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The Correlation of Office Disciplinary Referral Issuance and Cultural Competence: An Exploratory, Sequential, Mixed Method Study

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Abstract

This purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship existed between the number of office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) urban middle school teachers write and a teacher's level of cultural competence. The hypothesis was that teachers who report a lower number of ODRs will have a higher level of cultural competence. An exploratory, sequential, mixed-methods study was conducted to qualitatively analyze responses from a sample of urban middle school teachers to quantitatively score them. The Instructor Cultural Competency Questionnaire was used to capture participant responses to six scenarios based on cultural issues. The Bennett Model of Cultural Competence was used to score the responses. Qualitative analysis led to six themes, across 37 participants. Quantitative analysis was followed by using a Pearson correlation coefficient and scatter plot to compare the cultural competency score and the number of ODRs participants reported. The result of these tests was that there was no significant relationship between the number of ODRs participants reported and their cultural competency score, disproving the hypothesis. Some of the recommendations include initiating a longitudinal qualitative study on the actual reasons urban middle school students are referred. This study could also include the examination of the perceptions of teachers when it comes to appropriate behavior management, especially in diverse classrooms. Other recommendations include the implementation of school wide information system to collect ODR data and analyze it to prescribe the most appropriate behavioral interventions

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The Correlation of Office Disciplinary Referral Issuance and Cultural Competence:

An Exploratory, Sequential, Mixed Method Study

By

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Committee Member

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Dedication

"I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13

Despite the arduous, time-consuming, and frustrating work, this study was a labor of love, equal to love that I have for those who have supported me throughout this journey. While there are a host of friends, family, and colleagues to whom I, in sprit, dedicate this work, I first dedicate this dissertation to my maternal and paternal grandmothers, Rosetta Sanders-Frazier and Ophelia King, respectively. These women are the matriarchs of my family and whom I pray to emulate when I *grow up*. These women each gave life to my parents, Nellie (King) Whitaker and Christopher King, to whom this work is also dedicated. Both, in their own way, have motivated, pushed, inspired, and supported me in this journey, and in EVERY part of my life in which the outcome was a success. Even in my darkest days, I could always depend on my parents to be the beacon of light to impart wisdom, make me laugh, and remind me that in every situation "I got this!" With all my heart, I dedicate this work to the two loves of my life, Malcom and Quincy, Jr. These two sons of mine were patient, understanding, and encouraging through this process. They know that this work is proof that there is no stopping someone who is determined, and it is proof of the continued legacy of dedication that was started, even before my grandmothers. Finally, to the members of the Might Fine Cohort Nine, specifically Team Gear Up; my heart will never forget the struggle together and supporting each other. I could not conclude this dedication without acknowledgment of that.

Biographical Sketch

Djinga King-St. Louis, is a 20-year veteran, serving in public education in her local district, of which she is a product. She is currently a middle school Assistant Principal at John Walton Spencer School No. 16. Since childhood, she knew that she wanted to be an educator. After attending SUNY Buffalo State College from 1992 to 1996, she graduated with a Bachelor of Sciences degree in English Secondary Education in 1996. In 2005 she attended St. John Fisher College and graduated with a Master of Sciences degree in Educational Administration in 2007. After receiving her degree, she was immediately offered a position as a high school assistant principal in her district, which, she enjoyed until 2011, when she was promoted to Director of African & African American Studies in the same district. In 2016, Ms. King-St. Louis accepted a positon as a middle school Assistant Principal. However, she aspires to serve as a building principal in the future. Ms. King-St. Louis is the mother of two sons, Malcolm King and Quincy St. Louis, Jr., both of whom she is very proud, and for whom all her work and dedication to education is for.

Ms. King-St. Louis came to St. John Fisher College in the fall of 2015 and began her doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Ms. King-St. Louis pursued her research in the correlation of office disciplinary referral issuance and cultural competence under the direction of Dr. Jeannine Dingus-Eason and Dr. Jeannette Silvers. and received the Ed.D. Degree in spring 2017.

Abstract

This purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship existed between the number of office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) urban middle school teachers write and a teacher's level of cultural competence. The hypothesis was that teachers who report a lower number of ODRs will have a higher level of cultural competence. An exploratory, sequential, mixed-methods study was conducted to qualitatively analyze responses from a sample of urban middle school teachers to quantitatively score them. The Instructor Cultural Competency Questionnaire was used to capture participant responses to six scenarios based on cultural issues. The Bennett Model of Cultural Competence was used to score the responses. Qualitative analysis led to six themes, across 37 participants. Quantitative analysis was followed by using a Pearson correlation coefficient and scatter plot to compare the cultural competency score and the number of ODRs participants reported. The result of these tests was that there was no significant relationship between the number of ODRs participants reported and their cultural competency score, disproving the hypothesis.

Some of the recommendations include initiating a longitudinal qualitative study on the actual reasons urban middle school students are referred. This study could also include the examination of the perceptions of teachers when it comes to appropriate behavior management, especially in diverse classrooms. Other recommendations include the implementation of school wide information system to collect ODR data and analyze it to prescribe the most appropriate behavioral interventions.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

Suspension, as a form of punishment, is not new to school discipline policies. A 2006 study from the U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection reported that 3.25 million students, or 7% of school age population, were suspended from school at least once in the 2002-2003 school year for offenses including both objective (fighting, drug possession, and sale of drugs) and subjective offenses (disobedience, disrespect, and defiance of authority) (Losen, 2011; Skiba, 2000; Skiba, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Skiba, Peterson & Williams, 1997). More specifically, Black students are suspended more frequently than any other racial group (Darensbourg, Perez & Blake, 2010; Kinsler, 2011; Losen, 2013; Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2002; Nardo & Peterson, 2002; Wallace Jr. et al., 2002; Wallace & Bachman, 2008).

Studies have determined that harsh and punitive consequences to behavior do not foster a school climate that prevents school violence, yet school discipline polices use expulsion and out of school suspension as an attempt to promote a safe and orderly atmosphere and reduce the incidents of both major and minor infractions (Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2014). Mendez and Knoff (2003) reported that 25% of students in one Florida school district, who received an out of school suspension, committed more than five offenses. In the same study, student survey results indicated that the suspensions were not helpful and that they would probably offend again (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba & Peterson 1999).

Suspension in elementary, middle, and, high schools does not occur instantly and is often the result of office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) initiated by classroom teachers (Predy, McIntosh & Frank, 2014; Skiba, Michael et al., 2002). ODRs are standardized documents used to track incidents that need administrative attention. This initial documentation can ultimately determine the fate of the referred student and information recorded may include, but not limited to, the date, time, location, specific type of behavior, others involved and administrative action(s) taken (Predy et al.,, 2014). The reasons for ODRs range from subjective offenses such as disrespect and defiance to objective offenses such as smoking, drug or alcohol possession, or, assault (Skiba et al.,, 2011). The offenses vary across all school levels, with elementary schools maintaining the most consequences resulting from offenses of defiance, fighting and disrespect. In the middle school truancy, smoking and defiance lead the most common reasons for consequence (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Predy et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2011).

While a teacher may believe that a referral is needed for corrective action for student behavior, there is overwhelming research that indicates that Black students are receiving ODRs for subjective reasons at a much higher rate than any other racial or ethnic group (Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013; O'Brennan, Phillip, & Leaf, 2010; Skiba et al., 2002; Tobin, Hawken, & Frank 2012). There is scant empirical research that indicates who is doing the referring and, if the referring teacher is aware of his or her response to student behavior may be a result of racial bias. For example, Sue (1998) performed a cultural match study to examine the hypothesis that people of the same ethic background work more effectively together, than people from different ethnic backgrounds. Sue's (1998) research concluded that the

behavioral treatment outcomes for both Black and White students were not related to ethnic mismatch, but were the result of other factors unrelated to race.

While Sue's (1998) research may refute the hypothesis that race/ethnicity plays a role in the treatment or response to the actions of students from different cultural backgrounds, Sheet's (1996) research indicated that White teachers and White students were unconscious of the racial disparity in discipline, even though the students of color felt the disparity deliberately, especially when they were referred to administration for behavior they did not feel was justifiable. Unfortunately, for many Black students, unjustifiable referrals often lead to suspensions (Skiba et al., 2002).

When examining root causes of an ODR, it is important to know at what level they are occurring the most (Monroe, 2009). Hollywood movies like *Lean on Me* (1989) and *Sister Act II* (1993) portray the most violent and disruptive behavior occurring at the high school level. When middle school students contribute to the largest percentage of students suspended (Hilberth & Slate, 2013; Mendez & Knoff, 2003, Monroe, 2009; Skiba et al., 2002). Mendez and Knoff (2003) also determined that at this stage of development, children are challenged with coping with peer pressure while simultaneously forming their identity. Therefore, decision making skills, regarding behavior, have not matured. Similarly, Hilberth and Slate (2014) contend that middle school students between the ages of 12 and 14 are at the developmental age when they experience conflicting values and build confidence to challenge authority, which could be viewed as disrespect and defiance and contribute to higher numbers of students referred to the office. This type of behavior found in, "youth culture" (Hollie, 2012, p. 35) may

send a conflicting message to teachers attempting to manage behavior and meet students' needs.

In a Monroe and Obidah (2004) study, the phrase "cultural synchronization" (p. 258) was used to demonstrate the act of how a teacher's understanding of culture play a role in the teacher's response student behavior that may typically be coined as disruptive. The study provides an example of how media stereotypes the behavior of Black youth culture as loud and boisterous, often gesturing with the eyes or hands. If one is not of Black culture or does not know anything about Black culture, these gestures may be interpreted as intimidating (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Kunjufu, 2002), therefore leading to a reaction (quick and often temporary solution) to behavior, rather than a response (strategic and thoughtful) (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). Therefore, this study will examine teachers' cultural competence, and attempts to determine a relationship between cultural competence and the number of ODRs teachers write.

Problem Statement

The historic 1954 ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education*, which overturned the 1865 *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling which declared "separate but equal" was unconstitutional (United States Courts.gov). The ruling was intended to open the doors for all children, especially Black children, to more equitable access to education. But, for the lack of follow through at the federal level, slow and incremental movement at the state level, and tumultuous, and often violent interference at the local level, access to equitable education for Blacks was stymied, and today are faced with challenges that make equal access to educational opportunities difficult to access (West-Olantunji, 2008). To address the inequalities in education, the United States Department of Education (USDE) created

programs to provide access to quality education for all students. In 2000, No Child Left

Behind (NCLB) was implemented to help K-12 schools improve the quality of education.

NCLB's major focus was on testing and accountability. By 2014, many states reported an

increase of reading and math proficiency under NCLB funded programs (New America

Foundation, 2014). In 2009, under President Barack Obama, states competed for Race to

the Top funds to implement innovative ideas to improve schools in the most

impoverished areas. By 2013, American's high school graduation rate had increased

80%, the highest on record, because of Race to the Top funds (U.S. Department of

Education, 2014). While NCLB and Race to the Top initiatives were designed to meet the

needs of every student in the United States, there is still an area in the educational system

in critical need of attention.

　　　High numbers of students, absent from school because of a suspension, are

missing out on the benefit of government-initiated programs. Research has demonstrated

that students of color, specifically, are missing out due suspensions at a higher rate than

White students, and has been consistently the way it has been for many years

(Darensbourg et al., 2010; Kinsler, 2011; Losen, 2013; Skiba et al., 2002; Wallace Jr. et

al., 2008). No one will argue that the over suspension of students is a problem. The

conundrum is what are educators are doing about it.

　　　Research on the disproportionate suspension of specific students from diverse

cultural backgrounds suggests mitigating the problem with the implementation of cultural

competence in school discipline polices and as a part of teacher professional

development, which may influence the way behavior is viewed ((He, 2013; McAllister,

2012; Monroe, 2009; Skiba & Losen, 2011; Skiba et al., 1997). Cultural competence can be defined as:

>Creating and maintaining a classroom environment that works for all students, regardless of their social-cultural diversity (e.g., gender, race, religion, nationality, age, disability, or any other group membership); creating a class climate in which the potential advantages of diversity is maximized and the potential disadvantages are minimized; dealing effectively with the misunderstandings and conflicts that can arise in a diverse classroom that interfere with the learning process.
>
>(Roberson, Kulik & Pepper, 2002 p. 43)

Roberson, et al., (2002) assert that it is the responsibility of teachers to reflect on their pedagogical approaches that positively or negatively impact students and to adjust so that all student needs are met. Cultural competence may also redefine how teachers view behavior to assess whether to initiate the ODR that could ultimately lead to suspension. This study will attempt to understand if cultural competence is connected to the number of ODRs written by teachers. The data collected may be helpful in providing guidance on future discipline polices that will be more equitable for all students.

Disproportionate Initiation of Office Disciplinary Referrals

An ODR is usually written by a non-administrative professional, such as a teacher, and provides documentation of students which requires administrative attention (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Irving et al., 2006; Predy et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 1997). Bradshaw et al., (2010) argue that the purpose of an ODR monitors student discipline and monitors the impact of behavioral interventions. While all students have the propensity to receive an ODR for any offense, Black students receive them more frequently than any

other racial group. Bradshaw et al. (2010) hypothesized that the reason for this disparity

is because of a cultural disparity or a mismatch in values between a teacher and student.

For example, a student who is not of the White culture may believe his or her behavior is

appropriate, while a teacher who is of the White culture may misinterpret the same

behavior as inappropriate, therefore causing a cultural mismatch; a possible conflict that

may result in an ODR (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

Table 1.1 demonstrates the demographic of teachers in public education in

America. The figure show that publication is largely staffed with White, female teachers.

Table 1.1

Selected teacher characteristic	Number of teachers (in thousands)													
	1987-88		1990-91		1993-94		1999-2000		2003-04		2007-08		2011-12	
1	2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
Public schools														
Total	2,323	(13.2)	2,559	(20.7)	2,561	(20.8)	3,002	(19.4)	3,251	(29.2)	3,405	(44.0)	3,385	(41.4)
Sex														
Male	685	(6.8)	719	(11.2)	694	(11.8)	754	(10.7)	813	(13.3)	821	(20.4)	802	(22.2)
Female	1,638	(10.1)	1,840	(14.7)	1,867	(16.2)	2,248	(16.0)	2,438	(23.5)	2,584	(34.6)	2,584	(30.5)
Race/ethnicity														
White[1]	2,018	(12.6)	2,214	(20.0)	2,217	(19.5)	2,532	(17.2)	2,702	(30.1)	2,829	(38.7)	2,773	(30.5)
Black[1]	191	(4.6)	212	(6.4)	188	(5.4)	228	(6.0)	257	(11.0)	239	(15.8)	231	(12.1)
Hispanic[1]	69	(2.6)	87	(4.5)	109	(6.2)	169	(6.4)	202	(11.3)	240	(16.6)	264	(13.4)
Asian[1,2]	21	(1.1)	27	(1.7)	28	(1.2)	48	(2.7)	42	(2.5)	42	(7.2)	61	(7.3)
Pacific Islander	—	(†)	—	(†)	—	(†)	—	(†)	6	(0.8)	6	(1.3)	5	(1.4)
American Indian/ Alaska Native[1]	24	(1.3)	20	(1.4)	20	(1.4)	26	(1.9)	17	(1.2)	17	(1.9)	17	(2.9)
Two or more races	—	(†)	—	(†)	—	(†)	—	(†)	24	(2.2)	31	(2.9)	35	(3.7)

Reprinted from the National Center for Education Statistics, 2015

Per the figure, since 1987, the average number of White teachers in the United

States has been 2,298, 400 or about 81%. The average total of public school teachers in

the United States has been 3,189,700. It is understandable why Bradshaw et al. (2010)

hypothesize that because White teachers out number any other teacher based on race,

then White teachers must initiate ODRs more frequently to Black students due to a

possible misunderstanding of behavior that may be cultural. However, Townsend (2002)

clarifies that the race of a teacher may not always associate with how he or she perceives the behavior or academic aptitude of Black students. Townsend (2002), along with other researchers in the field of cultural competence, determined that an environment and teacher's practices, situated in cultural competence, more often contribute to the success of historically underserved students (Gay, 2000; Hollie, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994; West et al., 2008) and reduce the amount of ODRs written by that culturally informed teacher.

Disproportionate Suspension in America

To provide a context as to why this study is needed, it is necessary to understand the impact of the execution of the ODR and its resulting in the disproportion of suspension of students that mainly impacts Black students. The earliest documentation of exclusionary practice of suspension was captured in a report published by the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) (1972). CDF began collecting data on Black students in secondary schools who had been suspended out of school in 1970-1971 school year. The germinal study included examining 2,862 school districts, in nine states, that serviced 24,188,681. CDF concluded that one out of every six Black students were kept out of school, for a myriad of reasons, and from anywhere from one to 45 days (Children's Defense Fund, 1975).

Figure 1.2 demonstrates trends in suspensions of specific racial groups over the last 40 years. Losen and Martinez (2013) revisited the CDF research to demonstrate the increase in suspension in the United States since the 1972 publication, specifically that the rate of suspension of Black students sharply and quickly increased from 1972 to 2010, from 11/2% of the population suspended to 24.3% of the population suspended.

During the same time frame, the suspension of White students did not have a significant change, as was the case with reported Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American students.
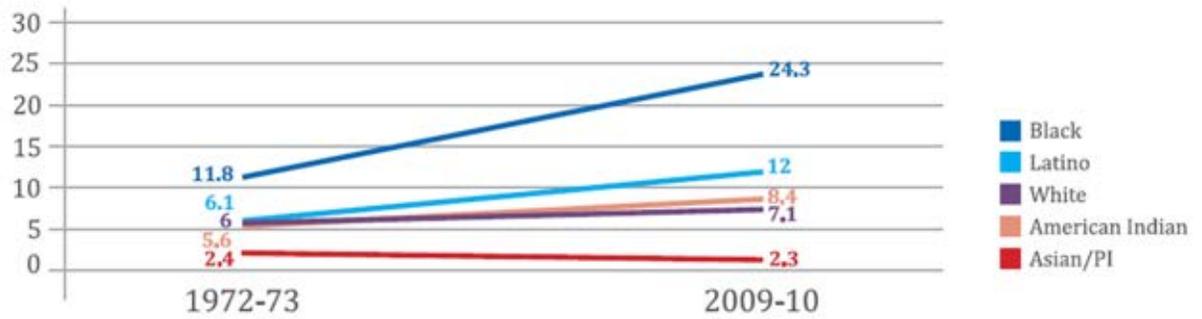
Figure 1.2. Secondary School Suspension (by race): Then and Now. Reprinted from: Out of school and off track: The overuse of suspensions in American Middle and High Schools, Civil Rights Project (Losen &Martinez, 2003).

Numerous studies have been conducted that continue to demonstrate Black students are suspended at a higher rate than any other student racial population from school (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Kinsler, 2011; Losen, 2013; Skiba et al., 2002; Wallace Jr., Goodkind, Wallace & Bachman, 2008). The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reported that in 2006, about 15% of Black students were suspended, compared with 8% of American Indian/Alaska Native students, 7% of Hispanic students, 5% of White students, and 3%of Asian/Pacific Islanders students (www.nces.ed.gov). The 2012 Schott Report also reported that in 2009-10 school year 17% Black students were suspended compared to 7% Latino and 5% White (www.schottfondation.org).

