
2004) made reference to students in Grades K-12, there are also implications for differences in child development even within the elementary school setting, which principals and teachers should take into consideration when executing discipline.

The behaviors described by the principals interviewed for this study, particularly of the students in early childhood grades, might be seen by some as nothing more than what has historically been known as temper tantrums. According to Simply Psychology (2016), in Piaget’s stages of cognitive development, the normal-functioning child from ages 2 through 7 years are in what is called the preoperational stage of development. It is a time when children “struggle with logic and taking the view point of others” (Cherry, 2017). This supports the sentiments of one principal when asked if she suspended kids in Grades K-2, and she replied, “No. No, they’re too young to understand.” In the case of older students, ages 7-11, they are in what Piaget describes as the concrete operational stage of development (Simply Psychology, 2016), where children can begin to rationalize that not everyone shares their thoughts and feelings, yet they can still be very rigid in their thinking. Research and professional training is needed in understanding how these stages of cognitive development intersect with students’ cultural values that have elements unique to inner-city communities and lifestyles, and how these factors transcend into the school setting.

5. Professional development and pre-service training should be conducted on the topics of adultification and the implications for child development.

Continuing in the vain of child development, the topic of adultification is one that came up a few times over the course of the interviews and directly correlated with the literature collected for this study, i.e., diaper changing, preparing meals, preparing
siblings for bed, etc. (Burton, 2007). From the principals’ standpoint, it seems that most teachers struggled with mannerisms demonstrated by students that could be deemed repulsive or appear disrespectful. The behaviors however, often stem from a place rooted in students’ lived experiences that have morphed into a type of maturity that teachers may be unaccustomed. As suggested in the literature and supported by the findings of this study, implications for further professional and pre-service training for teachers should focus on understanding how cultural dynamics and students’ societal plights can shape children’s development and maturation skills, thus impacting how they relate to adults within the school setting. As school districts seek to enhance the skill sets of principals and educators by incorporating more culturally responsiveness and sensitivity training as part of their professional development, adultification and parentification are topics that should not be ignored.

6. Mandatory, ongoing professional training for principals and teachers should be implemented to address biased attitudes and micro-aggressive behaviors.

A tremendous amount of this work is embedded in the need for mandated, ongoing professional training to address biased attitudes and micro-aggressive behaviors that educators of all races, genders, and classes hold toward students of color, but especially Black male students (Carter et al., 2014). Such training is vital for any educator who makes a commitment to working with students and families who reside within inner-city communities. As the research suggests (Cooper, 2003; Jensen, 2009), as well as the findings revealed in this study, families living in poverty face unique circumstances that culturally impact the ways in which children are reared, thus affecting the ways in which they navigate in school and throughout society. Given the fact that an
essential part of the work involves meeting families at their entry point of need, tackling discriminatory attitudes and cultural misconception is a necessity in meeting the holistic needs of students.

Conclusion

This study expanded upon the earlier studies using the Disciplinary Practices Survey by including the voices of elementary school principals working in impoverished communities, where suspension rates for Black males are highest in New York City. While the Department of Education and Mayor deBlasio have taken measures toward reducing the number of suspensions for students at all grade levels across the city, continued work is needed to get to the root of the philosophies principals hold when it comes to their disciplinary practices. Intervention programs and support services are vital resources for schools to have in place to meet the holistic needs of students, but they alone are not enough.

Continued research beyond the scope of race must take place. It should involve further exploration surrounding the power sources that drive principals’ leadership and disciplinary practices, as well as honest reflections on how the gender, parenting styles, and cultural experiences of principals influence the ways in which they engage all students, particularly Black males. There was genuine sensitivity and emotion on the part of the principals interviewed for this study, including the men, that became evident as they shared their life experiences, which shaped their leadership, and more specifically, disciplinary styles: being single parents, being recipients of governmental assistance as, witnessing domestic violence and substance abuse as children, being ostracized by teachers who humiliated them for being poor, and principals growing up in the same local
public housing complexes where their students resided. It was clear that these life experiences served as triggers for each of them, which shaped the ways in which they interacted with, and sought to support the students and their families. Their testimonies justify why empathy in education can and should be valued as a professional tool—for all educators to use as an alternative disciplinary measure. It has the potential to drive educators’ decisions about more effective ways of meeting the holistic needs of their students—particularly those living in poverty, and to minimize the number of Black males entering the school-to-prison pipeline.

Likewise, the lived experiences of our young Black males at the elementary school level must become part of the discussion in this field of study. There is much to be said about the challenges that these young, vulnerable people face on a daily basis; navigating the worlds of school, home, and for many of them, the streets, all within the constructs of poverty. If pedagogues—both new and seasoned alike—are genuinely committed to dismantling the school-to-prison-pipeline, these are all challenging topics which educators must be willing to speak openly and honestly.
References


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Appendix A

United States Kindergarten-Grade 12 Suspension and Expulsion Rates by Race and Ethnicity
Appendix B

Description of New York City Department of Education Citywide

Behavioral Expectations Progressive Infraction Levels

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

Infraction Levels

The Citywide Behavioral Expectations to Support Student Learning holds students accountable for their behavior. Infractions are grouped into five levels based on the severity of the infraction. Whenever possible and appropriate, the response to misconduct should begin with the lowest level of disciplinary response and should include appropriate guidance intervention(s).

Principals, teachers, school staff, students, and parents need to know the disciplinary measures that can be taken when a student misbehaves or substantially disrupts a classroom. The Discipline Code is divided into two sections: Section A: Grades K-5 and Section B: Grades 6-12—to ensure that the age and general maturity of the student are considered. Some infractions may not apply to students in grades K-3.

Each level of infractions provides a set of possible guidance interventions as well as a minimum to a maximum range of possible disciplinary responses that may be imposed by a teacher, principal, the Chief Executive Officer of the Office of Safety and Youth Development or other designee of the Chancellor or Community Superintendent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progressive Infraction Levels</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 Unsatisfactory/Noncompliant Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 Disrespectful Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 Disruptive Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4 Aggressive or Injurious/Harmful Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5 Seriously Dangerous or Violent Behavior</td>
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</table>

Where and When the Discipline Code Applies

The standards set forth in the Discipline Code apply to behavior:

- in school during school hours;
- before and after school, while on school property;
- while traveling on vehicles funded by the NYC DOE;
- at all school-sponsored events; and
- on other-than-school property when such behavior can be demonstrated to negatively affect the educational process or to endanger the health, safety, morals, or welfare of the school community.

When misconduct involves communication, gestures, or expressive behavior, the infraction applies to oral, written, or electronic communications, including but not limited to texting, emailing, and social networking.

The enumerated infractions are not all-inclusive. Students who engage in misconduct which is not listed are subject to appropriate disciplinary measures by the teacher, principal or the Chief Executive Officer of the Office of Safety and Youth Development or other designee of the Chancellor or Community Superintendent based on violation of school rules. To ensure that staff, students, and parents are aware of all expected standards of behavior, school rules must be in writing and available to all students.

The Discipline Code provides graduated accountability measures for students who engage in repeated misbehaviors despite prior interventions and/or prior imposition of appropriate disciplinary measures.

More severe accountability measures will be imposed on those students who engage in a pattern of persistent misconduct. Whenever possible and appropriate, prior to imposing such penalties, school officials should exhaust less severe disciplinary responses and use guidance interventions.
Appendix C

Sample of Citywide Behavioral Expectations of Student Intervention and Discipline Code

Kindergarten-Grade 5 LEVEL 4

be excluded from the bus as per Chancellor’s Regulation A-401.
Appendix D

New York City Suspension Rates by Borough

Student Suspension Rates by ZIP Code
New York City, July 2010-June 2011

Suspension patterns mirror stop-and-frisk in four of five New York City boroughs.

Source: Data provided to the NYCLU.
Rates shown represent the percentage of students living in a particular ZIP code who were suspended.
Appendix E

New York City Department of Education Sub-School Districts

Divided by Borough

Manhattan (1-6); Bronx (7-12); Brooklyn (13-23, 32); Queens (24-30); Staten Island (31)
Appendix F

Responses to Supplemental Questions as Requested by New York City Department of Education Research Policy and Support Group

MEMO

To: Sophie Sharps, Claudia Triana, New York City Department of Education Research and Policy Support Group
CC: Lois Herrera, Holly Bedwell
From: Susan M. Green, Doctoral Candidate, St. John Fisher College
Date: January 2, 2017
Subject: NYCDOE Data Request 653

A formal request has been made to the New York City Department of Education Research and Policy Support Group Division for suspension data for each/all K-5 schools (all schools serving any grades between K-5 i.e., K-2, 3-5, K-5) during the 2015-16 school year outlining the following information:

1) Principal suspensions by grade, gender, race and type of infraction
2) Superintendent suspensions by grade, gender, race and type of infraction
3) Percentage of students by gender who have multiple suspensions in one year

As per your additional request, here are the responses to your questions.

Additional Questions for Use of Suspension/Incident Data

A. Considering the research objectives what assumptions are being made around incident and/or suspension data (e.g. Schools that have better instructional programs will have lower suspension rates)? Most research at the city, state and country level gives the highest attention to suspension rates at the middle and high school levels (U.S. Department of Education, New York Civil Liberties Union). Ponwall (2013) highlights neighborhoods within the five boroughs of New York City (i.e., Central Harlem in Manhattan, Brownsville and East New York sections in Brooklyn, Stapleton, Staten Island), as having the highest suspension statistics across the city. Many of these same communities, predominantly occupied by Black families, have also been identified as some of the most impoverished areas within the city as well (Eide, 2014, New York City Department of Education, 2015). This data suggests intersections between suspension race, socioeconomic status, and gender.
Despite this data, there still remains ambiguity as to why suspension rates are highest in these areas, how these rates are depicted at the elementary school level, and the magnitude to which the aforementioned intersections extend specifically to Black males attending public elementary schools within inner-city communities. While the New York Civil Liberties provides the total number of K-5 suspensions at 2,383 during 2015-2016, it does not disaggregate the communities/school districts in which these suspensions have taken place, the types of infractions in which students engaged, the demographic makeup of those suspensions relative to race, gender and grade level, or the number of students who were the recipient of multiple suspensions. Therefore, assumptions cannot be made about the suspension data at the K-5 level because that information has yet to be made available. An assumption is being made however, about how principals attitudes, beliefs, values shape their disciplinary practices and suspension outcomes (see section B on Power Theory Framework).

B. What specific hypotheses are being made about how the intervention/program will affect discipline (incident and/or suspension) outcomes? This study is not making a hypothesis about how any intervention/program will impact discipline outcomes. The purpose of this study is to explore how the attitudes, values and beliefs surrounding discipline inform the ways in which school leaders who work within impoverished settings carry out disciplinary practices, and the impact those practices have on their Black male student population. The research design is a mixed method approach, using both surveys and interview question as outline below:

- R1: What are the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs and practices of NYC Title I elementary school principals?
- R2: Are there any demographic differences in the disciplinary attitudes, values, beliefs and practices of NYC Title I elementary school principals?
- R3: What factors influence the disciplinary and suspension decisions of NYC Title I elementary school principals specifically toward Black male students?

Using Power Theory as the framework for this study (inspired by French and Raven (1959) and amended by Tauber (2007) specific to educators), the researcher seeks to determine how principals’ disciplinary measures are rooted in three different power sources: coercive power, reward power or referent power. Coercive power can be closely associated with the zero-tolerance approach to discipline, while reward power is strongly associated with positive behavior intervention systems () that are often used to curtail student behavior. Referent power on the other hand, supports a social-emotional and empathic approach to managing student conduct through relationship building. Survey responses and interviews will be used to determine how the attitudes of the principals fall within one or more of these three power categories.

C. Will incident and/or suspension data be used as a primary outcome measure in the research? The incident and/or suspension data will only be used as a one source to support the outcome measure in the research. The incident and suspension data serve
as part of a larger study. The researcher seeks to triangulate the requested data with the results of the results collected from respondents who completed survey and interviews, to conduct a comparative analysis and determine what if any trends exist within the data sources.