Considering recent and growing concerns about perceived biases against students of color and the disproportionate number of disciplinary actions taken against them, the focus of this study is timely. Students of color, specifically Black students receive

suspensions at a higher rate than White students (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Kinsler, 2011; Losen, 2013; Skiba, Michael, et al., 2002; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008). This cited research has been examined from various angles. What has not been examined is the initiating stage of a suspension, the production of the ODR.

Initiation of the ODR

Historically, school districts are left alone to arbitrarily create and evaluate their discipline policies (Losen & Gillespie 2012). Current school discipline policies embed the idea of zero tolerance that punish not only major, objective offenses, but also minor, subjective offenses and the punishment is usually out-of-school suspension or expulsion (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). This is often the case with Black students, who contribute to the largest percentage of students suspended in the United States and for whom ODRs are written for the most frequently (Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Kinsler, 2010; Losen & Skiba, 2011; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 1997; Skiba et al., 2003). It is necessary to briefly examine zero tolerance and its impact on students, as it is this lens from which teachers appraise a situation and believe an ORD is necessary for subjective reasons, which is the case for Black students more than White students (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Lewis et al., (2010); Losen & Skiba, 2011; Skiba 2000; Skiba & Horner, 2011; Skiba, et al., 2002).

Zero tolerance policies, arose out of a United States federal drug policy in the 1980's as a method to send a strong message of severe consequences for the sale and/or purchase of drugs in the United States (Skiba, 2000.) In a report provided by Losen and Skiba (2010) fighting and physical aggression were common reasons for out-of-school suspension during the years 2005-2009. However, in that same year, much of the

suspension for Black students were for less disruptive offenses, such as defiance, disrespect or general disruption. Noguera (1995) surmised that schools that utilize a zero-tolerance approach to discipline do so for more of a symbolic stance on discipline rather than its effectiveness and that it negatively impacts Black students. Lewis et al. (2010) add that Black students are often targeted for exclusionary discipline and not for violent acts. Instead of discipline policies, steeped in zero tolerance, curbing disruptive and violent acts, the instances of suspensions have increased (Civil Rights Project, 1999). In a 1-year study in a Florida School district found that 25% of students who received an out-of-school suspension, 75% had already committed between one and five offenses and less than 1% committed only one offense (Mcfadden, Marsh, Price & Hwang, 1992). Students suspended by way of zero tolerance polices alienate students who need help the most and could exacerbate the cycle of academic failure that inevitably follow them (Gage, Sugai, Lunde, & DeLoreto, 2013).

A report published by the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) concurs with existing research that says students who are suspended out of school lose instructional time and diminish a student's ability to maintain academic achievement, therefor leading to social problems including school avoidance and increased academic problems (United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2015). Losen and Skiba (2010) add that the use of suspension and expulsion could be evidence-based, if the results of its use were seen in higher academic out comes and a reduction in disruptive of violent behavior. On the contrary, that is not the case. Losen and Skiba (2010) go on to report that suspensions reinforce negative behavior. This trend of suspension is seen most often when students are suspended in the sixth grade and are more likely to receive ODRs by

the eighth grade (Hilberth & Slate, 2012; Monroe, 2009; Skiba et al., 2002). While zero

tolerance policies were intended to control behavior and reduce incidents of violence, the

unintended impact is that these types of polices drastically reduce learning time for

students and increase opportunities for suspended students to become involved in deviant

behavior (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2010), and send Black students closer to

entering the school-to-prison pipeline (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2010; Skiba

et al., 2003).

ODRs in the Middle School

To understand the phenomenon of the over-suspension of Black students,

occurring largely at the middle school level, data from the Elementary and Secondary

Education Civil Right Compliance Survey from the U.S. Department of Education Office

of Civil Rights (CRDC) was helpful in providing the backdrop for the focus of the study.

This database disaggregates suspension data by characteristics such as race and gender

and definitively examines disproportionate suspension at the middle school level. In

2006, data from the CRDC was used to determine the suspension of a cross section of 18

middle schools in the United States (Losen & Skiba, 2010). The data revealed that while,

in that year, the average suspension rate for middle school students was 11.2%, 46% of

those students suspended were Black.

Similar studies were conducted with a focus on middle school, which confirmed

that that there may be something occurring at that level of instruction, distinctly different

than at the elementary and high school level (Hilberth & Slate 2013; Mendez & Knoff,

2003; Monroe, 2009). In an urban middle school study, Skiba et al. (2002) found that

students in grade 6, 7, and 8 were frequently referred to the office with an ODR, and

referred for subjective, non-violent reasons including defiance/disobedience and disrespect. In a similar, large scale study Predy et al. (2014) found that middle school students are referred and suspended for defiance at a higher rate, 31%, compared to elementary school students, 29% and high school students, 24%. Mendez and Knoff (2003) conducted a study in Florida that similarly determined that suspensions increased dramatically at the middle school level. Findings from their study resulted in the number of suspensions, per 100 students, increased more than 10 times in the middle school and seven more times, per 100 students, for fighting (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). The data presented is an indication of a trend of ODRs for subjective, non-violent reasons, leading to suspensions and requires further research to understand why this occurs most frequently at the middle school level.

Researchers have speculated as to why students are suspended more frequently at the middle school level and provide similar discourse. Mendez and Knoff (2003) offer that middle students are often challenged with coping with a variety of physical, cognitive, social and emotional changes as they shift from elementary school to middle school. Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield and Buchanan (1993) add that middle school environments are not conducive to the needs of adolescent development. Middle schools are typically set up like high schools, with students moving from class to class and teachers teaching core and elective subjects. Eccles et al. (1993) suggest that middle school environments need additional supports to assist teachers in helping students navigate growth and development at this age, and to help adolescents figure out who they are as individuals. Mendez and Knoff (2003) and Losen and Skiba (2010) emphasized that students in early adolescence need to be taught prosocial skills to respond to the

ecological and developmental changes and that schools provide "meaningful and consistently applied consequences for student behavior" (Mendez & Knoff, 2003, p. 47). These characteristics of middle school student develompment and middle school learning enviroments support a need to investigate teacher response to middle school student behavior.

Theoretical Rationale

Public schools in the United States today are predominately children of color with a constantly changing demographic landscape (Shelly & Cooper, 2011). There is a body of growing literature that supports the need for teachers to become culturally competent to make learning relevant to and for students of color, who have been historically underserved in the United States (Gay, 2000; Hollie, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Sleeter, 2011; Villegas, 1999). The responsibility to increase cultural competence falls on many, including everyone in the global and world community. Teachers must face the reality that they will increasingly encounter students who are culturally, socially, linguistically different than they (Howard, 2003). Because of the diversity of the urban classroom today, policy makers concerned about the well-being of school aged students and who want to see a productive workforce, needs a culturally responsive lens in their planning. This is also true in the way that schools engage with students and families, how curriculum is designed and delivered and, how behavior is perceived and handled (Hilberth & Slate, 2002; Skiba & Horner; 2011; Skiba et al 2002;).

Urban students face a multitude of challenges as they navigate through the American public school system. West-Olatunji et al. (2008) describe these challenges as "sociopolitical" (p. 28) that dictate the accessibility to academic resources, materials and

an environment conducive to quality education. Teacher cultural competence is the

ability for a teacher to be introspective in recognizing their own world views, to confront

the potential biases that may prohibit them from having authentic relationships with their

students and their families, and to understand the culture and diversity of their students

(He, 2014). Cultural competence provides the framework of this study because Pantic and

Wubbels (2011) proposed that teachers teaching in culturally diverse settings will be

more successful when considering the world view and values of their students as a part of

their teaching disposition. The use of the word *culture* implies the pattern of human

behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and

institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group. The use of the word competence

implies being able to function effectively (Educational Alliance, 2015; Hollie,

2012).Yang and Montgomery (2011) assert that there is a need to examine culture in new

way that has not been typically a part of the dominant conversation regarding, behavior,

learning and classroom setting, providing assistance for teachers to build an

"empowering school culture and social structure" (p. 262) to ensure that students from

diverse background have an equitable educational experience and feel empowered.

In the response to the need to address inequities in education and discipline within

educational settings, empirical research recommends that school policies need to be

created from the lens of cultural competency (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Hilberth & Slate,

2002; Mendez & Knoff (2003); Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2002). Cultural

competence in education is a teacher's practice of being continually introspective on how

their own culture and biases are reflected in their interaction and engagement with their

students (He, 2011; Pantic & Wubbels, 2011). He (2011) posits that in cultural

competence development, it is critical to challenge any cultural-deficit mindsets that may exist. Cultural deficits, perpetuated by the work of Ruby Payne's "deficit theory" (Neito, 2010, p. 17), is the blaming underachievement of students of color on their culture itself, and the inability to shift learning into mainstream American ideology (Neito, 2010). He (2011) suggests that the culture of the student should not be a factor in the lack of academic success, but the lack of understanding of culture by their teachers, and how students learn best. Their theory suggests that students of color may benefit the most when their teachers are cultural competent (He, 2013; Roberson, Kulick & Pepper, 2002; Yang & Montgomery, 2011).

Studies have recommended that a teacher's response to behavior may be different when that response is from a lens of cultural competence. These studies suggest that the misinterpretations of specific cultural behaviors may be at the root of issuing ORD's more frequently for subjective behaviors, such as defiance of authority, disruption of the educational process and disrespect, two of the most common reasons for which students are referred and ultimately suspended (Losen, 2011; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba & Horner, 2011; Sugai et al., 2000; Townsend, 2000). Therefore, research has recommended that schools utilize cultural competence as a framework to reform policies that may reduce suspensions (Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Hilberth & Slate, 2012; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013; Skiba, Chung, Trachok, Baker, Sheya, & Hughes, 2014; Skiba, Eckes & Brown, 2009). He (2013) expands that in the 21st century, it is critical that teachers be prepared for "cross-cultural communication" (p. 55) to best serve the need of students from various cultural backgrounds. Doing so may guide teachers away from cultural deficit thinking when

responding to students from other culture. Howard (2003) also contends that educators should appreciate the cultural capital of students and foster affirmation of their culture and perspectives.

To reduce the number of student referrals, which often lead to administrative decisions to suspend, some of scholars recommend providing support for teachers to work more effectively for and with diverse learners (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Wallace et al., 2008; Skiba & Horner, 2011). Their studies assert that proficiency in cultural competency may prove helpful for teachers in determining their response to student behavior. Additionally, Gay (2000) believes operating successfully and effectively within the cultural competent framework may lead to more successful outcomes for students by using knowledge about their culture to develop specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes to use in appropriate cultural settings to increase every student's educational performance.

Research Question

There is some validity to the fact that race and/or bias play a role in how a person, who subscribes to a particular race, perceives the actions of others prescribing to another particular race (Gay, 2000, Ladson-Billings, 1994; Skiba, et al., 2002; Nardo & Peterson, 2002; Sheets 1996), but is not the main ingredient. A lack of insight on culturally informed decision-making may create an atmosphere where certain students do not feel welcome, but excluded; disengaged and targeted for disciplinary action based on misinformation of cultural behaviors (Townsend, 2000). The high number of ODRs that urban students receive, largely in middle schools, also create a need for an investigation into how teachers, within middle schools, respond to the behaviors of students from

different cultural backgrounds, and if there is a relationship between cultural competence and their discipline decisions. Therefore, the guiding question of this study is how are the number of ORD's, written by teachers at the middle school level, impacted by cultural competence?

Potential Significance of Study

This study will investigate into the recommendations of researchers who claim that responding to student behavior from a culturally competent lens may reduce the number of students receiving ODRs (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Hilbert, et al., 2002; Mendez & Knoff (2003); Skiba & Horner; 2011; Skiba et al., 2002). Research has demonstrated that many students, particularly in urban public schools, are receiving ODRs and ultimately suspended from school (Skiba & Horner, 2011; Sugai et al., 2000; Townsend, 2000). Research has also demonstrated that once teachers understand cultural competence, and apply it to their engagement with students, their response to student behavior is viewed with more cultural understanding and more appropriate actions to correct behavior will prevail over issuing an ODR (He, 2013; McAllister, 2012; Monroe, 2009; Skiba & Losen, 2011; Skiba et al., 1997). This is not to say that certain objective behaviors, that may result in harm or danger, should not be addressed immediately via an ODR such as fighting, weapons, drug use/sale, excessive truancy, etc. However, through a culturally responsive lens, teachers may assess some subjective student behavior (disrespect, defiance, and threatening behavior) by using less reactionary actions and more responsive, therefore building classroom management that promotes a learning environment (Hollie, 2012). This study will aim to determine a teacher's level of cultural competence and compare it to the number of ODRs that he/she issues during a specific

time frame. The results of this study may inform school districts on appropriate policies regarding discipline so that it is equitable for all students. This study may also inform districts about creating appropriate professional development for educators to address the needs of student that they serve, especially in a diverse school district. This study may also inform the college course work of pre-service teachers, who wish to teach in an urban district or district, and may have had no experience as an urban student or resident.

Definition of Terms

Children of Color – Black/African American, Latino/Hispanic, Asian American, Native American, Bi-racial, non-White (Noguera, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002; Hollie, 2012).

Cultural Competence - teacher's practice of being continual introspective on how their own culture and biases are reflected in their interaction and engagement with their students (He, 2011).

Middle school student – Students between grades 6 and 8 and ages 12-15 (Mendez & Knoff, 2003).

Objective discipline infractions (ODI's)- Violations of smoking, weapons, drug possession/use, alcohol possession/use, vandalism, using obscene language, participating in or threatening of bodily harm (Skiba & Rauch, 2006).

Office disciplinary referral (ODR) – The written form used to alert administration of a student offense and needs administrative attention (Sugai et al., 2000).

School to prison pipeline – Phrase used to when discussing the correlation between the disproportionate number of Black males who experience exclusionary discipline practices and linked to the criminal justice system (Darensbourg et al., 2010).

Subjective discipline infractions (SDI's) – Instances of disrespect, excessive noise, threatening behavior, loitering, and tardiness (Skiba & Rauch, 2006).

Zero Tolerance - school or district-wide policies that mandate predetermined, typically harsh consequences or punishments for a wide degree of rule violation (Gage et al., 2013).

Chapter Summary

It has been well documented that urban middle school students receive suspensions and ODRs at a higher rate than students at either the elementary school or high school. Black students receive the highest percentage of suspensions and ODR as compared to other student groups. The 2007 United States Census Bureau that stated that people of Asian, Latin descent, along with Black make up 35% of the population. This number is projected to increase with the number of immigrants settling in the United States (Townsend, 2010), and will therefore contribute to the changing student demographic in public education. Because of these predictions, research cited in this chapter recommend school policies be revised using a lens of cultural competence to reduce the number of suspensions in middle school (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Kinsler, 2011; Losen, 2013; Skiba et al., 2002; Nardo & Peterson, 2002; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008). He (2000) asserts that with the understanding of the various cultural dynamics, that knowledge should play a role in school policy, resources, materials, and availability of teacher professional development to address cultural competence, and to address the changing landscape of public education. The next chapter will illuminate the multiple studies utilized, to be able arrive at the problem statement for this research.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

This chapter is a literature review, which will begin with research on the nuances of discipline in public urban schools as it applies to students of color, specifically Black students. This chapter will also discuss the use of the office disciplinary referral (ODR) as is usually documentation of discipline in need administrative attention. The chapter will conclude with the discussion of research on cultural competence and how experts connect it with favorable outcomes for students of color. It is important to note that, throughout this chapter, the use of the word "Black" and "African American" will be used simultaneously. However, during the discussion of the methodology, analysis and recommendation, the term "Black" will be used to signify race. However, to remain true to the authors of the literature review, should they use "African American" to determine race, the candidate will also use "African American" for that specific review.

Research on the disproportionate number of Black students suspended out of school is in abundance (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2002, Nardo & Peterson, 2002; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008). It is necessary to begin this chapter with research on suspension, as a backdrop, to highlight the critical nature of how behavior is managed, and the impact that decisions, regarding student behavior, is negatively affecting Black students. Because suspension does not occur in a vacuum, the core of this study will be to understand the validity and use office disciplinary referrals ODRs, as it is this document

that captures the details of student behavior that could lead to suspension (Predy et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2002).

The use of the ODR, to request administrative attention for student behavior, is usually initiated by a teacher when all classroom-based interventions have been exhausted (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Irving et al., 2006; Skiba et al., 1997). While it is not uncommon for teachers to seek out for administrative support for student behavior, Black students are being issued ODR more than any other racial group. Research on the disproportionate ODRs and suspensions for Black students recommend the application of cultural competency to decrease frequency of ODR that could lead to the suspension of Black students (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Skiba et al., 1997; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008). To this end, this chapter will conclude with the exploration of studies that assert that cultural competence is a more responsive and less reactionary approach to student engagement and behavior.

Suspension

In January 2014, the Obama Administration began a campaign to encourage schools to examine and redesign their discipline policies are equitable and do not contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The attention that suspension has gained from the federal government speaks volumes to the need for investigation, at the state and local level, to pay closer attention to who is getting suspended and why in urban school districts.

The conversation regarding the school-to-prison pipeline has been imbedded in the discussion of the disproportionate suspension of Black children. Empirical research on the direct correlation between the suspension of students, specifically Black males,

and entrance into the criminal justice system has gained attention in the last 10 years and the literature regarding mitigating this problem is growing. In a mixed method study conducted by Skiba, Simmons, Staudinger, Rausch, Dow and Feggins (2003) demonstrated that suspension and expulsion is not an effective strategy to reduce future incidents of inappropriate or dangerous behavior. Suspension data, in correlation with discipline, achievement and incarceration, proved that the strategy produces a negative affect (Skiba et al., 2003).

The study reviewed was two pronged. The first part of the study determined if there was a relationship between suspension and juvenile incarceration and student achievement. The second part of the study focused on principals' perspectives on discipline policies that led to suspension and expulsion (Skiba et al., 2003). To explore the relationship between suspension and juvenile incarceration, Skiba et al. (2003), commenced a national quantitative study. Discipline data from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights 2000 Elementary and Secondary School Survey (for the 2000-2001 school year), juvenile incarceration rates from the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) and achievement data from the National Center for Education Statistics' National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) were accessed for this study. Thirty-seven states were used in the study and the age of the youth included were between the ages of 10-17 years old.

The method of analyzing the relationship between discipline, incarceration and achievement was to use Kendall's Tau rank order test, which indicated that states that have the highest rates of school suspension also have higher rates of juvenile incarceration (Skiba et al., 2003). The Kendall's Tau test resulted in a negative

relationship between incarceration and student achievement. Children who were school age and incarcerated were still required to take high stakes testing while locked up. Therefore, their scores were also counted among the national data set and results of this part of the study. The results of this part of the study determined the zero-tolerance policies ultimately do not work to decrease inappropriate behavior and increase academic achievement.

The second part of the study, Skiba et al. (2003) captured principal perspectives on discipline. Respondents from elementary, middle and high school were principals from the state of Indiana. The respondents were invited by email to take an online survey call the Discipline Practices Survey. Of the total of 267 surveys were completed, 65% were male and 35% were female. Fifty three percent of the participants were from elementary schools; 22% were from middle schools and 24 participants were from high schools. The participants entering their race was not a part of the survey.

The survey used of both an open-ended questionnaire and a Likert scale, which created a mixed method approach. Eleven of the questions required principals to rank how frequently they used specific disciplinary or preventative strategies by using the Disciplinary Practices Scale. The responses were coded to develop identifiable differences regarding the perspectives from principals in certain areas of school discipline. Some principals believed that zero tolerance is effective, as it removed certain student from the school who were chronically troublesome. Their responses also included the removal of students with special needs, if that child was of those determined chronically troublesome. Other responses included the use of preventative measures to curb suspension and utilizing a more individualized approach to discipline (Skiba et al.,

2003). The results of this portion of the study concluded that school principals may or may not suspend a student. Their discipline decisions depended on other factors that were revealed through counseling the student.

Searching for these "other" factors are what the research of Skiba, et al. (2014) aimed to seek. The quantitative study was performed to understand the interaction of behavioral, student, and school characteristics that impact the rate of suspension. The examination was a multilevel approach utilizing quantitative research methods in a Midwestern state. Because of a very small Latino population compared to Black and White students, the primary focus was on Black students. The disciplinary data collected totaled 323,104 incidents of suspension and expulsion for 126,310 students in 1,720 schools. Data on gender, race and ethnicity were collected, as were school level principals' attitudes toward suspension. This attitude data was retrieved from a 2008 survey Discipline Practices Survey (DPS). The DPS was a combination of a 5-point Likert scale and frequency scale that asked the respondents how frequently specific disciplinary measures were taken (Skiba et al., 2014).

Skiba et al. (2014) also utilized a statistical method of multilevel data analysis using a hierarchical linear regression model because of the unbiased outcomes when observations are not independent. The variables that were gathered from the data were the type of infraction (use/possession, fighting, moderate infractions, defiance, and other), student characteristics (race and gender) and school characteristics (percentage of Black students enrolled, teachers' years of experience, state accountability scores, students receiving free and reduced lunch).

The results of the study performed by Skiba et al. (2014) confirmed earlier works (Skiba et al., 2011) that determined that the least severe behaviors of defiance resulted in the least serious outcomes (i.e. in-school suspension or detention), while more serous behaviors, like possession and use of alcohol or tobacco, resulted in more severe outcomes (i.e. out of school suspension). The current study concluded that the characteristics of students who are most likely to get suspended, but not expelled, for both minor and major consequences is Black and male. In fact, the study determined that schools that had a high enrollment of Black students fed the probability that out of school suspensions would be high as well. This study also concluded that while race was a factor linked to suspension, socioeconomic status, contrary to popular belief, was not (Wallace Jr. et al., 2008; Skiba et al., 2014).

The results of the DPS study determined that principals' attitude toward school discipline were very significant when predicting suspension outcomes and expulsion. The use of data from the DPS, determined that principals who favored out of school suspensions, never experienced reduction in office disciplinary referral, while out of school suspensions and expulsions were significantly less and the students of that kind of leadership experienced higher averages of achievement (Skiba et al., 2014).

Suspension at the Middle School Level

The work of Skiba, Michael, Nardo and Peterson (2002) is the earliest body of research on the disproportionate suspension of Black children, for this review. This middle school study provides the analysis of data to demonstrate a closer investigation of discipline measures at this level. The quantitative study compiled data from a large, public Midwestern district that served more than 50,000 students. The students were

26

middle school aged, in grades six, seven, and nine, where males represented 51.8% of the population and females represented 48.2%. Most students in the study were either Black (56%) or White (42%). A very small number of student fit into other ethnic categories. Latino students comprised 1.2 % of the students, Asian-American students comprised 0.7% of the population and Native Americans comprised 0.1% of the population.

To sharpen the picture of the subjects studied, socioeconomic status was determined by the qualification for free or reduced lunch. Of the entire sample, 65.3% of the students were eligible for free lunch, 8.1% were eligible for reduced lunch and 26.6% were not eligible for free or reduced lunch (Skiba et al., 2002). To understand the extent to which disparities in discipline by race and gender connect with socioeconomic status, tests were conducted using free or reduced status as a "proxy variable" (p. 325) in a two-factor analysis of covariance of race and gender that would predict disciplinary outcomes. To determine if bias had anything to do with the rate a specific group of students were suspended, Skiba et al. (2002) stated that the most accurate way to test this was by direct observation of behaviors and reactions to behaviors from that led to an ODR.

The results of the Skiba et al. (2002) study concluded that when controlling for socioeconomic status, racial disparities still existed. The study also concluded that males were more likely to be suspended than females and noted that what the schools determined as a serious offense was difficult to judge. Yet, a pattern emerged that suggested that Black students are suspended at a greater rate than Whites for more subjective reasons such as disrespect, excessive noise and loitering, while White students were suspended for reasons such as smoking, leaving the building without permission

and obscene language, but not as frequently as Black students for more subjective reasons.

The study is one of two that will be discussed in this review on suspension in the middle school, which have determined that suspensions, specifically out of school suspension, is being used a great deal. Mendez and Knoff (2003) performed a study to test the hypothesis that with increased instances of suspension as an intervention, inappropriate behavior would decrease. The quantitative study captured discipline data of 142 public schools in central Florida during the 1996-97 school year to determine how suspension rates changed across school level and for students of different genders and races. Mendez and Knoff's (2003) research aimed to do more than present an overall numerical data analysis on suspension. The study includes elementary, middle and high schools to: 1) investigate suspension rates by gender, race and school level combined; 2) analyze the specific infractions than most frequently led to student suspension; and, 3) identify the students who accounted for most the suspensions by race.

The study collected data from inner, rural and suburban schools, which the researchers labeled "general education schools" (Mendez & Knoff, 2003, p. 34). Fifty-six percent of the students in this county district identified as White, 23% as Black, 18% as Hispanic and 3% from other minority groups (Asian, Indian, and Multiracial students). The number of students who received free and reduced lunch was almost half of the population student, and of those, 78% were Black students. This is significant because it confirmed the trend of poverty, commonly noted among students of color, particularly Black students in urban schools (Gregory & Weinstein, 2007; Kisler, 2010; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2002; Nardo & Peterson, 2002, Wallace, Jr. et al., 2008). Mendez and

Knoff (2003) utilized the district's Management Information System (SMS) to study the percentage of race and school level (elementary, middle, and high school) that: (a) experienced at least one suspension, (b) the number of suspensions per 100 students in the course of the 1-year study, (c) what infraction resulted in the greatest amount of suspensions across all school levels, (d) for what infraction did a specific racial group earn the greatest percentage of total suspensions, and (e) what type of incidents resulted in the greatest number of suspensions. Several calculations were performed to determine the answers to the posed questions and grouped into group frequency distribution tables.

The Mendez and Knoff study (2003) resulted in finding that rates of suspension increased from elementary school to middle school, but then dropped significantly from middle school to high school. At least one suspension was experienced at the elementary school 3.36% of the students, at the middle school by 24.41% of the students and at the high school 18.46% of the students. This is the study also broke down the most common infraction types at the middle school level. Disobedience/insubordination was at the top of the list. Twenty percent of all suspension were because of this infraction. Both fighting and disruption resulted in 13% of all suspensions and inappropriate behavior resulted in 11% of all suspensions.

The distribution of suspension by reason, race and gender also confirmed what was also revealed in previous studies reviewed. Mendez and Knoff (2003) surmised that Black males were suspended for subjective offenses such as: disobedience/insubordination, 28%, (Whites 27%), disruptive, 38% (Whites 28%), inappropriate behavior, 35% (Whites, 30%) and disrespect, 32% (Whites 28%). Findings of Mendez and Knoff's study (2003) determined that the suspension of Black students

was not a school level-specific problem, but pervasive throughout all levels, however the number of suspensions were smaller at the elementary school, larger at the high school and higher still at the middle school level. As was the result in the Skiba et al. (2002) study, Mendez and Knoff (2003) also determined that a child's home settings and family economic status did not significantly affect suspension. Seventy-eight percent of Black students and 72% Hispanic students in their study received free and reduced lunch; an indicator of poverty. If SES had any link to rates of suspension, the suspension rate of Hispanic students in the study would be closer to the suspension rate of Black students. The research indicated that there had to be something else that attributed to the high number of suspensions of Black students. Those factors have not been proven conclusive by the study.

The research discussed thus far has proven that Black students, more than any other ethnic group, receive suspension as a consequence, at an overwhelming rate. The studies have also implied that suspension at the middle school level is higher than at the elementary school and high school levels. Because of this imbalance, research has begun to emerge which focusing primarily on the middle school population (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba, et al., 2002). A quantitative, one state study, conducted by Hilberth and Slate (2014) was developed to examine to what extent Black and White students were assigned to out-of-school suspension (OSS), in-school suspension (ISS), or disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) in middle school. The evidence collected attempted to confirm the hypothesis that the type and the amount of discipline students receive early in school will determine their overall academic outcomes (Hilberth & Slate, 2014).

The method of study was qualitative and included the collection of data on students in grades 6 through 8 through the Texas Education Agency and The State of Texas Public Education Information Management System (PEMIS) from the 2008-2009 school year. There were approximately 173, 900 Black and White students in grades 6 through 8 enrolled in public schools that school year. A Pearson Chi test was applied to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the proportion Black and White students assigned OSS, ISS, or DAEP within grades 6, 7, and 8 (Hilberth & Slate, 2014). The results for ISS were that while Black students in grades 6 through 8 averaged 14.2% of the population, that group was assigned ISS on an average of 35% of the time, compared to the 34.7% of white student in grades 6 through 8 who was assigned ISS on average of 16.6% during the 2008-2009 school year. The study determined that Black students were assigned OSS an average of 21.7% of the time and White students received OSS an average of 4.2% of the time. Finally, Black students receives DAEP an average of 5.5% of the time, while White students received DAEP 1.9% of the time.

This quantitative study, and the studies reviewed so far, continue to contribute to the body of research which supports Black students are disproportionally suspended in American public schools (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba, et al., 2002; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008). However, this study placed a focus on the middle school population, a period of development when children are testing the boundaries and seem to receive the consequence of suspension at a far greater rate at this age than at elementary school or high school (Hilberth & Slate, 2014). Recommendations for further research included collecting and disaggregating data on the reasons the students were assigned disciplinary consequences and to research school districts that were successful in reducing discipline

referral rates and to determine the factor that keep students in class (Hilberth & Slate, 2014).

The Utility of Office Disciplinary Referrals

ODRs are not intended to be used to result in a negative impact on students. However, increased numbers of ODRs have been associated with negative student outcomes such as school dropout, lower achievement, academic failure and antisocial behavior and does not decrease problem behavior (Predy, Mcintosh and Frank, 2014). However, ODRs are useful in multiple ways. Analysis of the documentation on an ODR can track behavior, design purposeful interventions for students who exhibit chronic behavior in school, predict future behavior problems and create school climate and culture protocols that are specific (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Irving et al., 2006; Skiba, et al., 1997).

Predy et al. (2014) wanted to study just how ODRs can work in favor of specifically middle school students, by identifying the trajectory of ODRs to predict end-of-the-year behavior. The researchers selected middle school as the population to study because the problem behaviors were usually "adult directed" at this age (p. 473) and, in most cases, ODRs in middle school are most frequently coded with the reasons of defiance or disrespect (Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Medez & Knoff, 2003; Tobin et al., 2012). In the Predy et al. (2014) study, this data was confirmed by the 33.2% of the ODRs that were for defiance or disrespect and 16.2 % were for disruption, while 14% of the referrals were for fighting. This study was significant because it demonstrated the intended use of the ODR as a proactive measure instead of how it has negatively impacts students, especially students of color (Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Kinsler, 2010; Losen &

Skiba, 2011; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 1997; Skiba et al., 2003) and provides

a more recent study of middle school discipline than the Tobin and Sugai (1999) study,

which also predicted the impact of ODRs in middle school (Predy et al., 2014).

The research questions that guided the study were:

1) What are the ODR trajectories by month, for students in each total ODR

category (i.e., receipt of zero to one, two to five, or six or more total ODRs by the

end of the school year); 2) How accurately does the cumulative number of ODRs

received per month, for the first 3 months of the school year, predict the total

ODR category; and, 3) To what extent does screening by type of ODR (e.g.,

fighting, arson) received by the end of September enhance prediction of total

ODR category? (Predy et al., 2014, p. 475)

This large scale, quantitative study included a sample of 410,852 public middle

school students from 593 middle schools. The students were in grades 6 through 8 and

the schools were in multiple settings. Thirty-four middle schools were in the suburbs,

17% were in what were considered small towns, 23% were urban and 26% were rural.

The sample was also comprised of students who were 58% White, and 47% "non-White"

(p. 476) (Predy et al., 2014). The study included a year's worth of ODR data from

archived records kept in the school-wide information system (SWIS), which will be cited

within this chapter as a reliable data collection system by schools that wish to track ODR

behavior. The total number of ODRs received in all schools was 403,172 and received by

118,582 by the end of the 2009-2010 school year, with students who received zero to one

ODR making up the largest percentage at 83%; students who received two to five making

up 12% and students who received six or more making up the remaining 5% (Predy et al., 2014).

The extant data was analyzed using planned analysis. Predictive analysis was used to determine the probability of a student being referred in two to five, or six or more infraction categories, based on specific predictor information (Predy et al., 2014). Diagnostic statistics were used to identify the accuracy of predicting membership in specific ODR categories. The complete analysis definitively answered the researchers' questions. Regarding the ODR trajectories by month, the average increase of ODRs from September through the end of the school year, for the zero to one category was 0.01 per month; for the two to five categories, the average increase was 0.29, and in the six or more categories the average was 1.10 ODRs per month (Predy et al., 2014). The biggest projection spike of ODRs received was in the months of November and February. While the researchers were not able to gain insight as to why this occurred, Predy et al. (2014) surmised that there is specific data that will offer insight into those specific months of the school year.

To determine the accuracy of the cumulative number of ODRs by month, to predict the total ODRs per category, a multilevel multinomial logistic regression was used. This test was used to determine the likelihood that students would receive ODRs in any of the three categories. ODRs received in September, October and November were significant predictors of receiving either two to five, or six or more ODRs by the end of the school year. The strongest predictor was in November, where students were 35 times more likely to be in the two to five ODR category, and 15 times more likely to be in the six or more category. Predy et al. (2014) felt this particular analysis would be helpful,

especially for students who were in the two to five category, as those students would have been identified early as needing intervention. Predy et al. (2014) suggests that early intervention could possibly reduce the overall suspensions of students when ODRs are studied early and regularly.

Finally, to answer the question regarding the extent of screening comments by infraction type, received by the end of September enhance prediction of total ODR in a middle school population, Predy et al. (2014) a regression analysis was performed to assess any improvement in prediction by adding the referred infractions of defiance, inappropriate language, physical aggression or fighting, and harassment to ODRs received in September. These behaviors were statistically significant in the two to five ODR category, with the behavior of "defiance" (p. 486) receiving the strongest predictor when received in September. Predy et al. (2014) hypothesize that defiance is a strong predictor of future referrals because defiant behavior is usually directed at the teacher who may view it as challenging or threatening. Instead of remedying the situation, removing a defiant student from the room may reinforce a negative student-teacher relationship and increase the probability of the repeated offense (Predy et al., 2014).

The Predy et al. (2014) study was successful in providing insight on how ODRs could be used effectively in schools to capture data needed to inform administration of additional support to correct student behavior and to gather information to make informed decisions about interventions. ODRs are also helpful in the redesign curriculum, room layout and classroom activities, which may improve student behavior (Tobin, Sugai & Colvin, 2000). ODRs also inform school staff of the overall safety of school building and school climate (Irving, et al., 2006).

To study the use and validity of ODRs and how they can be helpful, Irving et al. (2006) conducted a mixed method study to determine if ODRs, used with conjunction SWIS, the web-based data collection tool is an effective practice. This study is like Predy et al. (2014) in that is discussed the usefulness of the ODR. However, this research is significant due to its demonstration of the utility of the ODR, in combination with SWIS, especially when the objective of the ODR is to develop sustainable interventions that can be monitored and adjusted (Skiba et al., 2008; Vincent et al., 2012).

Irving et al. (2006) aimed to investigate three areas regarding SWIS/ODR data: (a) the reason SWIS/ODR data reports are used in a school and its usefulness, (b) determining the perceived effects of using SWIS/ODR data reports for decision making and, and (c) identified improvements needed to make the data entry for reports for SWIS/ODR to improve overall decision making for behavioral intervention. To conduct the investigation, Irving et al. (2006) developed two separate survey questionnaires. One survey had 23 questions that were for school staff who were experts in not only entering ODR data into SWIS, but also expert in generating report and using such reports to inform behavioral decisions. The second survey contained 10 questions and was reserved for staff who provided data entry and/or report generation of SWIS. Both surveys contained both a five-point Likert scale of *much less effort* to *much more effort*, and open-ended questions about the usefulness of the SWIS/ODR with minimal time required to complete.

Irving et al. (2006) received a 100% return of surveys, which were mailed to 56 respondents from 32 schools in four districts. Twenty-two were elementary schools, 10 were middle schools, and 18 individual participants were clerical staff. The data from the

Likert scale was entered into an Excel spreadsheet where the data was then calculated into frequencies, standard deviations and ranges for the ODR data entry and report access records in the SWIS database. The open-ended questions were also coded by one evaluator who created a list of themes that emerged. One theme was very apparent and immediately agreed upon was "develop multiple categories of 'minor' behavior problems" (Irving et al., 2006, p. 15).

The results of the questionnaire provided Irving et al. (2006) answers to their posed areas of inquiry, which resulted in a positive outcome when both ODR and SWIS are utilized together to make informed decisions about behavior interventions. The results of the questionnaire answered that more than 70% of the 14 elementary schools rated the use of SWIS ODR as "much more useful" and "more useful," while 60% of the nine middle school rated SWIS/ODR as "less useful" or "much less useful" (Irving et al., 2006, p. 19). The reason the difference in response at the middle school level than at the elementary level was because of factors that did not exist in the elementary schools, such as larger enrollment at the middle school and the focus being on content and less on the teaching of social skills (Irving et al., 2006). Data from both elementary and middle schools report that SWIS ODR were both used frequently for decision making purposes in school for four types of behavior decisions to provide: a) early identification of problem behavior, (b) identification of specific problems, (c) development and problem solving interventions, and (d) monitoring interventions (Irving et al., 2006).

The overall goal of the study by Irving et al. (2006) was to prove the effectiveness of SWIS/ODR to improve student behavior. The qualitative data retrieved from the open-ended questions on the research survey demonstrated a desire to improve the interface of

the current SWIS/ORD to more efficiently enter data from ODRs. While the quantitative portion of the survey resulted in both elementary and middle schools, on some level, believing that SWIS/ODR would be more effective in creating interventions reports more timely if the process of imputing data was more efficient (Irving et al., 2006). This study demonstrated that documentation systems are indeed helpful in correcting behavior and sustain interventions, provided there is buy-in from all staff and training in SWIS ODR.

The research by Irving et al. (2006) was conclusive in indicating that the use ODRs were helpful in the elementary school in providing interactions and support to individual students. The study also concluded that the entering of data into the system was not time consuming; a benefit when the quick generation of reports gave teachers and administration necessary data to provide behavioral support for students. What the study did not include was demographic information of the students receiving the ODR, particularly race. Because research conclusively indicates that Black students receive ODRs more frequently than any other racial group, it would have been helpful to know if any intervention for Black students, who received ODRs, was helpful. While ODRs can be useful, they may not be true indicators of student behavior, especially when many ODRs are received by Black students, and the reason for the ODR is subjective (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2002).

Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rauch, May and Tobin (2011) wanted to explore racial and ethnic disparities in ODRs and administrative decisions, on a national scale within the 2005-06 school year. This study is significant because it utilized extant data from a nationally recognized database and the analysis included middle school, the research context that is of great interest of the candidate. This study is also significant because

Skiba et al. (2011) find significant literature on school discipline at the elementary and middle school level, and wanted to test whether *school level* was a variable in disproportionality of school discipline.

To conduct the study, data from 346 elementary and middle schools were uploaded to the web-based school-wide information system (SWIS) from across the country. The schools selected were those whose culture was built by implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS) for at least 1 year. The desire to use SWPBS schools was not to test the effectives of the intervention, but part of being a SWPBS school means that the mandated data collection is rich, clean, and useful for the study of student discipline referrals (Skiba et al., 2011). Patterns of disproportionality in office referral rates, patterns of disciplinary decisions across different ethnic and racial groups and school level (middle school vs. elementary school) were identified by using descriptive and logistic regression analysis (Skiba et al., 2011).

The participants of the study included 436 schools, nationwide who: "(a) used SWIS for the full 2005-06 school year, (b) reported all ethnic information, (c) had grade levels between kindergarten and sixth or sixth grade through ninth, and (d) agreed to anonymously share summaries of their data for evaluation purposes" (Skiba et al., 2011, p. 91). The focus of the data provided was the pattern of the office disciplinary referrals (ODR) by race, and then on the administrative decisions by race. The SWIS data system has 27 categories of discipline infraction. Skiba et al. (2011) categorized the 27 into nine categories of: "minor misbehavior, disruption, non-compliance, moderate infractions, major violations, use/possession, tardy/truancy, and other/unknown" (p. 92). To guide the study of the patterns of discipline decisions of administrators by race Skiba et al. (2011)

posed three questions: "1) To what extent does racial/ethnic status matter in administrative decisions to discipline in elementary and middle school, 2) In which categories of discipline consequence are racial or ethnic disparities evident and, 3) In which infraction/consequence pair do racial disparities occur?" (Skiba et al., 2011, p. 92).

To answer these questions Skiba et al. (2011) utilized a quantitative approach that disaggregated enrollment, the number of students referred and the number of referrals disaggregated by racial ethnic group. The study also conducted a logistical regression test to determine if race had any influence on referral and if race influenced the type of infraction written on the referral. The results of the study regarding ODRs stated that Black students at the elementary school level (K-6) appeared to be overrepresented in ODRs. The results also noted that Black students were not only referred to the office more than White or Latino students, but many Black children had multiple referrals both at the elementary and middle school level. The research did not indicate if the multiple referrals happened during one day, one week or over the course of the school year. While Latino students received less ODRs than Black in elementary school, the rates of ODRs increased so much in middle school that the Latino rates were also overrepresented compared to White students.

Per Skiba et al. (2011) Black students were represented in all ODR infraction categories, with overrepresentation in the infraction area of non-compliance, tardy/truancy and disruption. This research is consistent with other studies reviewed which determined that Black children account for most of the ODRs for subjective reasons (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2003; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008).

The result of the study also concluded both Black and Latino students were overrepresented in the use of suspension in level K-6 and level 6-9. In the elementary schools, where detention was an optional administrative decision, Black and Latino students are underrepresented. Regarding the rate specific race/ethnic groups receiving consequences for specific infractions, in the elementary school, Black and Latino students were more likely than Whites to receive an out of school suspension for minor misbehaviors and less likely to receive in-school suspension or other moderate consequences that would take place in the school (Skiba et al., 2011). Black and Latino students in level K-6 were represented in every infraction category, except for truancy/tardiness and possession for Latino students.

To create a discipline process that is equitable and results in favorable outcomes, Skiba et al. (2011) suggested studying and reflecting on how current discipline systems violated the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which is to protect the rights for all American citizens the right to learn. Because current discipline systems engage in practices to remove students, specifically students of color, from school Skiba et al. (2011) recommended policy changes at the school level (i.e., all school referrals need to require that a student's race be added to the form), district/state level (i.e., policies addressing disciplinary inequity should be established), and federal (i.e., funding for technically assistance to help mitigate disproportionality district and state wide).

The studies reviewed thus far have demonstrated the usefulness of the ODR. The following study aimed to determine if there were other factors, combined with student behavior, which resulted in a high frequency of initiation of the ODR. A quantitative study by Bradshaw et al. (2010), was significant because of its simultaneous focus on

teacher perception and actions, and student behavior, specifically Black students. Two hypothesis were proposed and led to two questions to guide the study. First, "To what extent did a cultural disparity lead to the overrepresentation of Black students receiving ODRs?" (Bradshaw et al., 2010, p. 509). Bradshaw et al. (2010) cited Monroe (2005) and Townsend (2005) about the potential cultural bias in discipline procedures that lead to high frequency of ODR and suspension of Black students. To that end, this study examined to what extent Black and White teachers initiated ODRs for Black students compared to White students. The second question that Bradshaw et al. (2010) wanted to explore was if the higher number of ODR submitted reflected a teacher's higher "base" (p. 509) rates of behavior.

The data used in the research came from a sample of 6,988 students and 381 teachers, in 21 elementary schools, grades K-5, who were documented as either Black or White. All the participating schools were considered School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) schools, as these schools had staff trained in SWPBS, which provided a higher probability that interventions were created based on the ODR data (Bradshaw et al., 2010). SWPBS is a universal behavioral intervention supports that involves the entire school in making data-based decisions about students' support needs, having in place procedures for identifying additional supports, and a system of rewarding those students who regularly make good choices (Vincent et al., 2012).

Bradshaw et al. (2010) collected behavioral data from two sources: classroom teachers and ODR data that had been entered SWIS. The ODR data was cataloged into five areas; "any type of ODR (major or minor), a major ODR (e.g., fighting, defiance, abusive language, bullying or harassment), a minor ODR (e.g., disruption, property

misuses), a major ODR for fighting, and a major ODR for defiance" (Bradshaw et al., 2010, p. 511). The teacher data was the result of the Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation-Checklist (TOCA-C). The TOCA-C is a list of nine items that describe negative behaviors such as, "breaks rule, fights, harm property, and teases classmates." Teachers rate each student on a 6-point scale from *never* to almost *always.*" (Bradshaw et al., 2010, p. 511). The results from this checklist was viewed both as a student-level covariate and class wide covariates to disaggregate into trends of behavior that exist with individual students and behaviors that exists class wide.

Bradshaw et al. (2010) conducted a series of logistic regression tests to examine the influence of student and classroom level factors of students' receiving an ODR in any of the five ODR types. To answer the question regarding the extent that Black and White teachers initiated ODRs more frequently for Black students compared to White students, the study found that Black students were just as likely as White students to receive an ODR in any of the five ODR categories, but Black boys had a 55% greater odds of receiving an ODR than White boys. The study also concluded that while there was no noticeable significance between the Black and White teachers issuing ODR to Black and White students, Black teachers initiated ODRs for Black children at a greater rate than White teachers, and that boys had greater odds of receiving an ODR for major offenses compared to other students (Bradshaw et al., 2010). This finding goes against Monroe's (2005) and Townsend's (2005) theory of cultural mismatching as a factor that led to the increase ODR for Black students, by non-White teachers.

Regarding Bradshaw et al. (2010) desire to explore if the higher number of ODR reflect a teacher's higher base rates of behavior, the study found that the aggregated high

ratings on the TOCA-C for classroom behavior resulted in low numbers of ODR for both Black and White students. Bradshaw et al. (2010) hypothesized that the reason for this is either the more chaotic the classroom, the more difficult it could be for teachers to notice individuals for whom an ODR is warranted, or that a specific teacher may have a higher level of tolerance for disruptive behavior than other teachers. Petras, Masyn, Buckley, Ialongo & Kellam (2009) conducted a study on suspensions that yielded a similar result call the suppression effect, the term for highly disruptive classrooms from which students are not referred for suspension.

Over all, Bradshaw et al. (2010) concluded that there was no direct correlation between a teacher's race and the number of ORDs written for students of another race. Black teachers initiate ODRs at the same rate, and according to this study, a higher rate than White teachers. Also, just because a teacher rates his/her classroom as highly disruptive, as was the case with the teachers' score on the TOCA-C, did not mean an ODR was issued in those classes. But, in all cases, there remained a gap in understanding why Black students received ODRs more frequently than any other race. Bradshaw et al. (2010) posit that other cultural, socio-economical or contextual factors may exist that contribute to the inequity of ODR initiation. While this may be true of this study on K-5 elementary school, Black students in the middle school are receiving ODR at the higher than elementary and high school (Hilberth & Slate 2013; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Monroe, 2009; Skiba et al., 2002).

Quantitative research provided by Vincent, Tobin, Hawken & Frank (2012), attempted to fill in the gap in the aforementioned research with the intent to study the use of ORD's in urban elementary and middle schools, and how ODRs, with respect to

SWPBS, and the Response to Intervention (RtI), provide positive interventions for Black students. The RtI framework provides the availability of tiered support and continuous data collection, screening, diagnostic and progress monitoring to determine effectiveness. SWPBS is like RtI in that they both collect data to make decisions on how best to support students, but SWPBS focuses on behavior interventions, while the focus of RtI includes academic progress monitoring. SWPBS also involves the whole school in promoting an effort to teach appropriate behavior (Vincent et al., 2012). This study is significant because Vincent et al. (2012) points out that an ODR is not merely the result student behavior, but involved the observation of teachers and execution by an administrator. To this end, ODRs do not only reflect student behavior but also teacher and staff behavior (Vincent et al., 2012). The study was also significant because, like the study conducted by Irving et al. (2006), the data used is extant from SWIS, a proven reliable data collection system.

The core of the Vincent et al. (2012) study was to determine how one specific SWPBS feature called Check-in/Check-out (CICO) was effective in middle school students of color. The CICO tool is a way for students monitor their behavior, daily, checking in with a specific school administrator, receiving a progress form to be filled out by the student's teachers throughout the day, and returning to the same administrator at the end of the day (Crone, Hawken & Horner, 2010). The form is finally sent home to get feedback from the student's parent(s), signed and returned to the administrator the next day (Crone et al., 2010). The CICO tool is considered a secondary level of support within the SWPBS framework and has been empirically documented for reducing problem behavior in urban settings and reducing the need to refer students for special

45

education services (Vincent et al., 2012). Vincent et al. (2012) noted that when data in rates of behavior is aggregated across entire school populations that implement SWPBS, the rate of ODRs have shown a decrease. However, when data is aggregated by race and ethnicity, the number of ODRs remains unchanged.

Vincent et al. 2012 noted that because SWPBS had not been associated with "equalizing" (p. 435) disciplinary out comes for students, they wanted to study why students of color, within SWPBS schools, were still receiving ODRs at a higher rate than White students. Vincent et al. (2012) use the following questions to guide their research: (a) are African American, Hispanic American, and White students disproportionally represented among students at low (0-1), medium (2-5 ODR) and high (6+ ODR) risk for behavior failure in elementary school and middle schools? b) are African American, Hispanic American, and White students at each risk level disproportionally represented among students receiving CICO? c) does the probability of a student vary with the number of ODR received, with racial-ethnic background, or with both? and d) do reduction in ODR for students at medium and high-risk levels, who receive CICO, vary with racial-ethic background, with CICO start date or both? (Vincent et al. 2012, p. 435)

The study also relied on existing behavioral data that was entered into SWIS to conduct their study. A total of 155 elementary and 46 middle schools in the United States shared their data from the 2009-2010 school year. The criteria for the selected schools were that that they used SWIS-CICO and that the behavioral data captured included the student's ethnicity. Most of the students in this study were of either African American, Hispanic American and White, therefore those races were studied. The total number of students who were of this ethnicity in elementary school sample was 72,778 and the total

in the middle school sample was 30,365. The sample were also involved in the CICO and were considered medium and high risk. At the elementary school the N = 372, where 162 were African American, 72 were Hispanic American, and 138 were White students. At the middle school, the N=159 students, where 48 were African American, 35 were Hispanic American, and 76 were White (Vincent et al., 2012).

Vincent et al. (2012) used descriptive analysis to answer the first two research questions, which asked if African American, Hispanic American students were disproportionately represented in the number of low, medium and high ODRs and whether those students with the levels of risk were getting CICO intervention. The result of the elementary school analysis was that while Hispanic American and White students were very much underrepresented at all risk levels of receiving an ODR, African American students were slightly underrepresented at low risk level and over represented at high risk level of receiving an ODR. For those students receiving CICO, African American students were also overrepresented, while Hispanic American and White students was underrepresented (Vincent et al., 2012). At the middle school level, Vincent et al. (2012) noted similar findings and that the discrepancy in ODR and CICO involvement was "magnified" (p. 435). White students in middle school were underrepresented in receiving ODR more than 20 percentage points than White students in elementary school. Hispanic Americans were also slightly underrepresented and again, African American students in middle school are overrepresented. There was a difference in students involved in CICO at the middle school. The overrepresentation of Hispanic Americans decreased with increasing risk level, while the overrepresentation of White students increased with increased risk level. African American students were slightly

represented in CICO in the low-risk level, proportionality represented in the medium risk level and slightly overrepresented in the high-risk level (Vincent et al., 2012).

To answer research question 3, Vincent et al. (2012) performed a logistic regression test to determine if the number of ORD's received, racial–ethnic background, or both were predictor of CICO access, in elementary and middle school. ODRs collected in the first semester of the school year were collected, because researchers expected that student who received multiple ODRs early in the school year would be involved in CICO (Vincent et al., 2012). The results in the elementary school and middle school were almost the same; race-ethnicity and number of ODR received in the first semester both were predictor of receiving CICO or not. Per Vincent et al. (2012), with increasing ORDs, Hispanic American and African American students were more like than White students to receive CICO.

To answer research question 4, regarding the start date of CICO influencing the reduction of ODR for students at elementary and middle school, an ANOVA test was conducted, with start date a statistically significant main effect and race-ethnicity was not significant. In elementary schools, African American, Hispanic American and White students experienced a reduction in ODR when CICO was also used within the first semester (Vincent et al., 2012). However, for middle school, both race-ethnicity and start date emerged as statistically significant, where start date accounted for 5.9% and race/ethnicity accounted for 4.8 of the subject variance. Vincent et al. (2012) concluded that all students received an increase of ODRs from semester one to semester two. But those students who received CICO within 4 months of becoming eligible showed statistically lesser increases than those who had to wait and African American students

who received CICO experienced a mean decease in ODRs, which signified that early intervention with CICO seemed to benefit African Americans in middle school (Vincent et al., 2012).

Vincent et al. (2012) noted several familiar themes that have been revealed among the literature regarding the discipline measures and Black children. Vincent et al. (2012) indicated that African American students at elementary and middle school receive multiple ODRs, in one school year, more than any other race-ethnicity. Vincent et al. (2012) also noted that while African American students have access to secondary supports such at CICO at both levels, it occurred much less at the middle school. Vincent, et al. (2012) proposed that the reason for this is that the adults may interpret certain behaviors that African American students engage in as non-compliant or defiance. Vincent et al. (2012) goes on to further add that, regarding the adult component of CICO, middle school students were less willing to engage with adults, especially if the trust level that students have of teachers wore away due to multiple negative interactions. Vincent et al. 2012 concluded that given the success that CICO has had with some African Americans in middle school, it's apparent that middle school behavioral policies be implemented with more cultural competence to prevent a lack of support to African American students.

The studies presented thus far highlighted the body of research that explicitly determine that ORD's negatively impact specific students. Black students receive ODRs more frequently than Latino or White students (Bradshaw et al., 2010), especially in schools where SWPBS exists to serve as intervention (Vincent et al., 2012). Gregory and Weinstein (2007) conducted this mixed method study to take a closer look at the

discipline gap of the overrepresentation of Black students who were referred for discipline under the code of "defiance" and the relationship between teachers and students that may lead to the offense, and to determine if there are any underlying dynamics that contribute to Black students overrepresented in suspension. This study is significant because it highlights what adults determine poor behavior of Black students looks like and labels such behavior in a way that signifies the need to issue an ODR.

The quantitative portion of the study involved a review of one high school's annual discipline data within an urban high school in a mid-sized city in the United States. The racial demographic of the school was 30% Black, 37% White, 8% Asian, 12% Latino, 11% mixed, and 1% identified as either American Indian/Alaska Native or Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. An in-house coding team collected discipline records of the 2002-03 school year and grouped them into six themes: "1) truancy and missing class, 2) fighting and problems with peers, 3) property crimes and property damage, 4) defiance and challenging adult authority, 5) drug and alcohol use, and 6) other disruptive incidents" (Gregory and Weinstein, 2007, p. 460). The fourth theme, "defiance and challenging adult authority" (p. 460), had 10 sub codes that included *disrespectful*, *disruption,* and *uncooperative*. The results of the study determined that 67%, or 442 out of 596 students, received referrals coded" defiance of authority" (p. 460) in the 2002-03 school year. A chi-square test was used to determine that 255 of the referrals were given to Black students, who comprised 30% of the student body, a stark overrepresentation compared to White students. The study also determined that out of the 255 Black students referred, 185 of those students were referred by only one or two teachers, three adults referred 31 students, four adults referred 18 students and, seven to eight adults referred

five students. Gregory and Weinstein (2007) decided that because most of the students in this study were referred for defiance by teachers, a closer look in to a subsample of Black students referred for defiance was necessary.

The qualitative portion of the Gregory and Weinstein (2007) study was developed to uncover why students were referred for defiance. The study included interviewing students and teachers to gather reasons why students are referred for an ODR at all. During the spring semester of the 2003-04 school year, 33 of 53 Black students, who were serving in-school suspension, qualified to participate in the study, via written participation from parents or guardians. The teachers who were asked to participate were those who referred the participating student, and were named "the referring teacher" (Gregory and Weinstein, 2007, p. 460). The students also provided the name of a teacher with whom they got along with or the "nominating" teacher (Gregory and Weinstein, 2007, p. 460). Twenty of 21 referring teachers participated and all 22 of the nominating teachers participated.

All participating teachers were required to fill out a survey the Defiance Scale (Gregory & Weinstein, 2007). Students were also asked to rate their own behavior using the same survey. The results derived from this survey highlighted that students knew that they were behaving defiantly in their referring teacher's class and that they were rule breaking (Gregory and Weinstein, 2007). The use of the school's attendance data corroborated the students' lack of respect for the referring teacher's classes. A *t* test was used to determine that that students had more "unverified absences" (p. 465) in the referring teachers' classrooms than in the nominating teacher's classes. A *t* test was also used to determine that students felt more cared for by their nominating teacher than their

referring teacher. The student interviews confirmed the survey's findings with students

reporting that the nominating teacher, whom they respected, in turn respected them. The

nominating teachers were given the characteristics of being "nice, but strict" (Gregory

and Weinstein, 2007, p. 469), while the referring teacher demonstrated an "abuse of

power" (Gregory and Weinstein, 2007, p. 469).

It may be believed that members of the same racial group look out for one another

or favor one another. The results of the rating scale did not indicate that Black teachers

cared more for Black students or White teachers cared more for White students.