D. How will incident and/or suspension data and results be reported? How will student privacy be protected? **Reports will be made exclusively at the district, neighborhood and borough levels.** The incident/suspension data being requested for individual K-5 schools receiving Title 1 funding during the 2015-16 school year within each of the 32 school districts will outline:

1) Principal suspensions by grade, gender, race and type of infraction
2) Superintendent suspensions by grade, gender, race and type of infraction
3) Percentage of students by gender who have multiple suspensions in one year

Since personal, individual student data is not being collected, their privacy is not in jeopardy. Additionally, names of schools or principals will not be referenced in final report.

E. How will the results be uniquely informative or beneficial to the NYCDOE? **Assuming the NYCDOE has a genuine interest is supporting the social development of their elementary school population impacted by poverty, and more specifically, those living in inner-city communities plagued by gangs, substance abuse, and various kindergarten forms of criminal behavior that can negatively influence student conduct, having the aforementioned data, coupled with the results of the study will be useful in supporting leaders who serve these populations.** The holistic results of the study will be useful in expanding NYCDOE’s goal of providing a supportive environment (as part of the Chancellor’s Framework for Great Schools), in identifying the types of targeted supports and financial resources elementary schools in the highest, most neediest communities may need to best support students and families. Likewise, it will be useful and relevant information to have in structuring what will hopefully become mandatory, ongoing professional trainings that pedagogues and school administrators should undergo to best meet the unique needs of their students that are impacted by the cultural plights of poverty.

F. The Office of Safety and Youth Development must review the final version of any reports using suspension data. Researchers may provide the report to the Research and Policy Support Group (contact: RPSGResearch@schools.nyc.gov) who will distribute the work. Please indicate you agreement with this stipulation and approximately when the report will be provided. **As stated in my NYCDOE IRB application (File #1444), the New York City Department of Education and its subsidiary offices will be provided with**
a copy of the completed study upon final approval from my institution, St. John Fisher College
Appendix G

New York City Department of Education Non-Disclosure Agreement to Obtain Data

Data Request #: DR-653

NON DISCLOSURE / NONUSE AGREEMENT
FOR EVALUATION OF DOE SPONSORED PROGRAMS

This agreement ("Agreement") is dated December 6, 2015

Between
The Board of Education of the City of New York with an address at
52 Chambers Street, New York, New York 10007 ("BOE")

And
St. John Fisher College ("Recipient") with an address at 3600 East Ave, Rochester, NY 14618

The parties agree as follows:

1. Confidential Information" means any personally identifiable information related to DOE students, student families, procedures, DOE employees, agents, and volunteers obtained by or furnished to the Recipient, all findings, analysis, data, reports, or other information learned or developed and based thereon, whether in oral, written, graphic, or machine-readable form, and all information marked "confidential." Confidential Information includes, but is not limited to, names, addresses, contact information, school or school attended, school district, grades or other reviews, credits, scores, academic or evaluations, records, correspondence, activities, associations, financial information, social security numbers or other identifying numbers or codes, date of birth or age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, socioeconomic status (including free/ reduced lunch status), race, ethnicity, special education status, or English Language Learner status, regardless of whether such information was disclosed prior to, concurrent with or subsequent to this Agreement. Confidential Information shall not include any information that is (i) lawfully in the public domain at the time of receipt or which lawfully comes into the public domain thereafter through no act of the Recipient in breach of this Agreement, (ii) demonstrated to have been lawfully known to the Recipient prior to disclosure by or through the BOE, (iii) disclosed with the prior written approval of the BOE, (iv) demonstrated to have been independently developed by the Recipient without reference to the Confidential Information, (v) disclosed to the Recipient by a Third Party under conditions permitting such disclosure, without breach of this Agreement, and (vi) disclosed as required by court order, subpoena, or other validly issued administrative or judicial notice or order and/or as a matter of applicable law, provided, however, that in the event disclosure is required of the Recipient under the provisions of any law or court order, the Recipient will (a) promptly notify the BOE of the obligations to make such disclosure sufficiently in advance of the disclosure, if possible, to allow the BOE to seek a protective order, and (b) disclose such Confidential Information only to the extent allowed under a protective order, if any, or necessary to comply with the law or court order.

2. In furtherance of the Exploring the Disciplinary Attitudes and practices of NYC Public Elementary School Principals Towards Students Living in Poverty and the Impact on Black Males, the BOE agrees that from 1/9/2016 to 12/6/2016, Recipient shall have access to the BOE's Confidential Information as set forth in the attached Scope of Work. The Recipient agrees to hold the Confidential Information in strict confidence and not to disclose Confidential Information to any third parties nor make use of such Confidential Information for the benefit of another or for any use other than the Evaluation as set forth in the attached Scope of Work. Recipient agrees not to sell, lease, rent or distribute the Confidential Information.

3. The BOE shall have the right at its sole discretion to terminate the Recipient's access to the BOE's Confidential Information upon fifteen (15) days written notice to the Recipient. The BOE shall have the right at its sole discretion to terminate the Recipient's access to the BOE's Confidential Information immediately upon the Recipient's breach of any confidentiality obligations herein. No claim for damages will be made or allowed to the Recipient because of such termination. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary, the confidentiality obligations of the Recipient under this Agreement shall survive any termination of this Agreement.

4. Recipient shall only disclose the Confidential Information to its employees, agents, or subcontractors who need to know the Confidential Information and in those instances only to the extent justifiable by the need collectively referred to as "Personnel." The Recipient shall ensure that all such Personnel comply with the terms of this Agreement. The Recipient shall not release or incorporate any of the Confidential Information into any database or any medium other than may be required for the Evaluation. The BOE may audit the Recipient's maintenance of the Confidential Information for security purposes.

5. In addition, Recipient agrees to hold all individually identifiable information obtained, learned or developed by Recipient pursuant to applicable provisions of state and federal law, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (29 U.S.C. 1232g) and any applicable regulations promulgated thereunder. Recipient understands that the release of Confidential Information to persons or agencies not authorized to receive such information is a violation of United States federal law. Student records shall at all times be subject to BOE policy and the Chancellor's Regulation A 850 entitled, "Student Records Confidentiality, Access, Disclosure and Retention," (available on the BOE website at http://doc.digest.edu/docshare/docs/bul/documents/44A 850.pdf).