However, the results did indicate that the referring teachers, who were of all racial

backgrounds, perceived the participating students as less engaged, paid less attention in

class and more defiant. While the nominating teachers reported high academic

expectations and attentiveness (Gregory and Weinstein, 2007). These results were

conclusive in the suggestion that, across classrooms, teachers perceive defiance

differently and the participating students knew the teachers who cared about them and

those who did not. For those teachers who the students felt not care about them were less

engaged and possibly demonstrated more defiant behavior (Gregory and Weinstein,

2007).

In the conclusion of the study, Gregory and Weinstein (2007) recommended a

longitudinal study to be conducted in the school to provide more conclusive information

on how student-teacher relationships are built during the first weeks of school and

maintained thought the school year. This study could document how defiance looked by a

teacher and, also diffused; i.e. studying what students do and how teachers respond

versus react. While the study did provide an examination of high school engagement and

behavior in one school in one district, it would have been helpful to know what the perception was of teachers in an elementary and middle school, in the same district and if that determines the type and frequency discipline.

Examining Cultural Competence

Previous literature discussed modern discipline polices that prove to be inequitable and result in the overrepresentation of Black students who are issued an ODR and ultimately suspended from school. To reduce the number of ODRs, which often lead to the administrative decision to suspend, some of the recommendations from research include providing support for teachers to work more effectively for and with diverse learners (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). Mendez and Knoff (2003) also offered that educators take a more ecological approach to discipline to understand why certain racial groups are overrepresented in suspension. Skiba et al. (2011) suggested that because many Black and Latino students were referred for administrative action and received punishment for "minor misbehavior" (p. 103), schools should take a closer look at the emerging research on culturally responsive pedagogy and classroom management. Because of the implicit and explicit mentioning of culturally responsiveness in interaction with and responding to student behavior in the literature, it is important to get a controlling understanding of what is and what it is not.

Several articles and reports have surfaced regarding the importance of cultural competence over the last 10 years, specifically explaining why it is important in today's diverse community. However, empirical studies on use of culturally competence to manage behavior and influence discipline policies in schools is not in abundance. This is puzzling since several empirical studies on the disproportionate suspension of Black

children recommend training in cultural competence as a method to reduce overall behavioral infractions and increase student engagement (Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2011). The research studies examine in this literature review, regarding cultural competence, will therefore be focused on how to determine cultural competence, via the construction of tool for measuring it, as well as research in the application of cultural competence in teaching of diverse learners.

A mixed method study by Roberson, et al. (2002) described the need to examine cultural competence in diverse classroom settings, via examining what students on a college campus were experiencing on a day-to-day basis. Roberson et al. 2002, also wanted to study how college faculty were responding. Roberson et al. (2002), were initially commissioned to create and evaluate a training program to "sensitize" (p. 41) the faculty at the College of Business at Arizona State University, to address diversity issues which, in an unrelated inventory, did not adequately train them to meet the needs of students from different backgrounds. Roberson et al. (2002) were invested in creating such a training program, however in its preparation, they learned that the biggest challenge would be to evaluate the participants themselves, who were teaching assistants, and not just create a workshop. Roberson et al. (2002) believed that training programs on diversity do not effectively measure the trainee's change in behavior, more than it demonstrates the effectiveness of a good training facilitator. Through studying the college students' perceptions of classroom interactions, the Instructor Cultural Competence Questionnaire (ICCQ) was created to assess workshop participants. This study is significant because, while no one will argue that interactions with diverse learners must be thoughtful and sensitive to understand how students learn, it is equally beneficial to

use actual experiences to determine cultural competence by using real-life situations, as opposed to simulations, as a pre-assessment of a diversity training program (Roberson et al., 2002).

To create the questionnaire ICCQ, Roberson et al. (2002) wanted to capture true attitudes that students held in certain situations when they were faced with uncomfortable or challenging environments in which students from diverse backgrounds were in the same class (Roberson et al., 2002). These "critical incidents" (p. 43) were necessary to serve as personal and lived experiences resulting from diversity management in the classroom. The questionnaire asked students to identify the circumstances leading to the incident, the actual behavior of the instructor and the results of the behavior. Roberson et al. (2002) surveyed 350 students and 150 responses were returned and classified in to broad categories, which were categorized into smaller groups with similar characteristics, independently verified by two authors. Of 166 incidents, 57 or 34% noted general classroom management issues, not connected with diversity. The remaining responses resulted in six, critical incident themes regarding diversity issues that: "1) resulted from professor behavior; 2) resulted from in-class student behavior; 3) resulted from class composition; 4) were raised by an individual student; 5) resulted from small group dynamic, and; 6) surfacing during class discussions" (Roberson et al., 2002, p. 44).

The next phase of creating the ICCQ required the development of six situations using the six critical themes (Roberson et al., 2002). The questions were open-ended, asking the respondents to write what they would do in that situation. Roberson et al. (2002) created several situations for each thematic category to develop parallel forms of the instrument. One form would be used as a pre-training and one would be used as a

post-training. The items were scored using Bennett's (1993) Model of Cultural competence which describes six stages a person goes through when gaining cultural competence, from "denial" to "integration" (Roberson et al., 2002, p. 44).

To test the reliability and validity of the ICCQ, Roberson et al. (2002), both the pre and post questionnaire was given to 98 participants of two existing diversity training programs. One program offered cultural awareness training, while the other offered similar cultural awareness training with additional skills support which taught trainees how to interrupt culturally inappropriate remarks. Roberson et al. (2002) believed that the participants of the latter training would score higher because of the additional skills they received in their training.

To test reliability, two coders, who were unaware of the type of training received by the participants, were trained on the 6-point Bennett (1993) Model of Cultural Competence and scored the responses of the ICCQ. The reliability for the rating was .75 for the pretest and .71 for the post test, acceptable levels of reliability (Roberson et al., 2002). Roberson et al. (2002) averaged the scores of the two coders to obtain a measure of each participants' cultural competence, pre-training and post-training.

Validity of the ICCQ was tested in two ways, and collected at post-training to assess attitudes toward diversity and knowledge of diversity issues. The first method was to examine a correlation of scores with other measures and the second was to examine the sensitivity of scores to training (Roberson et al., 2002). Both the Pluralism and Diversity Attitude Assessment (PADAA) and the Diversity Knowledge test were administered to all 98 of the participants who took the ICCQ. While the results of the ICCQ offered a

skills-based learning outcome, the results of the PADAA offered a measure of affective

leaning outcome and the diversity knowledge test offered a cognitive learning outcome.

The results from the ICCQ had a significant positive correlation only with the

diversity knowledge test, which Roberson et al. (2002) believed that the more knowledge

a person has about diverse culture, the better equipped that person will be in managing

cultural conflicts. To test the sensitivity of the ICCQ scores to cultural diversity training

programs on the campus, an ANOVA was conducted and resulted a significant difference

across programs. Once again, those participants who attended skills-based training

programs receiving higher post-test scores, an indication of knowledge of diversity

issues, attitudes and values lending to the higher post-test score (Roberson et al., 2002).

The ICCQ measured the skill-based behavior of cultural competence when managing

cultural conflicts in the classroom and was generated by the critical incidents created by

students (Roberson et al., 2002). Because the ICCQ was reliably scored, it could be

altered to fit the needs to assess a variety of purposes.

A culturally competent teacher is more than just being able to teach and manage

behaviors in diverse classrooms. Cultural competence is self-reflection into one's own

cultural makeup and world views that, in turn, may enhance the learning experiences for

students who are from different cultural backgrounds, and embracing those differences

(He, 2013). Cultural competence is also defined as a set of behaviors, attitudes and

polices that merge within a system, within polices, and among professionals to work

effectively in diverse situations. These definitions differ from terms like cultural

knowledge or cultural sensitivity, which are sometimes used synonymously, in that

cultural competence informs actions and usually yield positive results. Cultural

sensitivity and knowledge means a superficial familiarity of different cultural characteristics (Adams, 1995).

In a parallel mixed methods study, (He, 2013) wanted to highlight the reflective component of cultural competence through the application of appreciation inquiry (AI). AI is a strength-based model of transforming people and organizations via uncovering and highlighting exiting hopes and dreams (He, 2013). AI puts the focus on, "the best of what has been, what is and what might be, (p. 58). AI has been used to enhance teacher-student relationships and foster culturally competence relationships between administrators, teachers and students. This study is significant because He (2013) demonstrated how AI is used to guide teachers' reflection on teaching diverse learners, one of the tenets of cultural competence

The context of this study was an opportunity for graduate students, who were studying to be ESL teachers, to apply four dimensions of AI (4-D AI) to the teacher reflection process in:

1. action – define successful skills, teaching episodes or actions;

2. depth on practice – discussion of personal, responses, emotions, qualities and successes;

3. envisioning - choose a desired future action for change using positive language, and;

4. critical dialogue – show evidence of inquiry in conversation with themselves or others. (He, 2013, p. 58)

Two research questions guided the He (2013) study: "1) how do teacher candidates reflect on their cultural competence development; and 2) how do teacher

candidates reflect on their development as a ESL teacher through this process? (He, 2013, p. 60). There were 21 graduate students participating in the study, over the course of two semesters, in a medium sized university in the United States. Twelve were pre-service teachers experience working with ELL's and remaining were in-service teachers. Six of the participants were non-native English speakers (He, 2013).

The quantitative portion of the study was data collected from the teachers completing a Cultural Competence scale created by Koehn & Rosenau (2002). The reliability of the instrument was confirmed by using Cronbach's alpha. There was a pre and post assessment, at the beginning and end of the semester. The scale consisted of 22 items, and captured the respondent's answers in the areas of; "a) analytic competence; b) emotional competence; c) creative/imaginative competence; d) behavioral competence with communicative facility, and; e) functional adroitness" (He, 2013, p. 59). The qualitative data was collected throughout the semester from the teacher's weekly reports, reflections, and blog entries that the participants were required to hand in. All quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS and qualitative data was analyzed using in Vivo coding to capture attributes from each teacher to form 21 cases (He, 2013). To focus on teacher reflections, Miles and Huberman (1994) data analysis was used to reduce, display, verify and determine the validity of the data (He, 2013).

In the response to the first question regarding teachers reflecting on the development of cultural competence, the findings of the data indicated that participants developed cultural competence significantly over time, with scores ranking highest in the area of emotional competence on both the pre and the post. Using the qualitative data, He (2013) noted that teachers admitted being "tentative" (p. 62) of how to rate themselves on

the Cultural Competency scale. However, after completing the course, most teachers recognized their growth and learning over the semester and comfort with, "cross-cultural communication in such a short time" (p. 62). The results and analysis of the qualitative portion of the study answered the second part of the study in regarding teacher's reflection on their development as an ESL teacher. Teachers reflected in their teaching and engagement with ELL students and their families following the 4-D AI-D model. All participants noted how, in some way, their experience was enriched by the weekly reflection in all four dimensions of the model (He, 2013). The non-native speakers of English added more details than the native English speakers as they were reflective of their own journey to learn English in American schools. A notation of empathy was captured in the data who were non-native speakers of English, teacher participants.

The overall finding of this study was how the application of the AI model allowed for teachers to, through reflection, focus on the strengths that ELL students and their families have, instead of focusing on the challenges that come with a diverse population (He, 2013). Because the data from the analysis resulted in teachers' cultural competence increasing over the course of the semester, He (2013) posits that preservice teachers get much more out of their education from application of their understanding of cultural competence to real-life situations, than from readings and discussions. ELL's were the focus of this study and because the landscape of public education is more diverse than it has ever been before, more of a concentrated effort should put into more effective modes of teaching them. What is not mentioned in this study is how AI and cultural competence is utilized in helping other types of cultural differences be successful in schools, when language is not a major barrier.

The previous study demonstrated that the participants scored highest in their emotional competence on the Cultural Competency scale used in the study (He, 2013). At the core of cultural competency is caring and empathy (Gay, 2000). In a qualitative study, McAllister (2010) wanted to analyze the role of teacher belief regarding empathy. This study demonstrates existing data from an experience in which teachers were immersed in a program in which the participants were required to study the culture of their students. The 34 teachers selected for this study participated in a teacher development seminar provided by CULTURES (Center for Urban Learning/Teaching and Urban Research in Education and Schools), which was designed to increase awareness of cultural competence and adapting that learning to adjust curriculum for diverse learners. Twenty-five teachers were Black, 11 of whom taught in an urban, predominantly Black high schools. Four teachers were White, three of whom taught in a predominately Black high school and two teachers were Latina, who also taught in a predominately Black high school (McAllister, 2010).

The study used extant data from the initial teacher application to CULTURES, which included the gender, race, years in teaching, and school characteristics in which the teacher worked (enrollment, demographic, number of staff), as well as self-reported data by teachers which included their final projects, their exit interviews and the CLUTURES project report, which included reflections on what they learned in the seminar overall, and how their beliefs about culture had changed. This rich, anecdotal data was analyzed by way of the QSR NUDIST (Qualitative Solutions and Research, NON-Numerical, Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorizing) to code and manage data from 200 documents.

The overall result of the McAllister study (2010) indicated that all 34 participating teachers believed that empathy was an important factor in their effectiveness with students of diverse backgrounds. Through a content analysis of the recordings of teacher practices, three themes emerged: a more positive interaction with culturally diverse students, more supportive classroom climate and more student-centered practices (McAllister, 2012). The positive interactions came because of teachers having to visit a "foreign country" for a day (p. 438). The location was a local community that was different than their own culturally community. For example, the Black teachers who had a significant number of Vietnamese students spent time in a Vietnamese community and felt that they had more of an appreciation for their culture after the visit. To support a positive classroom environment, teachers reported that small changes, such as allowing students, for whom English is not their first language to sit together, to help those that may be struggling. Another teacher admitted that because of the CULTURES seminar she needed to provide a classroom environment that affirmed all cultures evenly and not just those that she was familiar with. To more effective engage students in class, teachers shifted their curriculum to focus more on the students' interest and directly aligning learning activities to students' lives as much as they could (McAllister, 2012).

It is important to highlight that part of the follow-up to the CULTURES seminar was an immersion experience where all participating teachers visited the families of their students. Each teacher visited a different number of families, but every teacher visited at least two. Similar to He (2013), the participants felt that experience was helpful, in that they gained valuable cross-cultural sensitivity that increased their empathy for students from diverse backgrounds and was able to apply what they learned during the

CULTURES seminar to the visits (McAllister, 2010). It is interesting to note that in the

reflection notes of 80% of the teachers, who were of the same diverse background of the

students they visited, found that because of their knowledge and understanding of the

oppression within their culture, they were more sensitive to these students, especially

those who were new to American schooling (McAllister, 2010).

Also, like He (2013), the recommendation resounding throughout the McAllister

(2010) study is the importance of continual teacher reflection on their culturally

sensitivity individually as well as in group settings. According to McAllister (2010),

these reflections helped to shape interactions with their students to assure they were

positive, providing a supportive and student-centered classroom environment and to

promote empathy and non-judgmental when it comes to race. The positive outcomes of

the concerted effort via the professional development discussed in this study, is an action

that McAllister (2010) recommends as the most valuable to increase student achievement.

Gaps within the Analysis

The quantitative and qualitative studies presented have furnished evidence that

Black students are referred for administrative action via an ODR (Mendez & Knoff,

2003; Skiba et al., 2002; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008). Studies have also been furnished to

illuminate that the instances of suspensions are highest in the middle school and that both

Black and White teachers initiate ODRs to Black students more than any other race

(Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2002). Finally, studies have

been furnished to highlight that, with the application of cultural competence, teacher

behaviors may be impacted to better serve diverse students and make more appropriate

decision on how to handle their behavior (He, 2013; McAllister, 2012 Roberson et al.,

2013). While these studies add to the body of research in regard the disproportionate referrals for discipline of Black students, the review of these studies uncovered two significant themes identified as gaps within the research.

Skiba e. al, (2011) contributed to the body of research on the disproportionate number of ODRs written for Black students for the reasons of disrespect and defiance. The first gap noticed within these studies is the description of the exact behaviors of students for which ODRs were written and enacted upon by school administrators. The hypothesis for future study could be the perception of what teachers determine disrespectful determine the type of referral written. There is also a need to implicitly study the impact of teacher bias in discipline and the degree that it impacts their disciplinary decisions. The qualitative studies of McAllister (2012) came the closest to honing in on exact behaviors of students and teachers in her study of teacher responses to different cultural situations. However, without personal observation, with the purpose of noting exact interactions, it is difficult to ascertain which behaviors of students lead to an ODR. The second gap is centered around the studies on cultural competence, specifically, the participants used for the study. The He (2013) study focused on ELL population as the diverse student focus. In the Roberson et al. study (2002) the population of focus were college students and facility, and in the McAllister (2012) study the focus was on extant data submitted by teachers. However, none of the studies on cultural competence centered directly on or identified the population of concern, urban middle school students. Therefore, the research will focus on cultural competence in the middle school and how it impacts the frequency of ODRs initiated in urban middle schools.

Methodology Used in Analysis

The research cited in the literature review utilized various methods to answer posed research questions. Most of the research reviewed utilized a qualitative approach, where certain variables were controlled to affect the outcome, or correlations were used to determine a relationship between data (Huck, 2012). The mixed method approach was utilized by four studies in this review (He, 2013; Gregory & Weinstein, Roberson et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2003). In these studies, both qualitative and quantitative were collected, analyzed separately and then compared to see if the results confirm the researcher's hypothesis or not (Creswell, 2014). Only one study reviewed was qualitative (McAllister, 2012), instead of the researcher being involved in the experience with participant (Creswell, 2014), extant data from another qualitative experience was used to answer research questions posed within that study. The variety of methods used within this literature review provided the candidate with sufficient exemplars for which to model future research.

Chapter Summary

The intent of this literature review was to understand and make sense of research that has been conducted on the disproportionate number of ODRs written for Black students attending urban public schools and identify gaps within. It was critical that the review begin by introducing the big picture of suspension of Black students, a plaguing condition for many Black students attending urban public schools, which has been studied since the early 1970's (The Children's Defense Fund, 1972). The results of studies are similar, in that suspensions negatively impact Black students and do not lead to safe school environments or remediate the students. The findings of the studies on

suspension then led to a deeper insight into the referral process for suspension. Therefore, narrowing into the discussion of research of multiple studies on ODRs, which are usually initiated by a classroom teacher.

There is limited empirical research on cultural competence, specifically how it is applied and the results of its application in urban public schools. However, the literature reviewed on cultural competence emphasized how cultural competence is embedded in the way that people respond to situations and engagement with students from ethnic backgrounds (He, 2013; McAllister, 2002; Roberson et al., 2002). The gap in research on cultural competence are the lack studies that demonstrate how cultural competence looks in urban public settings. Studies on the disproportionate suspension of Black students recommend designing teaching practices, classroom management, and curriculum from a cultural competence lens. Requiring teachers to teach in this manner would mean a paradigm shift of a teaching mindset. The research for this study may provide yet another pin hole into the educational arena and contribute to current research on cultural competence, specifically how it looks in public education and its connection to a teachers' disciplinary decisions.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

     Much research has been cited indicating that Black students are receiving referrals for subjective reasons at a much higher rate than any other racial or ethnic group (Kunjufu, 2002; Lewis et al., 2010; McFadden et al., 1992; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Nogurea, (2002); Skiba et al., 2002), but very little empirical evidence as to why. The hypothesis for this study is that teachers who report a lower number of ODRs will have a higher level of cultural competence. With that said, the purpose of the research is to examine data to answer the research question: Is there a relationship between the number of ODRs that urban middle school teachers write and cultural competence?

     With the increasing number of Black students entering urban, public school systems, Townsend (2000) proposes that it is highly probable that their teacher is from another cultural background. Racial or any kind of bias, coupled with the high number of referrals for subjective behavior for Black students, create a need for an investigation of the teachers' perception of student behaviors and if a specific level of cultural competence impacts their response to the behavior. Because middle school aged students receive the highest number of referrals leading to suspension ((Hilberth and Slate, 2014; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Monroe, 2009; Skiba et al., 2002; Townsend, 2000), the answer to the research question will be sought out amongst middle school educators.

Research Context

The research took place in an upstate New York midsize school district, with a population of 29,000 students. For this study, the district will be identified as Center City School District. Center City has a student population of 60% Black, 26% Latino, 11% White, and 3% Asian/Native American/East Indian/Other. Within the district, 84% of the students were eligible for free/reduced-price lunch, 10% students had limited English proficiency, and 16.5% of the students were classified with a learning disability. There were approximately 3,010 teachers in the district, with 157 teachers who taught middle school aged students, grades 6-8. The district teacher demographics included: 74%, White, 14% Black, 7% Latino, 3% Asian, and 1% Pacific Islander. As of the 2015-16 school year there were 38 elementary schools, with 13 of those school a pre-K-8 or K-8 configuration, 12 secondary school buildings where exactly half were a 7-12 and 9-12 configuration, and five program schools where the students were dually enrolled with another secondary school.

Research Participants

Research show that middle school aged students receive the highest number of referrals leading to suspension (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Monroe, 2009; Nardo & Peterson, 2002; Predy et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2002). Therefore, teachers in grades 6-8, of varying years of experience and teachers of core subjects of English, math, social studies and science, special education were invited to participate in the study. Teachers of electives such as physical education, art, music, consumer science or any other specialty class in which the instructor is certified to teach, and to whom students are assigned, were also invited to participate. Librarians, long-term substitutes, or other support staff such as

counselors, social workers and school psychologists were not considered for this study, as they typically do not have the same students assigned to them regularly and/or are not in a classroom.

Research Design

The design for this study was an exploratory, sequential, mixed method design. In this design, the qualitative data is explored first and the findings will be used in a second quantitative phase. (Creswell 2014). The second set of data was built on the results of the initial data set. For this study, it was necessary to first analyze and code the narrated responses from the survey tool to derive at a mean numerical cultural competency score. The second data set was the reported number of ODRs from the participants. Thus, the hypothesis for this study is if a participant's cultural competency score is in a high then their corresponding report of ODRs will be low. The analysis of both sets, in a sequential order was needed to conform or disconfirm the hypothesis.

Instrument to be Used in Data Collection

A self-administered questionnaire was designed, using Qualtrics survey software, to collect the both the quantitative and qualitative data for this research (Appendix A). The survey used assured anonymity to provide a level of comfort needed to respond to certain scenarios that asked the participants to respond to cultural situations. Floyd (2014) suggests that for a self-administered study, the tasks should be restricted to closed answers. Therefore, part one of the survey collected demographic information of gender, sex, age, grade, subject taught and school organization and how many ODRs they submitted between Memorial Day and the last day of school. This data collection was set up as a drop-down menu of boxes to check which was helpful in the quantitative data

collection. Floyd (2014) also notes that when respondents are asked to answer in their own words, it makes the coding difficult and the answers are of limited value. However, part two of the survey was set up to capture the respondent's answers in their own words and became the qualitative portion of the study. This part of the survey refutes Floyd's (2014) supposition and enhances Creswell's (2013) belief that because qualitative research addresses "real world" problems (p. 51), open ended questions capture thoughts and emotions usually evoked when the topics are of gender, are cultural, or where marginalized groups are the subject. Capturing this kind of data was critical in coding the responses to provide the most accurate score.

The scenarios used in the survey were adapted from Roberson et al. (2002) Instructor Cultural Competence Questionnaire (ICCQ). The ICCQ was a questionnaire of six cultural scenarios, originally designed to be answered by participants who were teaching assistants on a college campus. The original scenarios of the ICCQ were situated in a college classroom, and reflected a college atmosphere. However, because the Roberson et al. (2002) study states that the ICCQ can be used for a "variety of purposes" (p. 50), permission was granted from the original researchers to adjust the scenarios for this study to fit a middle school classroom atmosphere, and were realistic and relatable for the respondents (Appendix B). The scenarios from the original ICCQ were set up as cultural issues in the following categories: *issues resulting from teacher behavior, issues resulting from in-class student behavior, an issue raised by an individual student, issues raised by small group dynamic, issues resulting from in-class discussion, and issues surfacing during group discussions.* Each of the six responses to the scenarios were independently scored, given a numerical score and then calculated into one mean score.

Roberson et al. (2002) used the Bennett Model of Cultural Competence (1993) to score the responses to the ICCQ (Appendix C). Permission from the creator of this scoring tool was also granted to be used for this study. The Bennett's (1993) Model describe stages of cultural competence as denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration (Roberson et al., 2002). The descriptions of these stages were assigned a number from 1, denial, the lowest score to 6, integration, the highest score. How each participant responded to the scenarios created for this survey was also given a score from 1-6.

Floyd (2014) says that once a survey is close to completion, it is a good idea to conduct a field test. A field test was done one month before the survey was sent out to the research district. Ten middle school teachers were contacted personally to be a part of the field test, from which six responded and were modestly compensated. The participants were sent an email requesting their assistance. In the body of the email contained the link to the survey and the request to provide feedback. Of the six who responded and completed the questionnaire, two provided feedback. The feedback was that the survey questions were thought provoking and part two took longer than the suggested time of 20 minutes. Because the feedback of the survey possibly being too long was the only negative response, decision to move on with the dissemination of the survey was determined. The analysis of part two of the ICCQ is the qualitative portion of the study and relationship of both the quantitative and qualitative will be discussed in the data analysis section.

Data Collection and Analysis

Middle school teachers were the required sample for this study. In Center City, there were approximately 157 teachers who taught grade 6, 7 and 8. However, the request was sent to all 3010 teachers in the district using the districts' Outlook email server. This method was used to expedite the dissemination as attempting to filter out middle school teachers, prior to dissemination, was a time-consuming process. Therefore, to capture responses of middle school teachers, part one of the questionnaire was precluded by questions that eliminated teachers pre-K-5 and teachers who teach purely 9-12 courses from taking the survey. This method proved successful in capturing full responses from only middle school teachers.

The ICCQ was open for a total of eight weeks. By week two, 255 participants began the survey, however only 12 respondents identified as a middle school teacher and completed part I and II of the ICCQ. At this point, the initial analysis of the participants' responses began. To increase the number of respondents, the survey remained opened for two more weeks at which an additional 17 full responses were collected from middle school teachers. Analysis took place on a continual basis during the time that the survey was open. However, on the sixth week that the survey was open, zero responses were received. After a personal reach-out to individuals in Center City, who were middle school teachers, an additional eight responses were received. The continual analysis of the responses to the survey allowed for saturation to be determined by the end of the eighth week, resulting in a sample size of N=37. At this point the survey was closed and data collection ended.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis was performed first and was required to the numerically score the responses for the cultural scenarios. The qualitative data was then tested with the number of ODRs the participants reported. The qualitative analysis was multi-layered and began by reading the responses to the six scenarios of the ICCQ, coding each response, scoring each response using the Bennett (1993) Cultural Competency Scoring tool, and then calculation of the six scenario scores into a mean cultural competency score. Based on an understanding of cultural competence, the first step of the analysis included assigning a priori codes to the six scenarios. These codes were developed by the researcher's knowledge of cultural competence from the works of cultural competence experts such as Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings and Tyrone Howard. The researcher has spent years providing workshops to educators in cultural competence based the expertise of these scholar and provided the background for the creation of the a priori codes.

Over the period of data collection, the researcher began to create a second set codes. These emergent codes were the actions, feelings, worldviews and perceptions of the respondents. Finally, in vivo coding was utilized, which allowed the voice of the respondent to come through and therefore deepening the researchers' understanding of the respondent's worldview. These codes are detailed in Appendix D. It is not unusual to capture anywhere between 15-40 codes at any level of coding (Saldana, 2013). However, because of both the small sample of respondents, and in some cases the length of each response to the scenario, the coding stopped at this point, as the responses became saturated.

The final step of qualitative analysis included the utilization of the Bennett (1993) scoring tool to score each respondent's response to the six scenarios. Each Bennett (1993) score has its own descriptor, from which words were extracted and aligned to the respondent's coded answers. A score of 1 or denial stage was issued as the lowest score and a score of 6 or integration was issued as the highest score. The scores for each response to the individual six scenarios were averaged into one mean score. To get the individual scores for each response, the emerging codes from each scenario response were aligned to the appropriate score on the Bennett scoring tool. For example, for one respondent, the emerging codes in a singular response to a scenario were, "teachable moment," "speak to students" and "immediate action," which aligned with a score of a 4 or "adaptation." The emerging codes from the same respondent's answer to the another scenario was "avoidance," "down play," "offer book circle after school," "mandatory overrides," "student choice," "opinions," or "unfit," and aligned to a score of a two or "defense." The same scoring method was utilized for all six scenarios and then averaged into one mean score. The mean score for each participant was then aligned to the number of referrals the participants reported. This analysis of the cultural competency score and reported referrals will be discussed in the next section.

Quantitative Analysis

SPSS was used to run statistical analysis of ODR data and the numerical cultural competency score. Codes created to qualitatively analyze the independent variables collected from part one of the ICCQ. The independent variables were the number of ODRs participants reported, and other independents variables such as race, gender, years in teaching, and school organization (K-6, K-8, 7-12), and was organized into an Excel

spreadsheet. The research question for this study is: what is the relationship between the number of ODRs that urban middle school teachers reported writing during the research time frame and the mean cultural competence score. Therefore, tests were conducted to determine this relationship, with the mean cultural competency score for each participant added to the Excel spreadsheet. The arrival of the competence score will be described in the next section. The first test run was a scatter plot analysis. To determine the strength of the relationship between the reported ODRs and the cultural competency score. Next, a correlation coefficient was obtained by running a Pearson's correlation test. Finally, a case summary test was run to assist with the analysis of each participants' reporting of ODR data and his/her corresponding cultural competency score.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the research setting, its participants, tools used and data analysis were articulated. To answer the research question regarding the relationship between the number of ODRs that urban middle school teachers submit and cultural competence, the study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data. A two-part survey was created using Qualtrics to collect and organize the qualitative data (the number of ODRs teachers reported and the ICCQ scores) and the ICCQ was used to collect the qualitative data (the narrated responses from the teachers). The analysis of the ICCQ included running analytical tests using SPSS and qualitative coding procedures so that an appropriate cultural competency score could be applied. The next chapter will provide details of the findings from the quantitative portion of the study and the results from the qualitative portion of the study. This analysis will answer the research question and provide insight into the relationships that have surfaced because of this study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The hypothesis for this study is that urban middle school teachers, who write high numbers of referrals for urban middle school students, may demonstrate a lack of cultural competency in responding to student behavior. The research design was an exploratory sequential mixed method, where the qualitative data was collected first, analyzed and the results used in quantitative analysis (Creswell, 2014). Because the research question is looking for a relationship between the number of ODRs and teacher levels of cultural competence, multiple quantitative tests were conducted.

The tool used to capture the data was a computer-generated survey called the Instructor Cultural Competency Questionnaire (ICCQ). The qualitative findings are connected to the quantitative findings via qualitative analysis of the teacher's responses. This analysis resulted in a numerical cultural competency score provided by the Bennett Tool of Cultural Competency. Participants responded to six cultural scenarios and each response was given a score. The scores were then averaged into one mean score per participant and tested with the number of ODRs the participants reported. The findings of these tests and the results of the analysis will be discussed in this chapter.

Research Question

The research question guiding this study was: Is there a relationship between the number of ORDs that middle school teachers write and levels of cultural competence. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze the relationship between the number

of office disciplinary referrals (ODR) urban middle school teachers write and cultural competence.

Qualitative Analysis Findings

While each participant was given a mean score, six themes emerged, which cut across all 37 participants. These themes aided in providing the context of the participants' perspectives on responding to cultural issues and providing a deeper understanding of current issues that may inform decisions that impact students. The scenarios of the original ICCQ were set up as cultural issues in the following categories: *issues resulting from in-class discussion*, *issues resulting from teacher behavior*, *issues resulting from in-class student behavior*, *issues raised by an individual student*, *issues raised by small group dynamic*, and *issues surfacing during group discussions*. Table 4.1 illustrates the highlights of each scenario. The context of the full scenarios can be found in Appendix B.

The coding process, and analysis across all participants' responses to the scenarios, resulted in six themes. As indicated by Table 4.1, each theme coincides with a cultural issue. The qualitative analysis that resulted in the emerging themes will be described in the next chapter, as well a discussion of the application of a Bennett Scale cultural competency score for each theme that surfaced. While each individual teacher received a cultural competency score, applying a Bennett score to the themes determined the overall cultural competence among answers across all 37 participants.

Table 4.1

Cultural Conflict Scenario Summaries

Cultural Issue	Scenario	Emerging Theme
Issues resulting from in-class discussion	Discussion on the American Civil Rights among 8th graders turn into the benefits of a program for urban students of color. How would make sure all students had an opportunity to contribute?	The importance of relationships and inclusivity in a diverse classroom
Issues resulting from teacher behavior	The teacher asks a Black, female student to describe what she knows about gravity. The student asks, "Is that when my mom tells me to pull out my dress that is hanging in the closet?" The teacher responds quite firmly, "Not pull out, take down. Down is an example of gravity. You don't say 'pull out' ".	The importance of immediate advocacy for cultural sensitivity
Issues resulting from in-class student behavior	You overhear a group of students discussing what her hair looks like underneath. One student says that he believes the student never washes her hair. An	Recognizing teachable moments and acting in the moment
Issues raised by an individual student	You are explaining an assignment to a class 7th graders which requires them to interview their family members for the purposes of creating a family tree. One student blurts out, "I don't even who fucking my father is!"	The recognition of human error, remorse and repair
Issues raised by small group dynamic	You are discussing the transportation arrangements for a White student who will need to attend another school outside of his neighborhood that will better meet the student's needs. A school staff member shared concern regarding the student riding the bus with "those" students.	The reality of racism and courageous conversation
Issues surfacing during group discussions.	A colleague presents the use of an ELA text to you that he believes is more culturally responsive and reflective of the population of students in the 6th grade. You agree to his logic for the change in text, however as he makes his case to other teachers at the meeting, it is immediately shut down.	Avoidance of making decisions for students that may negatively impact teachers' responsibility to policy

Themes

The first theme to emerge was *the importance of relationships and inclusivity in a*

diverse classroom resulting from an in-class discussion. In the first scenario, the

participants responded to a class discussion on a school diversifying program, in which

the teacher noticed that most of the comments were coming from Black students and that the Whites students appeared uncomfortable. The word "encourage" was used in 80% of the responses, indicating that most the participants were aware of the need to assist students in having a courageous conversation that may be difficult, depending on the class dynamic. For example, one teacher stated that a conversation with the White students could be held after class to determine why they were quiet and "encourage" their voices to be heard as well, even if it was difficult to do so. Participants also responded by demonstrating a sense inclusivity; making sure that no student was left out of a what can be considered a racially sensitive discussion. One participant said, "every opportunity would be made to include the White students into the conversation. Another participant made the statement, "all opinions matter here." Some participants' responses indicated that they felt the need to act in the moment. For example, one participant noted, "timing is important to make sure that all students' voices are represented." A similar response was, "I would call the White student by name and invite him/her to respond, but not insist." These responses indicated that, based on the relationship that was created with students, these participants felt accustomed to recognizing awkwardness and tried to adjust the atmosphere on the spot so that all students felt safe in in discussing topics that are culturally sensitive.

The overall theme of this scenario received a Bennett (1993) score of a 4, or *adaptation*. This is when individuals recognize cultural differences, without evaluating them as positive or negative. Answers indicated that more is desired to be learned about someone from a different cultural background/perspective and/or realizes his or her own shortcomings in dealing with the situation. The participants who responded to this

scenario valued a safe atmosphere for students to speak and valued the lived experiences of their students. Similarly, these participants responded in a manner that did not pass any judgement on the students for being quiet, but were encouraging to add to the conversation, therefore leading to additional perspectives to contribute to the conversation.

The second theme to emerge was *the importance of immediate advocacy for cultural sensitivity resulting from teacher behavior.* In this scenario, the participants were to respond to a situation where one teacher observed another teacher publicly admonish and embarrass a student for, what was believed, the wrong use of a word. In some ways, the participants appeared to either advocate for the student, who could not find the words to advocate for herself, or, to advocate for the teacher to recognize a situation as a cultural conflict. Advocating for the student showed up in responses where one participant stated he/she would, "ask the student to explain what she meant." Most participant's answers demonstrated that it was critical to make the student who looked embarrassed feel better and to "encourage" her to remain engaged. Some participants responded with the action to immediately "interject into the lesson" to restore order to the rest of the students who were laughing.

Examples of teacher advocacy appeared in responses from teachers who said that they would speak to the teacher after class. One teacher said, "it is difficult to notice if you're being insensitive in or out of the classroom." That teacher gave the teacher in the scenario the benefit of the doubt – that she was "possibly unaware that her reaction to the student was negative." Another teacher mentioned that the conversation after class "needed to include a lesson on the linguistic nature of people from other cultures, which

may have been why she felt the students' verbal response to her question was wrong." More than half of the participants mentioned that the teacher's comment to the student was unprofessional, specifically stating that, "it is in no way good practice to publicly embarrass a student." Participants, who indicated that they would interject, also added their opinion that the teacher in the scenario responded negatively to the student. Words like "rude," "insensitive," and "out of touch were used to demonstrate this opinion. Other immediate actions including "confronting the teacher on the spot" about the possible miscommunication, while, other teachers mentioned the behavior of the student's classmates, "admonishing the behavior of the students who were laughing at the exchange between the teacher and student," for example. Another participant explained that an after-class conversation would include a discussion on "meeting students where they are." This participant followed up with, "knowing who your students are will help guide how we engage with them." In the responses described, the participants recognized that it is critical to student performance, and to teacher integrity to speak up, especially when it may be easier to remain quiet.

The overall theme of this scenario received a Bennett (1993) score of a 5, or *acceptance*. This is when individuals can change their behavior when interacting with individuals from other cultures. Answers indicated that individuals engage in active diversity efforts, possibly by speaking to others to learn more about cultural differences or by trying to modify his or her own behavior. The responses to the scenario indicated the importance of recognizing cultural differences to avoid a cultural conflict. The responses offered how he/she would address the teacher to become more sensitive or aware of students from diverse backgrounds in how they talk and/think. This

conversation could result in a teacher getting to know her students and therefore initiating changed behavior in how they respond to them.