6. The Recipient shall submit to the BOE all data collected pursuant to this Agreement. Whenever required by the BOE, the Recipient shall promptly surrender (or destroy at the direction of the BOE if surrender is not practicable) all Confidential Information and all media containing the same to the BOE and certify, in writing, that all of the foregoing materials have been surrendered or destroyed in accordance with this Agreement.

7. All reports and work product created pursuant to this Agreement by the Recipient and in accordance with the Scope of Work will remain the exclusive property of the Recipient. Any reports or work product may not contain any personally identifiable information. The BOE shall provide the Chancellor or his designate with a reasonable opportunity to review and comment prior to the Recipient's publication of the results of its participation or findings in the performance of this Agreement. If the BOE publishes any copy of each publication or final report which includes any results of the Recipient's participation or findings in the performance of its work under this Agreement shall be furnished to the BOE without charge, and the BOE shall have an irrecoverable, nonexclusive, nontransferable, royalty-free license to reproduce, distribute, create derivative works based upon, or otherwise use the materials for BOE purposes.

NYC DOE - Non-Disclosure Non Use Agreement
8. The parties agree that money damages would be an insufficient remedy for breach or threatened breach of this Agreement by Recipient. Accordingly, in addition to all other remedies that the DOE may have, the DOE shall be entitled to specific performance and injunctive or other equitable relief as a remedy for any breach of the confidentiality and other obligations of this Agreement. Moreover, the Recipient acknowledges that unauthorized disclosure of Confidential Information by the Recipient, its Personnel and agents may result in civil and/or criminal penalties under New York State and Federal laws.

9. The Recipient shall immediately advise the DOE, Research and Policy Support Group at 718-339-7599 or in writing if the Recipient shall learn of any unauthorized use or disclosure of Confidential Information by the Recipient, its Personnel or any third party who shall have gained access to the affected Confidential Information. Moreover, the Recipient shall be responsible, at its own cost and expense, to notify in writing all persons affected by any unauthorized disclosure of Confidential Information by Recipient, its Personnel or any third party who shall have gained access to affected Confidential Information as a result of any act and/or omission by the Recipient and/or its Personnel.

10. Nothing in this Agreement obligates either party to consummate a transaction, to enter into any agreement or negotiations with respect thereto, or to take any other action not expressly agreed to herein. Any subsequent agreements between the parties shall include a confidentiality obligation on the part of Recipient at least as strict as set forth in this Agreement, unless such subsequent agreement specifically references this Agreement by name and declares the obligation of this Section 10 in writing. In the event a subsequent agreement fails to contain a confidentiality provision with obligations at least as strict as this Agreement, the confidentiality provisions of this Agreement shall be deemed inserted therein which shall continue to bind the parties.

11. The Recipient shall defend, indemnify and hold harmless the DOE and the City of New York from any and all claims brought by third parties to the extent arising from, or in connection with, any negligent acts or omissions of the Recipient and the Recipient’s Personnel or any other representatives for whom the Recipient is legally responsible for, in connection with the performance of this Agreement.

12. No failure or delay (in whole or in part) on the part of either party hereof to exercise any right or remedy hereunder shall impair any such right or remedy, operate as a waiver thereof, or affect any right or remedy hereunder. All rights and remedies hereunder are cumulative and are not exclusive of any other rights or remedies provided hereunder or by law or equity. To the extent any provision of this Agreement is held to be unenforceable or invalid, the remainder of the Agreement shall be deemed to remain in full force and effect, and the Agreement shall be interpreted to give effect to the maximum extent permitted by law.

13. This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of New York. The parties hereto agree to submit to the jurisdiction of the Federal or State Courts of New York City, New York. This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof, it supersedes all prior agreements or understandings of the parties, oral or written, relating thereto and shall not be modified or amended except in writing signed by Recipient and DOE. Neither party shall assign or transfer, without the prior written consent of the other party, this Agreement. This Agreement shall inure to the benefit of the respective parties, their legal representatives, successors, and permitted assigns.

Board of Education of the City of New York

By: ________________________

Name: ________________________

Title: Director
Research & Policy Support Group (RPSG)

Recipient Acknowledgment

State of New York

County of

On this day of ______________, 201__, before me, the undersigned, a Notary Public in and for said State, personally appeared one ______________, personally known to me or proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence to be the individual whose name is subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he/she executed the same in his/her capacity, and that by his/her signature on the instrument, the entity or individual upon behalf of which the individual acted, executed the instrument.

______________________________

NOTARY PUBLIC

By: ________________________

Name: ________________________

Title: ________________________
Appendix H

Disciplinary Practices Survey

Disciplinary Practices Survey

Version 1.0
Study #07-12400
January 07, 2008

Russell J. Skiba
skiba@indiana.edu

Timothy L. Baker
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## Disciplinary Practices Survey

Before you begin the survey, please enter the information below. Thank you.

**School Number:**

**School Name:**

---

**Please fill in the circle that most closely represents your perspective, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).**

1. Suspension makes students less likely to misbehave in the future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s): 

2. The primary responsibility for teaching students how to behave appropriately in school belongs to parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

Comment(s): 

3. Suspensions and expulsions hurt students by removing them from academic learning time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s): 

4. Although it would be nice to get to know students on an individual basis my duties as an administrator simply don’t allow me the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>

Comment(s): 

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5. I feel it is critical to work with parents before suspending a student from school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>

Comment(s)

6. Zero tolerance makes a significant contribution to maintaining order at my school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

Comment(s)

7. Repeat offenders should receive more severe disciplinary consequences than first-time offenders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>

Comment(s)

8. In-school suspension is a viable alternative disciplinary practice to out-of-school suspension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>

Comment(s)

9. Teachers ought to be able to manage the majority of students’ misbehavior in their classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>

Comment(s)
10. Regardless of the severity of a student’s behavior, my objective as a principal is to keep all students in school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

11. Teachers at this school were for the most part adequately trained by their teacher-training program to handle problems of misbehavior and discipline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>

Comment(s)

12. The primary purpose of discipline is to teach appropriate skills to the disciplined student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

13. Suspension and expulsion do not really solve discipline problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

Comment(s)

14. Most if not all discipline problems come from inadequacies in the student’s home situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)
15. Students should receive recognition or reward for appropriate behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

16. Suspension is a necessary tool for maintaining school order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

17. In my experience students from certain racial/ethnic backgrounds choose to be less engaged in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