The third theme to emerge was *recognizing teachable moments and acting in the moment, resulting from in-class student behavior*. Participants were asked to respond to a scenario where a teacher overheard a group of students appearing to make fun of a female student wearing a hijab. Many participants responded to this scenario with a sense urgency to redirect the students who appeared to be insensitive to the new student. Words like, "immediate," "interject," "on the spot," "interrupt," "steer," and "halt" were used to describe in what way the teacher would react to the comments overheard. Several teachers said that they would "admonish" the students for showing disrespect toward the new student. At least three fourths of the participants would use the situation as a "teachable moment" and that students were "often curious." For example, one participant noted, "a student's curiosity is a teachable moment . . . a prime opportunity for me to address the students' misunderstanding of the new student's culture." Similarly, another teacher said that "when people are uneducated on something they revert to put downs and sarcasm." One participant rationalized that, "at the middle school level, students may not know how to respectfully inquire about something or someone unfamiliar with them." Another participant noted that, "kids at this age can be subconsciously mean to their peers."

The emotional reaction of the new student was not ignored in the participants' responses. Most teachers addressed this by using words/phrases like, "take to the side," "apologize," "invite to educate her peers," indicating the importance of dealing with student behavior, while simultaneously trying attend to the student who may have felt bad

by the comments. Whether the comments were meant to be hard by the female student or not, much of the participants' responses were to act immediately to students' comments toward a fellow student's cultural dress.

The overall theme of this scenario also received a Bennett (1993) score of a 5, or acceptance - when individuals can change their behavior when interacting with individuals from other cultures. Again, the answers indicated that the instructor engages in active diversity efforts, possibly by speaking to others to learn more about cultural differences or by trying to modify his or her own behavior. Participants responded that they would interrupt the conversation and take the time to address the students' curiosity, despite the negative tone assumed. This interruption could possibly change the tone of their conversation to one of respectful curiosity, while at the same time providing a safer atmosphere for the student to share the significance of the hijab, hopefully gaining understanding and acceptance from her peers.

The fourth theme to emerge was the *recognition the importance of human error, remorse, and repair in an issue raised by an individual student.* Participants were asked to respond to a scenario where a teacher is explaining a project on constructing a family tree. In doing so, a student has an emotional outburst about not know who her father is, which causes other students to verbally contribute to the situation. While the use of profanity may not be welcomed or encouraged in classrooms, not one participant addressed it in their response. In fact, most responses began with some sort of apology. One participant said, "egg on my face. I would explain to my students that it never occurred to me and apologize how insensitive such an idea was." Another participant responded even more candidly by saying that she would, "apologize and call myself out

for being the dumb white woman that this exercise so clearly revealed." One participant also responded with a "my bad" and began to talk about his/her own family and how it too was "not a conventional one." There were a few more response like this, where participants found an opportunity to redirect the lesson and discuss family structure. One participant suggested, "modeling lessons first, showing what a possible tree looked like, may have reduced the likelihood that students would push back." There were responses from some who took the restorative approach. One participant mentioned the importance of, "recognizing the emotional state of the student who blurted out and making a direct apology to her." Some teachers appeared to step out of the role of the instructional leader and into one of someone who students could relate to. For example, 22 participants mentioned that they would took the time to "share" their own family tree, demonstrating the fact that not everyone was raised in a nuclear family. This overarching response demonstrated participants' trying to correct assumptions and to connect to the students to make the lesson more relevant.

The overall theme of this scenario too received a Bennett (1993) score of a 5, or *adaptation* - when individuals can change their behavior when interacting with individuals from other cultures. These answers indicated that the instructor engages in active diversity efforts, possibly by speaking to others to learn more about cultural differences or by trying to modify his or her own behavior. These teachers all responded in way where they either accepted that they erred the way the lesson was presented, also in the context of the lesson. The teachers also indicated that they would share something personal to make connection to the students and to make the learning more personal and relevant.

The fifth theme to emerge was *the reality of racism and courageous*

conversations raised by small group dynamic. The participants were asked to respond to

a scenario where, during a teacher meeting, another staff member mentions her concern

of a white student having to ride a bus with "those students." About half of the

participants of responded by using the word "probably," implying that, based on both the

circumstances, and how that person was feeling in the moment, would a response occur.

One example of this response was, "The use of the words 'those students' would

definitely raise an eyebrow, but honestly, my response would depend on how comfortable

I was with my colleagues." Another teacher said that he/she would "probably speak to the

teacher after the meeting to get clarification on 'those students'."

Another response was slightly more courageous. For example, one participant

said, "I'd politely ask, might you clarify what you meant by those students?" Most of the

responses asked for immediate clarification and not in a way to protect the school staff

member who made the comment. An example of this was, "I would not have a problem

asking what was meant by 'those students', knowing full well that the remark was racist."

Another response was, "I would call out the adult and figure out precisely " who was the

intended target of the ignorant and racist statement. Similarly, a teacher responded with

the phrase, "SPEAK UP!" followed by, "I would ask the teacher to whom she was

referring and before she answered, follow up with the fact that we serve all students

here." This teacher also stated that not saying anything means that, "you are just as

guilty."

The overall theme of this scenario also received a Bennett (1993) score of a 5, or

acceptance - when individuals can change their behavior when interacting with

individuals from other cultures. These answers also indicated that the instructor engages in active diversity efforts, possibly by speaking to others to learn more about cultural differences or by trying to modify his or her own behavior. While the responses were varied, most were intent on getting clarification, at some point, indicating that there was a problem with the comment, specifically that it was insensitive and racist. Some of the responses indicated that they would speak up about the comment on the spot, while others indicated that they may have a conversation with the adult later, but it would depend on the one thing or the other. In both cases, participants felt that the need to make the person, recognize the error in her speech, leading to further communication to learn more about her cultural perspectives.

The sixth theme to surface was *the avoidance of making decisions for students that may negatively impact teachers' professional responsibility, an issue surfacing during group discussions.* Participants were asked to respond to a scenario of one teacher looking for support from the English department to approve 6th grade students reading a more diverse text in English class; one not on the required reading list. While "you" (the respondent) agree with the change in text, your colleagues push back. Largely, the responses to this scenario highlighted teachers who were not ready or comfortable to push back on a mandated curriculum. Some of the responses attempted to explain a current system of text selection. For example, participant explained that, "some texts are for social enjoyment and some are prescribed for our academic course, which are leveled to increase in rigor as students get older. That's why current text in ELA are selected." Another participant felt a specific response would "derail" the meeting and followed up

with, "later I would conference with the co-teacher to find out if there were a way to compromise substitute a boring book with one frequently recommended by students."

Other responses appeared to avoid discussion by dismissing the idea because of mandated curriculum. There were many suggestions to reading non-curricular text "outside of the school day." One teacher said, "perhaps these 'extracurricular' books could be added on for out-of-class readings and book talks." Another teacher rationalized that, "some things we have to do because we are required to and, in this, we may learn something that we did not know." Another participant stated, "this situation may call for an author study that can be held after school." Surprisingly, the same participant added the importance of "validating our students' needs and feelings," yet concluded with, "for this moment we have to read what is required."

The overall theme of this scenario received a Bennett (1993) score of a 2, or *defense*. Individuals acknowledge the existence of cultural differences, but because these differences are threatening, construct defenses against them. Answers placed blame on other entities by attributing the concerns or treatment directly on something or someone else. The teachers who responded to this scenario either downplayed the concern the teacher brought to the committee regarding a more diverse book choice, by the suggestion of specific books be a part club after school, or blamed a mandated curriculum that they responsible for carrying out. In both cases the responses of the teachers suggest that it was more difficult to change intuitionally set mandates, like an ELA text selection, and suggests there could be retribution if doing so.

When analyzing the responses to the scenarios, clarity arose that in a society where racism is still an issue, the responses from this study indicate that educators are

attempting to level the playing field inside the classroom. The themes that surfaced in this analysis mentioned nothing about race (Black vs. White or any other race), nor did it marginalize the students, who were the subjects of all the scenarios. What did surface among the responses was the participants appearing to operate in a manner that is, on some level, culturally competent. The responses attempted to demonstrate servicing students, advocating for their voices to be heard and to be equitable.

Their responses also demonstrated that there is still room for growth. While most of the participants' cultural competency score was the mid to high range, the ODR reporting was needed to assist in confirming the hypothesis. To better determine if cultural competency impacted the number of ODRs, the cultural competency scores were utilized in quantitative statistical tests described in the next section.

Quantitative Analysis Findings

The research question sought to determine if the number of ODRs middle school teachers reported is related to their level of cultural competency. The qualitative analysis resulted in a numerical mean cultural competency score for each of the 37 participants and was tested against the number of ORDs each participant reported. Analysis, via a scatter box graph (Figure 4.1), was initiated to demonstrate the statistical data in a more visual manner. The hypothesis of the study is that teachers who demonstrate a higher level of cultural competency, will report lower ODRs. A scatter box demonstrates a change in one variable accompanied by a change in another variable. If there was a relationship between the number of ODRs and cultural competency, as the scores got closer to 6, the plots would cluster to the lower right of the graph, thus conforming the hypothesis. Instead, the results demonstrated a linear relationship between the number of

ODRs and a teacher's mean cultural competency score across all scores. Therefore, the hypothesis cannot be confirmed. The scatter box shows two participants, who scored the highest cultural competency, a level 6, had the lowest referrals, while five teachers, who also had a somewhat high cultural competency score at a level 5, reported anywhere from one to fifteen ODRs. The results of this test do not conclude a definitive relationship between the number of ODRs middle school teachers write and their level of cultural competence, indicating that there are other factors that may contribute to the frequency of initiating discipline.
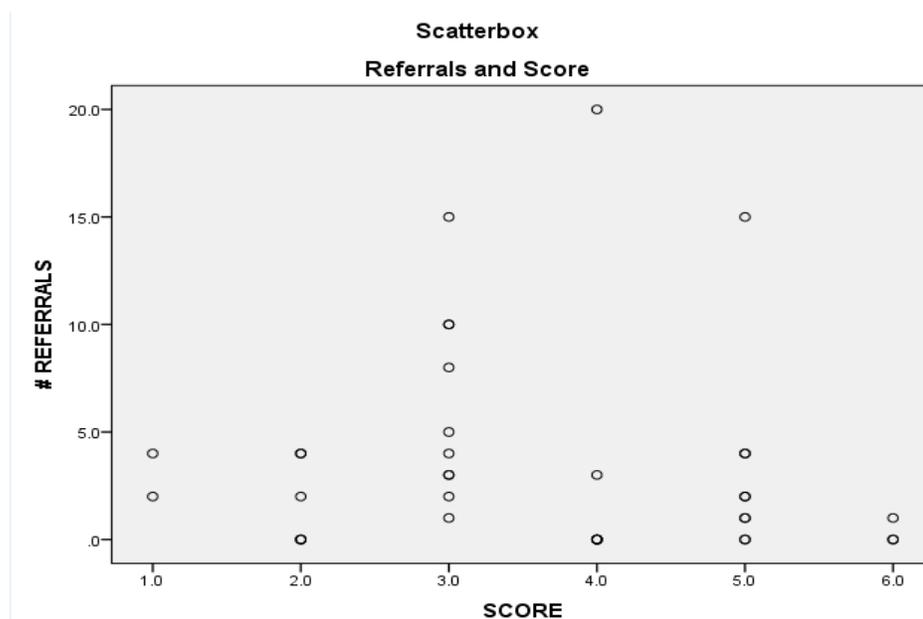
Figure 4.1. Scatter plot.

To further confirm the results of the scatter box, a statistical measure of strength was required. The most statistically common tested used to test the strength of a relationship of two variables is a correlation coefficient (Einspurch, 2005). For this study, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient test was computed to assess the relationship between the cultural competency score and the number of referrals that the teachers reported on the ICCQ survey. The correlation coefficient, or *r*, always ranges

between values of +1 to -1 (Einspurch, 2005). A value of 0 indicates that there is no direct relationship, a value of +1 indicates a perfect association, and a value l of -1 indicates a negative association or an inverse relationship (Einspurch, 2005). In this study, the coefficient test resulted in the *r,* at -.094, close to the r of -1, indicating a weak relationship and demonstrating that there was no significant relationship between the number of referrals reported and the cultural competency score. See Figure 4.2.

Correlations

		# REFERRALS	SCORE
# REFERRALS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.094
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.581
	N	37	37
SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.094	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.581	
	N	37	37

Figure 4.2. Correlation results.

Interpretation of Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

While, the qualitative analysis did show that the sample of middle school teachers were more culturally competent in responding to student behaviors than not, the results did not indicate that these teachers were less likely to issue ORD's based on their response to the cultural scenario. Figure 4.3 is a case summary, demonstrating the number of referrals reported by of all 37 participants, and their corresponding cultural competency score. The first column is the participant, indicated by a number, followed by the number of referrals reported and his/her cultural competency score. The table will show that most of the participants scored a 3 on the Bennett (1993) tool, and therefore at the stage of "minimization." The Bennett tool (1993) described this stage as acknowledging cultural differences, but trivialize them, assuming they are superficial and

that human similarities outweigh the differences. Individuals at this stage appeared to not feel the need to question the unknown, but are willing to take at face value.

Because the number of reported ODRs by those participants, whose mean score was a level 3 were so varied, the study could not conclude the number of referrals had anything to do with how culturally competent the teachers were at the time of data collection. Similarly, those participants who scored a 4 or 5 reported submitting significantly high numbers of ODRs. Individuals at this stage either appeared to recognize cultural differences in values, without evaluating them as positive or negative (score 4) or able to change their behavior when interacting with individuals from other cultures (score 5). If the hypothesis were confirmed, then the participants who scored a 4 or 5 would have reported lower numbers of ODRs. Therefore, confirming again, that there was no significant correlation between the number of referrals written by middle level teachers and their cultural competence.

The correlation coefficient, scatter box graph, and case summary table all concluded that participants' ODR reporting was not impacted by their cultural competency score. The scatter box analysis found that teachers, with even a median score of a three, reported writing between two and fifteen ODRs. This is quite a range and therefore not helpful in disconfirming the hypothesis that middle school teachers who write more referrals will have a lower cultural competency score. The Pearson correlation coefficient results also determined that there was no relationship between the number of ODRs that the teachers reported and their cultural competency score. Finally, the case summary table visually demonstrated that while some participants' cultural competency scores fell into the median range, the number of ODRs reported were skewed. Therefore,

PARTICIPANT	# REFERRALS	SCORE
1	15.0	3.0
2	.0	4.0
3	.0	2.0
4	.0	4.0
5	.0	6.0
6	4.0	5.0
7	.0	4.0
8	2.0	5.0
9	3.0	3.0
10	8.0	3.0
11	.0	5.0
12	.0	6.0
13	15.0	5.0
14	4.0	2.0
15	3.0	3.0
16	10.0	3.0
17	10.0	3.0
18	.0	4.0
19	1.0	5.0
20	2.0	5.0
21	4.0	2.0
22	5.0	3.0
23	20.0	4.0
24	3.0	4.0
25	.0	5.0
26	.0	2.0
27	.0	2.0
28	4.0	5.0
29	1.0	3.0
30	4.0	3.0
31	.0	4.0
32	2.0	2.0
33	1.0	6.0
34	1.0	5.0
Total N	34	

Figure 4.3. Case summaries.

the findings of this study demonstrated that a higher than average level of cultural competence, or very low level of cultural competency has no significance on the number ODRs written. Therefore, the definitive answer to the research question regarding the relationship between the number of ODRs middle school teachers write is that there is not a significant relationship.

Chapter Summary

This study was an examination of the relationship between the number of ODRs that urban middle school teachers write and cultural competence. The exploratory, sequential, mixed method design prescribes that qualitative data is analyzes first, followed by quantitative data analysis to confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis that urban middle school teachers who write a higher number of referrals will result in a lower cultural competency score. The qualitative analysis resulted several overall themes across all six scenarios and 37 participants. These themes concluded that the sample of participants' cultural competence was mid to upper middle level, based on a low score of one, to a high score of 6. However, the qualitative analysis was not able to tease out if the participants' response to the scenarios would have resulted in an ODR. This missing data could have been resolved if the scenarios involving student behavior were presented with student removal as an option. Because they were not, this will be considered a limitation and discussed in the next chapter.

Conducted second, the results of the quantitative analysis found that there was no significant relationship between the number of ODRs the participants reported and their cultural competency score. The test showed that participants whose score resulted in a high level of cultural competency, also reported a high number of ODRs. Even

participants who scored mid-level, reported skewed number of ODRs. The qualitative

analysis confirmed the quantitative, in that both sets of data demonstrated that the number

of ODRs that urban middle school teachers write have no relationship to cultural

competence. The final chapter will discuss the limitations of this study and discuss

possible recommendations to reducing the number of ODRs that urban middle school

students receive.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

In the United States, urban middle school students have historically received the highest number of ODRs than elementary or high school students (Hilberth & Slate 2013; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Predy et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2002). The use of the ODR is meant to serve as a document to track the progress in reducing student behavior. However, for some marginalized students, the ODR has become a pathway toward suspensions, contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2003). While the purpose of this study was not meant to focus on a racial group receiving the ODRs, studies have demonstrated that Black students, in urban public schools, receive the highest number of ODRs and even higher so at the middle school level.

Bradshaw et al. (2010) hypothesized that because White teachers out number any other teacher based on race, then White teachers must initiate ODRs more frequently to Black students, due to a possible misunderstanding of behavior that may be cultural. However, Townsend (2002) clarified that the race of a teacher may not always associate with how he or she perceives the behavior or academic aptitude of Black students. Townsend (2002), along with other researchers in the field of cultural competence, determined that an environment and teacher's practices, situated in cultural competence, more often contribute to the success of historically underserved students (Gay, 2000; Hollie, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Losen, 2011; Skiba & Losen, 2011, Skiba et al.,

1997; West et al., 2008). This claim, and the disproportionate number of ODRs issued for middle school students, became the foundation for this study.

Summary of the Study

A detailed, exploratory sequential mixed methods analysis was conducted to answer the research question regarding the relationship between the number of office disciplinary referrals (ODR) that urban middle school teachers write and their level of cultural competence. The level of competence was demonstrated by a cultural competency score of a one through six. The qualitative analysis was conducted first, resulted in the necessary cultural competency score to be used to run quantitative tests.

The qualitative analysis resulted in six themes that demonstrated that either participants responded to student behavior on the spot or advocated for students who were marginalized and may not have had a voice. A scatter plot graph indicated that more participants scored in the mid-to high range of cultural competency. However, these same participants also reported high numbers of ORDs, while no response to the ICCQ resulted in the use of the ODR. The summary of the statistical findings of this study also concluded that there was no direct correlation the number of ODRs that the participants reported and their cultural competence. The correlation coefficient resulted in -.094, a demonstration of a weak relationship between ODR and the participants' cultural competency score. Therefore, the qualitative and quantitative analysis disconfirm the hypothesis that teachers who have a high level of cultural competency will write fewer referrals.

Findings Related to the Literature

Middle school teachers. In the United States, urban middle school students have historically received the highest number of ODRs than elementary or high school students (Hilberth & Slate 2013; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2002). The scenarios presented in this study were situated in a middle school classroom and with middle school student behaviors in mind. Predy, McIntosh and Frank (2014) indicated that middle school student behavior can extremely challenging and often need administrative support. Hilberth and Slate's (2014) study indicated that there are some secondary teachers (grade 9-12), displaced to teach in a middle school atmosphere.

In this study, twenty-nine out of 37 participants, or 78% of the sample reported submitting referrals in the 8-week time-period. While this number could be representative of what research current says about middle school students receiving the most referrals, it cannot be confirmed since neither elementary or high school teachers were invited to participate in this study to compare ODR data. The scenarios for this study did not ask the participants, who identified as middle school teachers, to determine the "why" of specific behaviors, just what he/she would do. Thus, the results could not confirm or deny the finding from the studies mentioned. These deficiencies will be discussed further in the limitations section.

The office disciplinary referral. The office disciplinary referral (ODR) is meant to serve as a document to track the progress in reducing student behavior (Predy et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2002). Analysis of the documentation on an ODR is meant to track behavior, design purposeful interventions for students who exhibit chronic behavior in school, predict future behavior problems and create school climate and culture protocols

that are specific (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Irvin et al., 2006; Predy et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 1997). The results of the sequential exploratory analysis resulted that most participants, or 78%, submitted an ODR. However, the actual effectiveness of the ODR is questionable, especially when the scatter plot graph demonstrated one participant who reported issuing 20 ODRs in an eight-week time-period, while three teachers reported issuing less than five. This study was conclusive in determining that the actual intended use of the ODR is absent, especially when more than half of the participants reported issuing them multiple times in the eight-week research period. Studies have determined that when the ODR data is tracked and analyzed over time, the number of referrals should decrease. Maximizing the effectiveness of the ODR requires time and trained people dedicated to its compilation and analysis (Irving et al., 2006). This study asked participants to report the number of ODRs, which is not significant in determining the effectiveness of the ODR, only confirmation that they are used

Cultural competence. Research has surfaced indicating that increasing cultural competence would reduce the number of ODRs urban middle school students receive. Some of the recommendations included providing support for teachers to work more effectively for and with diverse learners (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). Mendez and Knoff (2003) also offered that educators take a more ecological approach to discipline to understand why certain racial groups are overrepresented in suspension. Skiba et al. (2011) suggested that because many Black and Latino students are referred for administrative action and receive punishment for "minor misbehavior" (p. 103), schools should take a closer look at the emerging research on culturally responsive pedagogy and classroom management.

Cultural competence can be defined as creating and maintaining a classroom environment that works for all students, regardless of their social-cultural diversity, while creating a classroom atmosphere in which the teacher maximizes the learning potential of all students (Roberson et al., 2002). Losen, 2011, Skiba & Losen, 2011, Skiba et al 1997 all contend that cultural competence may redefine how teachers view behavior to assess whether to initiate an ODR. However, the results of the Instructor Cultural Competency Questionnaire (ICCQ) demonstrated that this is not exactly the case. While it appeared that most of the teachers in this study are culturally competent on some level, based on most of the teachers receiving a score of three or higher, the results did not significantly impact the number of ODRs they reported. These mid-level and higher scoring teachers reported submitting ODRs in the range of three to 20 in a six-week period. This wide range was not very helpful in concluding that cultural competence will reduce the number of ODRs middle school teachers write, which conflicts with emerging research recommending that training in cultural competence will ultimately reduce the number of ODRs teachers write (Gay, 2000; Hollie, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Losen, 2011; Skiba & Losen, 2011, Skiba et al., 1997; West et al., 2008).

Hollie (2011) claims that cultural competence does not replace strong classroom management. It is important to note that the results of this study do not suggest teaching diverse students with a cultural competence mindset should not be considered in reducing ODRs. However, the results did conclude that a culturally competent mindset is not sufficient in many classrooms today.

Limitations

There were several limitations within this study. The first limitation was the data collection tool. The ICCQ was a two-part, electronic, survey designed to collect demographic information via a dropdown, checkbox mode for part one and part two collecting data in the form of a narrated response. By the end of the data collection time, a total of 355 participants started the survey. One hundred and fifteen participants did not meet the criteria of being a full-time middle school teacher and were directed to the end of the survey. Two-hundred and three participants did meet the criteria; however, they did not continue to respond to the scenarios. Fowler (2014) suggests that a survey with checkboxes is more amenable to participants. Its faster and may yield a larger sample. The fact that part two of the survey required more time and thought may have dissuaded teachers from continuing.

The ICCQ had two parts. Among other information collected in part one, the participants were asked to report how many referrals were written during a specific time-period. This self-reporting could result in underreporting, another limitation. Writing an ODR means administrative assistance is needed (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Irvin et al., 2006; Predy et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 1997). High referral reporting may indicate that a teacher may be weak on classroom management and therefore may result in inaccurate reporting.

The actual context of the scenarios of the ICCQ also resulted in a limitation. Each scenario concluded with asking the participant, "what would you do?" For this study, the scenarios involving students did not offer the option for student removal, therefore possible initiation of an ODR. The reason for this was to remain true to the original scenarios of the created by Roberson et al. (2002), whose scenarios also did not suggest a

punitive response. However, because their study stated that the ICCQ can be used for a "variety of purposes" (p. 50), the scenarios used for this study could have asked if the participant would have suggested student removal for those scenarios where student behavior was questionable.

The size of the sample was also a limitation. Initially, a larger N was sought to strengthen the study. This may have been achieved if the scenarios were presented as part of a focus group; a method where data can be gathered faster from a group, at one time (Fowler, 2014; Saldana, 2013). While this method is just as timely in analyzing the results, the analysis could commence faster due to not having to wait for results to come in. While the N is relatively small for a quantitative study (Huck, 2012), which may affect the generalizability to study other districts, the rich qualitative data analysis was conclusive and able to answer the research question for this research district.

The time of year that the survey was distributed also provided a limitation. This survey was disseminated at the end of May. For educators, September, Christmas and June are usually not good times to collect data (Roberts, 2010). During these times of year, teachers are at various stages of getting to know students, especially during the months of September and October. By Christmas and June, a teacher's personal stamina for turning attention to non-school-related activities, like completing a survey such as the one used for this study, may be diminished or absent. The best time to collect data from teachers are the end of November and February through March (Roberts, 2010).

Recommendations for Practice

The number of ORDs for urban middle school students has historically been relatively higher than in elementary and high school schools (Hilberth & Slate 2013;

Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Monroe, 2009; Skiba et al., 2002). Past studies have recommended cultural competence in teacher practice and in policy to positively impact students from diverse backgrounds (He, 2013; McAllister, 2002; Roberson et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2002). The first recommendation impacts the use of the ODR by schools and by teachers. The second recommendation involves professional development that impacts teacher engagement with students.

The first recommendation is a result of research presented in the literature section which demonstrated the intended and proper use of the ORD (Vincent et al., 2012). Vincent et al. 2012 highlighted various positive student outcomes with proper ODR analysis and intervention. McIntosh et al. (2010) and Predy et al. (2014) support the use of the ODR for effective and efficient progress monitoring of problem behavior, especially in the middle school. Their studies also explicitly state that the process for maintaining ODR information is timely and required a concentrated effort. Therefore, schools may benefit from a team of behavioral data specialists for this task. However, access to these kinds of resources to do this may be lacking. In this event, with proper training, teachers can keep track of their own ODRs and analyze them for their own professional development and classroom management. This type of data keeping may be a reflective tool for teachers and assist in providing classroom norms and expectations for their students. Districts may find it worth the investment in a centralized team dedicated to analyzing ODR data on a district level, scaffold down to a school building level, and finally classroom by classroom.

The nationally known school-wide information system (SWIS) is a popular data collection tool used nationwide to track ODR behavior by school (Predy et al., 2014).

Because the results of the study indicated the number of ODRs was not impacted by cultural competence, there must are other factors to take into consideration in reducing the number written in the middle school. The utilization of SWIS may allow for the district to collect and analyze ODR data to pin point trends within the context of the ODR; specifically, infraction type, time of day, race, gender, teacher's name, student grade and any other data that may result in understanding the needs of the student and serve as the foundation for intervention (Vincent et al., 2012). School data collected at the district level could then be shared with an individual school's team. This team could be made up of school counselor, school social worker, administrator and teachers. With aid from the district team, schools can access and study their school-specific ODR data to identify interventions that will help to improve the behaviors that the data show need support.

Even if a district does not use the SWIS system for data collection, districts will benefit from a standardized system and training for ODR data collection and regular or monthly analysis. This process can identify students in need of intervention early in the school year and track their behavior with the ODR throughout the year. Because student suspensions because of an ODR is higher in the middle school, this practice of early identification may slow the number of referrals in low level/high frequency infractions such as defiance. Viewing the ODR more as a proactive tool, rather than reactive may screen out negative behaviors early and educators can spend more time rewarding positive behavior.

The recommendation of professional development, based on this study, is a recommendation that includes several points. First, providing high-quality professional development for teachers may be the most important thing schools/districts can do to improve student-learning (Johnson, 2014). Professional development is offered for a variety of reasons and for varied lengths of time. However, the professional development suggested in this section require quality time immersed in the learning, as it means a mindset shift, which is not easy to do, nor does it happen instantaneously.

Because of the disproportionate submitting of ODR for children of color, many studies have recommended that schools utilize cultural competence as a framework to reform policies that may reduce suspensions and is worth exploring (Gregory et al., 2010; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Hilberth & Slate, 2012; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013; Skiba et al., 2009; Skiba, et al., 2014). This overrepresentation of students of color receiving ODRs may be reduced through teacher professional development where they may address their perception of acceptable behavior from student who are culturally different. While this study did not confirm culturally competent teachers are the silver bullet to reducing ODRs and ultimately suspension, teachers may benefit from dedicated time to reflect own their own beliefs about culture, families, expectations that distinguish themselves from their students. Some teachers may feel that students who do not conform to what they believe is acceptable behavior are bad and in need of corrective action. This teacher perception, and belief of appropriate student behavior may be the result of a cultural mismatch (Monroe, 2005), which deserves recognition and mitigation through cultural synchronization, the theory of, "balancing their school disciplinary practices with those that mirror the students' lived reality, particularly, their home discipline practices"

(Lewis et al., 2010, p. 10). Perhaps time spent engaging in workshops and conversations about cultural competence may assist teachers in navigating cultural issues with a wider lens and possibly respond to student behavior, rather than react to it.

Cultural competence in education is a teacher's practice of being continually introspective on how their own culture and biases are reflected in their interaction and engagement with their students (He, 2011; Pantic & Wubbels, 2011). This kind of reflection can only benefit a teacher who is of another culture than his/her students and may help to build a more positive relationship with students, which may reduce negative behavior. While results of the study concluded that cultural competence did not have a significant relationship to the number of ODRs that teachers write, there is still a place for understanding the philosophy of cultural competence and how to apply it teacher pedagogy and student engagement; the caveat being that being culturally responsive does not replace strong classroom management (Hollie, 2011). Monroe and Obidah's (2004) qualitative study also highlighted one of their participant's use of her student's culture as core to the creation of a positive classroom environment while maintaining her authority and control of the classroom.

The findings from this study concluded that the number of ODRs are not impacted by cultural competence. Therefore, other school-related factors are worth investigation. Losen and Gillespie (2012) cited Rausch and Skiba (2005) whose study concluded that when race and poverty were controlled, the attitude of the principal toward the use of suspension correlated with its actual use. In other words, principals who believe in suspension would suspend more and, conversely, those principals who believe

that suspension is ineffective would suspend less. However, neither school of thought

reduced the number of ODRs teachers submit in their study (Losen & Gillespie, 2012).

Because teachers are usually the author of the ODR, they may benefit from

professional development that will strengthen their classroom management. When

teachers can both provide engaging lessons, and manage their classroom, disruption tends

to decrease (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010). Similarly, there is research that states

that there is a connection between strong classroom management and improved

educational outcomes. Specifically, when applied consistently and correctly, effective

classroom management, "can work across all subject areas and all developmental levels

to promote students' self-regulation, reduce the incidents of misbehavior, and increase

productivity" (Kratochwill, 2009, p. 5). Providing teachers with professional

development to strengthening their classroom management may not only reduce ODRs,

but increase instructional time for students, which no one would argue, a win-win all

around.

Recommendations for Future Research

To reduce the number of ODRs that middle school teachers write, it may

be helpful to initiate qualitative research to study the reasons why students are referred.

Referrals often ask the teacher to check off from a list of reasons for the referral and/or

provide a space for the teacher to narrate the reason for the referral. However, some of

the reasons such as defiance of authority and disrespect, are too vague and the reasons

that most middle school students are referred to administration (Mendez & Knoff, 2003;

Predy et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2011).   If a teacher does not indicate exactly what the

student did that was defiant, the administrator's decision to act may be based on a teacher perception of what is defiant and/or disrespectful.

Future qualitative research may include teacher perceptions of student behavior. A deep dive into a school's database of ODRs can be initiated and connect each referral to the referring teacher. There are teachers who may submit a high number of referral for behaviors that they should be able to manage themselves. However, it is the teacher's perception of what is appropriate and what is not that drives the decision to issue a consequence. Therefore, studying teacher perception may uncover what teachers, specifically those teachers who submit high number of ODRs, believe is inappropriate student behavior. Similarly, the same study could focus on teachers who submit low numbers of ODRs and uncover what behaviors are considered in need of administrative support. The studies suggested may result in uncovering teacher perceptions of misbehavior, provide strategies in appropriately handling student misconduct, without losing instructional time and serve as a basis for teachers who could benefit from mentoring and teachers who would benefit to mentor struggling teachers.

Chapter Summary

This chapter demonstrated the importance of this study into the trajectory of the lives of urban middle school students as they navigate their world in school and their teachers' response to their behavior. It is critical that educators act with a sense of urgency to help students understand why rules, expectations, and even mistakes are important. Investing time into this type of education for middle school students may help to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline and be replaced with students who are hopeful about their future. The intent of this study was to fill a gap in current research that

conclude middle school students receive more referrals for discipline than elementary or high school students. Interestingly, the problem is it not about race, nor does the problem have anything to do with the level of a teacher's cultural competency. Based on the analysis for this study, the teachers in this research district generally care about their students and are looking at how they themselves can change to be of service to 21st century students. There are still factors that are either difficult to pinpoint or too sensitive to address that may contribute to a high number of ORDs. However, this study demonstrated that it was not for a lack of caring about the needs of students, but possibly because there is still a need to demonstrate, empirically, best practices on how to reduce ODRs by teachers effectively managing student behavior, before the need to write one.

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Appendix A

ICCQ Part One - Participant Demographic Questions

Question	Selection options
Job Title	Drop down box for options (building administrators, support staff and those selection "other" will be redirected to "thank you" page.
Race	Drop down: Black, White, Latino, Asian, Alaska Pacific Islander, two or more races (the demographic selection is in accordance with what the research district lists as race.
Age	Drop down : 23-28, 29-34, 35-40, 40-45, 46-51, 51-55, over 55
Gender	Male/Female
School Location	Will be a drop-down menu for options.
Years in teaching	First year (will be redirected to "thank you" page), 2-4, 5-7, 8 - 10, 11-13, 14-16, 18-20, 21-23, 23-25, more than 25
Subject(s) taught	Drop down with common content and write in text box for special subjects
School design	Check box: K-8, K-12, 7-12
Grade(s) taught (check all that apply) – those who check Pre-K – grade 5 will automatically be redirected to "thank you" page indicating that they did not qualify.	Will be a drop-down menu for options.
Approximately how many students do you teach each day?	Will be a write-in field
How many office disciplinary referrals have you submitted between spring break 2016 and Memorial Day observance 2016 ?	Open field for numerical response

Appendix B

Instructor Cultural Competency Questionnaire (ICCQ) Scenarios

1. A class discussion on the American Civil Rights among 8th graders turns into the benefits of a program for urban students of color to go to school in a suburban district and the process for getting into the program. Eighty percent of the class is Black and most are engaged in the discussion. You appreciate the inquiry and insight that the students are bringing to the conversation, however you notice that none of three White students are participating in the discussion and have exchanged glances at each other. How would you respond?

2. You are observing a fellow teacher teach a 6th grade science lesson on gravity for which you are required to give feedback on. The demographic of the class are 100% students of color; no White children are in enrolled in the class. The teacher asks a Black, female student to describe what she knows about gravity. The student asks, "Is that when my mom tells me to pull out my dress that is hanging in the closet?" The teacher responds quite firmly, "Not pull out, take down. Down is an example of gravity. You don't say 'pull out' ". The class laughs and the student looks embarrassed. How would you respond?

3. You just received a female student in your class who is wearing a hijab. You overhear a group of students discussing what her hair looks like underneath. One student says that he believes the student never washes her hair. Another student responds with "that not right!" You are not sure if the response was in defense of the student or in jest. How would you respond?

4. You are explaining an assignment to a class 7th graders which requires them to interview their family members for the purposes of creating a family tree. One student blurts out, "I don't even who fucking my father is!" Another student immediately follows with, "Me either! How am I supposed to do a stupid family tree?" Several students laugh and chime in with who is missing from their family. How would you respond?

5. During a Committee on Special Education meeting you are discussing the transportation arrangements for a White student who will need to attend another school outside of his neighborhood that will better meet the student's needs. A school staff member shared concern regarding the student riding the bus with "those" students. How would you respond?

6. Prior to a 6th grade planning meeting, a colleague presents the use of an ELA text to you that he believes is more culturally responsive and reflective of the population of students in the 6th grade. While the suggested text is like the theme and genre of the required ELA text, it is not a part of the required text to use during that specific ELA module. You agree to his logic for the change in text, however as he makes his case to other teachers at the meeting, it is immediately shut down. He looks to you for feedback.   How would you respond?

Appendix C

Bennett Model of Cultural Competence (1993)
Scoring Tool

Score	Stage	Definition	Representative Answers
1	Denial	Individuals deny that cultural differences exist. This belief reflects physical or social isolation from others from different backgrounds.	Answers reflect a failure to acknowledge that a student's concerns or treatment may be due to cultural differences.
2	Defense	Individual acknowledge the existence of cultural differences, but because these differences are threatening, construct defenses against them. One common defense mechanism is negative stereotyping.	Answers "blame the victim" by attributing the concerns or treatment directly on the student.
3	Minimization	Individual acknowledge cultural differences, but trivialize them, assuming they are superficial and that human similarities outweigh the differences.	Answers recognize the possibility of cultural differences, but these issues are trivialized and assumed to be unimportant.
4	Acceptance	Individuals recognize cultural differences in values, without evaluating them as positive or negative.	Answers indicate that the instructor wants to learn more about the student's perspective and/or realizes his or her own shortcomings in dealing with the situation.
5	Adaptation	Individuals are able to change their behavior when interacting with individuals from other cultures.	Answers indicate that the instructor engages in active diversity efforts, possibly by speaking to others in an effort to learn more about cultural differences or by trying to modify his or her own behavior,
6	Integration	Individuals integrate aspects of their own original cultural perspective with those of other cultures, becoming bicultural or multicultural.	Answers in this stage openly acknowledge the influence of culture and the instructor's efforts to see the situation through the student's eyes, educate others and act as a cultural ally.

Appendix D

Qualitative Codes

A priori codes	"relationships," "teachers as facilitators," "teachable moment," "finding relevance," "meeting students where they are," "advocacy," "change agent," "validation" and "affirming."
Emergent codes	feelings of shock, embarrassment, ability to relate to students, recognizing own short comings in lesson planning, recognition of blatant racism, avoidance, indifference, fear of admonishment by colleagues, the benefit of student choice and student-centered instruction.
In Vivo Codes	"yikes," "blunder," "be ashamed," "I don't see how this is cultural issue," "in shock," "no home training," "zero tolerance" and "my bad"