18. Schools must take some responsibility for teaching students how to get along and behave appropriately in school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

19. Violence is getting worse in my school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)
20. Students who are suspended or expelled are only getting more time on the streets that will enable them to get in more trouble.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

21. Students with disabilities account for a disproportionate amount of the time spent on discipline at this school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

22. Suspension and expulsion are unfair to students from certain racial/ethnic backgrounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

23. I believe out-of-school suspension is unnecessary if we provide a positive school climate and challenging instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

24. It is sad but true that, in order to meet increasingly high standards of academic accountability, some students will probably have to be removed from school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)
25. Disciplinary regulations for students with disabilities create a separate system of discipline that makes it more difficult to enforce discipline at this school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

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26. The majority of this school’s discipline problems could be solved if we could only remove the most persistent troublemakers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

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27. I need additional resources to increase my school’s capacity to reduce and prevent troublesome behaviors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

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28. Schools cannot afford to tolerate students who disrupt the learning environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

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29. Economically disadvantaged students require a different approach to discipline than other students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)
30. Suspension is used at this school only as a last resort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

31. Students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds have different emotional and behavioral needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

32. Certain students are not gaining anything from school and disrupt the learning environment for others. In such a case, the use of suspension and expulsion is justified to preserve the learning environment for students who wish to learn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

33. Disciplining disruptive students is time consuming and interferes with other important functions in the school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

34. At my school students from certain racial/ethnic backgrounds are the ones who are more likely to be disrespectful toward teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
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</table>

Comment(s)
35. Disciplinary consequences should be scaled in proportion to the severity of the problem behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)

36. Conversations with students referred to the office are important, and should be factored into most decisions about disciplinary consequences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

Comment(s)

37. Regardless of whether it is effective, suspension is virtually our only option in disciplining disruptive students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s)
38. Please rate the extent to which the following programs are used in maintaining discipline and promoting safety in your school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>1 Never used</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 Frequently used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a). Social skills and conflict resolution training for all students.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b). Individual behavior plans or programs for disruptive students.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c). Counseling or therapy.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d). Peer mediation</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e). In-class telephones for reporting behavior problems.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f). In-service training and workshops for teachers on classroom management</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g). Metal detectors and/or video technology</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h). Bullying prevention programs</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i). Security guard, resource officer, or police presence.</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(j). Anger management training</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comment(s) 

39. I believe that putting in place the types of prevention programs listed above can reduce the need for suspension and expulsion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

Comment(s)
40. There is really nothing a school can do if students are not willing to take responsibility for their behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
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Comment(s)

41. Prevention programs would be a useful addition at our school, but there is simply not enough time in the day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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Comment(s)

42. I have noticed that time spent in developing and implementing prevention programs pays off in terms of decreased disruption and disciplinary incidents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

Comment(s)
Demographic Information: Please fill in the circle which best represents your answer.

43. Race/Ethnicity (Choose one):
   - White
   - African-American
   - Hispanic/Latino
   - American Indian
   - Asian/Pacific Islander
   - Multi-racial
   - No Response

44. Gender
   - Male
   - Female

45. How many years have you been a principal?
   - 0-2
   - 3-5
   - 6-10
   - more than 10

46. How many years as principal of this school?
   - 0-2
   - 3-5
   - 6-10
   - more than 10

47. Highest degree completed (Choose one):
   - Bachelor’s
   - Master’s
   - Doctoral
   - Other (please specify)


Appendix I

Permission From Author to Use Existing Survey Instrument

PERMISSION: TO USE AN EXISTING SURVEY

October 22, 2015

Russell Skiba, Ph.D
Indiana University

Dear Dr. Skiba,

I am a doctoral student currently attending St. John Fisher College. My expected date of completion is August 2016. My dissertation is tentatively entitled Policy, Ethics and Empathy: Understanding variables that influence disciplinary approaches used by inner-city school leaders toward black male students.

My dissertation committee is being chaired by Dr. Justice Kelly and Dr. Byron Hargrove.

I would like your permission to use the Disciplinary Practices Survey created by you and Dr. Heather Edl in my research study, under the following conditions:

- I will use this survey only for my research study and will not sell or use it with any compensated or curriculum development activities.
- I will give full credit to you and Dr. Edl as the designers of the instrument
- I will send my research study and copies of reports, articles, and the like that make use of the survey data promptly to your attention.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by providing your signature below.

Sincerely,

SUSAN M. GREEN

Doctoral Candidate
St. John Fisher College
skibas00189@sjfc.edu
(917) 586-2081

I, Russell Skiba, Ph.D give permission to Susan M. Green, to use the Disciplinary Practices Survey as part of her research for her study:

Russell Skiba

Date: 10/27/15
Appendix J

Seven Sub-Scales of Disciplinary Practices Survey with Hypothesized Scale Items as Outlined by Author Dr. Russell Skiba

A. Attitude toward discipline in general

- I feel that getting to know students individually is an important part of discipline
- Although it would be nice to get to know students on an individual basis, especially those who need help, my duties as an administrator simply don’t allow me the time.
- I feel it is critical to work with parents before suspending a student from school.
- Regardless of the severity of a student’s behavior, my objective as a principal is to keep all students in school.
- The primary purpose of discipline is to teach appropriate skills to the disciplined student.
- Students should receive some recognition or reward for appropriate behavior
- It is sad but true that, in order to meet increasingly high standards of academic accountability, some students will probably have to be removed from school.
- The majority of this school’s discipline problems could be solved if we could only remove the most persistent troublemakers.
- Schools cannot afford to tolerate students who disrupt the learning environment

B. Awareness and enforcement of disciplinary procedures

- My school keeps detailed records regarding student suspension and expulsion
- Teachers at my school are aware of school disciplinary policies.
- I believe students at my school are aware of school disciplinary policies.
- Violence is getting worse in my school.
- Disciplinary policies are strictly enforced in my school.

C. Beliefs concerning suspension/expulsion and zero-tolerance

- Out of school suspension makes students less likely to misbehave in the future.
- Zero-tolerance makes a significant contribution to maintaining order at my school.
- I believe suspension and expulsion allow students time away from school that encourages them to think about their behavior.
- Suspension and expulsion do not really solve discipline problems.
- Out-of-school suspension is a necessary tool for maintaining school order.
- Zero-tolerance sends a clear message to disruptive students about appropriate behaviors in school.
• Students who are suspended or expelled are only getting more time on the streets that will enable them to get in more trouble.
• I believe suspension is unnecessary if we provide a positive school climate and challenging instruction.
• Out-of-school suspension is used at this school only as a last resort.
• Regardless of whether it is effective, suspension is virtually our only option in disciplining disruptive students.
• Certain students are not gaining anything from school and disrupt the learning environment for others. In such a case, the use of suspension and expulsion is justified to preserve the learning environment for students who wish to learn.
• Zero-tolerance increases the number of students being suspended or expelled.
• The primary responsibility for teaching children how to behave appropriately in school belongs to parents.
• Teachers ought to be able to manage the majority of students’ misbehavior in their classroom.
• Most if not all discipline problems come from inadequacies in the student’s home situation.
• Schools must take responsibility for teaching students how to get along and behave appropriately in school.

E. Attitude toward differential discipline of disadvantaged students or students with disabilities

• Teachers at this school were for the most part adequately trained by their teacher-training program to handle problems of misbehavior and discipline.
• I need additional resources to increase my school’s capacity to reduce and prevent troublesome behaviors.
• Disciplining disruptive students is time consuming and interferes with other important functions in the school.

F. Resources available for discipline

• Suspensions and expulsions hurt students by removing them from academic learning time.
• In-school suspension is a viable alternative disciplinary practice to suspension and expulsion.
• Please rate the extent to which the following programs are used in maintaining discipline and promoting safety in your school:
  (a). Social skills and conflict resolution training for all students
  (b). Individual behavior plans or programs for disruptive students
  (d). Peer mediation
  (e). In-class telephones for reporting behavior problems
  (f). In-service training and workshops for teachers on classroom management
  (g). Metal detector and/or video technology
  (h). Bullying prevention programs
  (i). Security guard, resource officer, or police presence
  (j). Instruction in social skill, problem-solving, or violence prevention
  (k). Anger management training
• I believe that putting in place prevention programs (e.g., bullying programs, conflict resolution, improved classroom management) can reduce the need for suspension and expulsion.
• Time spent on prevention programs or individualized behavior programming is wasted if students are not willing to take responsibility for their behavior.
• Prevention programs would be a useful addition at our school, but there is simply not enough time in the day.
• I have noticed that time spent in developing and implementing prevention programs pays off in terms of decreased disruption and disciplinary incidents.

G. Attitude towards and availability of prevention strategies as an alternative to exclusion

• Students with disabilities who engage in disruptive behavior need a different approach to discipline than students in general education.
• Repeat offenders should receive more severe disciplinary consequences than first-time offenders.
• A student’s academic record should be taken into account in assigning disciplinary consequences.
• Students with disabilities account for a disproportionate amount of the time spent on discipline at this school.
• Disciplinary regulations for students with disabilities create a separate system of discipline that makes it more difficult to enforce discipline at this school.
• Disadvantaged students require a different approach to discipline than other students.
• Students from different ethnic backgrounds have different emotional and behavioral needs.
• Suspension and expulsion are unfair to minority students.
• Disciplinary consequences should be scaled in proportion to the severity of the problem behavior.

Conversations with students referred to the office are important, and should be factored into most decisions about disciplinary consequences.
Appendix K

Permission From Author to Conduct Alternative Analysis for

Disciplinary Practices Survey

Skiba, Russell <skiba@indiana.edu> Jun 8

Susan,

Here is the organization of the original items and the Qualtrix version of the revised scale that appeared in Skiba et al., (2014). As I said, we did not use the scales in a descriptive sense, as you intend to do. The listing of the scales was more to give a sense, in the absence of presenting all of the items, of the types of items/issues the scale addressed. It seems a reasonable approach, however, to use the scales descriptively. It would not be inconsistent with the original scale to organize the items in the revised scale using the original categories.

To derive scale scores this way however, you would need to reverse score certain items. For example, two items on the first scale:

- I feel that getting to know students individually is an important part of discipline
- Although it would be nice to get to know students on an individual basis, especially those who need help, my duties as an administrator simply don’t allow me the time.

If you were adding items together to get a scaled score, one of these items would need to be reverse scaled, since if added together as is, they might cancel each other out. The problem, however, is that there are other items that are neutral:

- My school keeps detailed records regarding student suspension and expulsion

These items could be endorsed by someone of either perspective. So it would be hard to know how to know what to do about reverse scaling (or not) for such items.

For this reason, our analyses did not use the descriptive scales, but a cluster analysis approach, using the scale to identify the perspectives of different groups of principals. The other way you might come up with empirical scales would be to conduct a factor analysis, to identify how the items go together empirically, and how they would be weighted—positive, negative, or neutral. I don’t see any of these methods, however you choose to go, as violating the integrity of the scale, as we did not use it for descriptive purposes. As long as you keep the items on whichever version you choose to use, you’re welcome to perform whatever analysis on the scale makes sense to you. I hope this helps.

Best,
Russ

Russell J. Skiba, Ph.D.
Professor, Counseling & Educational Psychology
Appendix L

New York City Department of Education IRB Approval Letter

[The letter body follows as text]

Dear Ms. Green:

I am happy to inform you that the New York City Department of Education Institutional Review Board (NYCDOE IRB) has approved your research proposal, "Exploring the Disciplinary Attitudes and Practices of New York City Title I Public Elementary School Principals Towards Students Living in Poverty and the Impact on Black Males." The NYCDOE IRB has assigned your study the file number of 1444. Please make certain that all correspondence regarding this project reference this number. The IRB has determined that the study poses minimal risk to participants. The approval is for a period of one year:

Approval Date: September 28, 2016
Expiration Date: September 27, 2017

Responsibilities of Principal Investigators: Please find below a list of responsibilities of Principal Investigators who have DOE IRB approved to conduct research in New York City public schools.

1. Approval by this office does not guarantee access to any particular school, individual or data. You are responsible for making appropriate contacts and getting the required permissions and consents before including the study.

2. When requesting permission to conduct research, submit a letter to the school principal summarizing your research design and methodology along with this IRB Approval letter. Each principal agreeing to participate must sign the enclosed Approval to Conduct Research in School/District form. A completed and signed form for every school included in your research must be emailed to IRB@schools.nyc.gov. Principals may also ask you to show them the receipt issued by the NYC Department of Education at the time of your fingerprinting.

3. You are responsible for ensuring that all researchers on your team conducting research in NYC public schools are fingerprinted by the NYC Department of Education. Please note: This rule applies to all research in schools conducted with students and/or staff. See the attached fingerprinting materials. For additional information click here. Fingerprinting staff will ask you for your identification and social security number and for your DOE IRB approved letter. You must be fingerprinted during the school year in which the letter is issued. Researchers who join the study team after the inception of the research must also be fingerprinted. Please provide a list of their names and social security numbers to the NYC Department of Education Research and Policy Support Group for checking their eligibility and security clearance. The cost of fingerprinting is $133. A copy of the fingerprinting receipt must be emailed to IRB@schools.nyc.gov.
You are responsible for ensuring that the research is conducted in accordance with your research proposal as approved by the DOE IRB and for the actions of all co-investigators and research staff involved with the research.

You are responsible for informing all participants (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents, and students) that their participation is strictly voluntary and that there are no consequences for non-participation or withdrawal at any time during the study.

Researchers must use the consent forms approved by the DOE IRB, provide all research subjects with copies of their signed forms, maintain signed forms in a secure place for a period of at least three years after study completion, and destroy the forms in accordance with the data disposal plan approved by the IRB.

Mandatory Reporting to the IRB: The principal investigator must report to the Research and Policy Support Group, within five business days, any serious problem, adverse effect, or outcome that occurs with frequency or degree of severity greater than had anticipated. In addition, the principal investigator must report any event or series of events that prompt the temporary or permanent suspension of a research project involving human subjects or any deviations from the approved protocol.

Amendments/Modifications: All amendments/modifications of protocols involving human subjects must have prior IRB approval, except those involving the prevention of immediate harm to a subject, which must be reported within 24 hours to the NYC Department of Education IRB.

Continuation of your research: It is your responsibility to insure that an application for continuing review approval is submitted six weeks before the expiration date noted above. If you do not receive approval before the expiration date, all study activities must stop until you receive a new approval letter.

Research findings: You are required to report findings to the IRB by the end date noted for the study. Follow-up reports may also be requested for multi-year studies. Your report should not include identification of the respondent, student, or staff member. Please send an electronic copy of the final report to: info@nycdoe.gov.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Mary Mattia at 212-374-5913.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Mary Mattia, PhD
Director, Institutional Review Board
Appendix M

Invitation to Elementary School Principals from Researcher to Participate in Study

Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear New York City Principal Elementary School Principal,

I write to inform you about a study that is being conducted and for which you may be eligible to participate. The name of the study is “Exploring the Disciplinary Attitudes and Practices of New York City Public Elementary School Principals Towards Students Living in Poverty and the Impact on Black Males”.

The study is being conducted as part of my Doctoral research involving New York City public elementary school principals, who lead schools where at least 60% of their student body is eligible for free or reduced lunch and where at least 40% of your student population is identified as African-American or Black, non-Latino.

The Institutional Review Board at St. John Fisher College (where my Executive Leadership in Social Justice studies are being conducted), and the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) has approved this study. You were selected because you meet the criteria for prospective principals based on a database provided by NYCDOE. The criteria for this study are the following:

1) At the time of the survey, you must be a New York City Department of Education Public Elementary School Principal.

2) Your school must serve students in any grades inclusive of pre-kindergarten through kindergarten grade 5.

3) You must be leading a school where at least 60% of your student body is eligible for free or reduced lunch.

4) You must be leading a school where at least 40% of your student body is identified as African-American or Black, non-Latino, which is inclusive of Black males (principals of all girls schools are not eligible to participate).

The study seeks to solicit the voices specifically of elementary school principals working within impoverished communities, to understand the philosophies that influence their disciplinary approaches, and how those philosophies impact Black, non-Latino males. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please review the attached recruitment flyer. You can also contact me at smg00189@sjfc.edu or sgreen8@schools.nyc.gov.

It is important to know that this letter does not mandate you to participate in this study. It is completely your decision. Your participation is voluntary. There will not be any adverse effect should you decide not to participate in this study. Furthermore, you do not have to respond if you are not interested in participating this study. If you decide to participate, please call the above phone number or email me at smg00189@sjfc.edu or sgreen8@schools.nyc.gov. You will then be sent a letter confirming your participation, giving you the date, place and time of the study.
Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Green
Doctoral Candidate
St. John Fisher College
Executive Leadership in Social Justice Program
Appendix N

Informed Consent Form for Principals to Participate in Study and be Audio Recorded

St. John Fisher College
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of study: Exploring the Disciplinary Attitudes and Practices of New York City Public Elementary School Principals Towards Students Living in Poverty and the Impact on Black Males

Name(s) of researcher(s): Susan M. Green

Faculty Supervisors:
Dissertation Chairperson Dr. Janice Kelly
Committee member Dr. Byron Hargrove

Purpose of study: Kindergarten through grade 12 suspension rates is highest in the most impoverished communities within NYC, with Black males representing the uppermost subgroup of suspended students. The data however does not indicate the suspension proportions specifically at the elementary school level. This study seeks to solicit the voices of NYC public elementary school principals, whose student body is comprised of at least 50% Black students, and where at least 60% of their student body is eligible for free or reduced lunch. The goal is to gain insight on their disciplinary attitudes and practices toward their students in general, and the impact on their Black male population specifically.

Place of study: New York City Department of Education

Length of Participation: Approximately 60 minutes for interviews; 20 minutes to complete the survey

Risks and benefits: There are no physical or psychological risks to participating in this study. Public elementary school principals will contribute to the field of study by sharing their disciplinary philosophies and the impact on their student bodies holistically, with highlighted concentration on their Black male students. The benefit to this is that reflecting on their philosophies and practices could lead to improving approaches in managing student behavior in the future.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy: Neither names or any other identifying information will be presented in the written analysis of the for the group interviews. Written transcriptions will be stored in a locked cabinet for at least three years after the successful defense of the dissertation and then shredded. The electronic format of
interview sessions will be stored on an external hard drive and locked in the same cabinet with the transcripts in addition to the audio files.

**Your rights:** As a research participant, you have the right to:
1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study (to receive results from the study, contact the primary researcher, Susan M. Green at smg00189@sjfc.edu.

**CONSENT TO AUDIO RECORDING & TRANSCRIPTION**
This study involves the audio or video recording of your interview with the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio or audio recording or the transcript. Only the research team will be able to listen to and/or view the recordings. The tapes will be transcribed by the researcher and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

By signing this form, I am allowing the researcher to **audio** me as part of this research. I also understand that this consent for recording is effective until the following date: June 30, 2017. On or before that date, the tapes will be destroyed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Print name (Participant)</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>_______________________</td>
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**Consent to Participate in Study**
I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

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<tr>
<th>Print name (Participant)</th>
<th>Signature</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>_______________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Print name (Investigator)</th>
<th>Signature</th>
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<tr>
<td>_______________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact the Office of Academic Affairs at (585) 385-8034 or the Health & Wellness Center at (585) 385-8280 for appropriate referrals. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns
regarding confidentiality, please call Jill Rathbun (585) 385-8012. She will direct your call to a member of the IRB at St. John Fisher College.
Appendix O

New York City Department of Education Approval to Conduct Research in Schools

Principal Signature Page

APPRAVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

To the Principal:

The research study described in the Proposal Submission Form has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the New York City Department of Education. (See the signed Approval Letter). This researcher is now seeking principals willing to cooperate in the study. Please sign below if you agree to have your school participate in this study.

In order to begin the study, the researcher must return this form to IRB@schools.nyc.gov – signed by the principal of each school that will be participating in the study to the IRB, Research and Policy Support Group (RPSG) before data collection begins.

NOTE:

Researchers who need to be in schools must have fingerprints on file at the Department of Education prior to field work.

Where data collection includes information from DOE administrative records, a data request must be submitted to RPSGresearch@schools.nyc.gov. Researchers may not request school or individual student records from school personnel.

Researcher/Principal Investigator: Susan M. Green

Title of Study: Exploring the Disciplinary Attitudes and Practices of New York City Public Elementary School Principals Towards Students Living in Poverty and the Impact on Black Males

Research Will Involve:

Cooperating School | School ATS Code (DBN district-boro-school number) | Grade(s) | Number of Classes | Number of Staff/Students | Start Date of Data Collection

_______________________________________________________________________________________

Date School ______________________________________________________________________________

Principal’s Signature

PLEASE DUPLICATE AS NECESSARY

Rev 2012
Appendix P

General Interview Questions for Qualitative Portion of Study

Do you feel that getting to know your students, particularly your Black males, is an important part of discipline? Please explain.

How would you define the term “disadvantaged” relative to the context of poverty?

Generally speaking, how would you describe the impact of poverty within your school community? Are there any direct associations you can make between poverty and students' academic or social behaviors? In these cases, how do you manage the behaviors of the students? What impact would you say your tactics have had? Can you provide 1-2 examples?

How do you describe challenging behavior?

What impact do you believe your leadership philosophies and practices have had on the ways in which your teachers (i.e. security) respond to the behaviors of your Black male students?

How effective have suspensions been in improving behaviors of your Black male student population? Please describe.

If you had to rank the most frequently demonstrated disruptive behavior in general, what would it be?

Do you find that the types of behaviors or frequency of behaviors differ amongst your varied populations? If so, please explain. In what ways?

What are some of the most common disruptive behaviors demonstrated by your Black male population?

What are your beliefs on the best methods for managing student behaviors, specifically that of your Black males?

Do you differentiate disciplinary practices?

Have you found that your disciplinary practices differ between your girls versus male students?
Do you believe that Black male students with disabilities who engage in disruptive behavior require a different approach to discipline compared to Black students in general education?

Are there any differences in how you manage the disruptive behaviors of your Black males who are classified with learning or emotional disabilities vs. those who are not?

What proportion of your Black male students with disabilities account for the amount of the time spent on discipline at this school?

Do you have any Black male students with Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs)?

Have you always had the same practices as a managing student behavior or have they changed in your tenure as principal?

What is the youngest student you have suspended in your school? Describe an incident.

The city is seeking to eliminate suspensions in Grades K-2. What are your thoughts about that? How does the Chancellor’s Regulation on Behavioral Expectations align with and influence your disciplinary practices as they relate to your Black male population?
Appendix Q

Criteria for Designating Persistently Dangerous Schools

Criteria for Designating Persistently Dangerous Schools

Designation of persistently dangerous schools is based on Violent and Disruptive Incident data. The Department has established a School Violence Index (SVI) to identify persistently dangerous schools.

Schools may be designated as persistently dangerous if they meet the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IF for two consecutive school years, a school has EITHER:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) An SVI of 1.5 or greater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) An SVI of 0.5 or greater AND a total of 60 or more violent incidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEN the school may be designated as persistently dangerous.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The School Violence Index (SVI)

The SVI is a ratio of violent incidents to enrollment in a school and is determined by the number of incidents, the seriousness of the incidents, and the school’s enrollment. The table below provides the weights for each type of incident that carries a weight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident Category</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(All of these Types of Incidents are Considered to be Violent Incidents)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forceable Sex Offenses</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Sex Offenses</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault with Serious Physical Injury</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidnapping</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault with Physical Injury</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reckless Endangerment</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other Incident Categories Involving the Use of a Weapon</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons Possession</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To calculate the SVI for each school, the incident counts for each type of incident are multiplied by the weight for that type of incident and those products are added together to obtain an overall weighted incident total. This total is then divided by the enrollment, which results in the SVI score. Please see the SVI worksheet for an example of how the SVI is calculated.

Violent Incidents

Violent incidents are those that carry a weight greater than zero. (All of the types of incidents listed in the table above are considered to be violent incidents.)
Appendix R

New York State Education Department 2016-17 list of Persistently Dangerous Schools
Designation Based on Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
2016-17 Persistently Dangerous Schools Designation
Based on Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PS 111 Jacob Blackwell</td>
<td>NYC CSD 30 Queens</td>
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<td>PS 207</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 17 Enrico Fermi</td>
<td>Rochester CSD</td>
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