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The Academic Impact of Suspension on Black Male Students in an Urban High School

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The Academic Impact of Suspension on Black Male Students in an Urban High School

Abstract

The focus of this research was the academic impact of school suspension on Black male students in an urban high school. Findings for the study were derived from archival data retrieved with permission from the school district that served as the site of the study. The performance of 400 Black male students in the 2015 cohort of eight high schools on the New York State Algebra Regents exam was analyzed to determine whether suspension from school affected achievement as measured by the passing score on an exam which determined successful high school completion and academic success. The implications of these findings for Black males, both socially and economically, as compared to their White and Hispanic counterparts, as well as Black females are discussed. Research suggests that the policies that limit educational opportunities for Black males decrease the probability of their employment prospects, while increasing the need for welfare services, the future rate of incarceration in prisons, and the potential for commitment to psychiatric institutions. The findings from this study could inform understanding of the impact of the policy of school suspension, one of several policies which limit educational opportunities for Black male students. Implications of the study include alternative approaches to addressing student behavior in high schools and adjustment to the delivery of Math curriculum and instruction to ensure it is culturally sensitive to the diverse needs and backgrounds of all students.

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Dedication

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13

First, I must give all honor, thanks and praise to my Father in Heaven who has guided me through this journey as many obstacles attempted to block my way. My faith has proven to be stronger than any pain I have endured.

I give special thanks to my father Salti Hattar, who is my constant motivator, my hero and my inspiration on a daily basis; my mother Hanan Hattar, my role model, my brothers Samer Hattar and Amer Hattar, my sister in law Jennifer (Malota) Hattar, and my adoring nephews Dylan Hattar and Tyler Hattar, who give me hope for a better tomorrow.

To my loving extended family here on Earth and those in Heaven (especially my god father Farah Hattar, my grandparents and priest Fr. Sami), thank you for your prayers, well wishes, and guidance.

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To the Lincoln High School Class of 2018, We Did It! Thank you for inspiring me and being a part of my journey.

Biographical Sketch

Sandy S. Hattar is a tenured Assistant Principal for the Yonkers Public School District. She served as a teacher for 6 years, and most recently for the last 6 years, as an administrator. Prior to attending the St. John Fisher College Ed. D. in Executive Leadership Program for the purpose of conducting this research study, Ms. Hattar earned her Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from Iona College in 2004, her Master's Degree in Education from Iona College in 2006, and her Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Mercy College in 2008. Ms. Hattar started at St. John Fisher College in the spring of 2015 to begin her doctoral quest in the Executive Leadership Program. She pursued her research on the academic impact of suspension on Black male students in an urban high school under the direction of Dr. Frances Wills and Dr. Bil Liepold, with editing support from Dr. Janet Lyons. She received her Ed.D. degree in August 2018.

Abstract

The focus of this research was the academic impact of school suspension on Black male students in an urban high school. Findings for the study were derived from archival data retrieved with permission from the school district that served as the site of the study. The performance of 400 Black male students in the 2015 cohort of eight high schools on the New York State Algebra Regents exam was analyzed to determine whether suspension from school affected achievement as measured by the passing score on an exam which determined successful high school completion and academic success. The implications of these findings for Black males, both socially and economically, as compared to their White and Hispanic counterparts, as well as Black females are discussed. Research suggests that the policies that limit educational opportunities for Black males decrease the probability of their employment prospects, while increasing the need for welfare services, the future rate of incarceration in prisons, and the potential for commitment to psychiatric institutions. The findings from this study could inform understanding of the impact of the policy of school suspension, one of several policies which limit educational opportunities for Black male students. Implications of the study include alternative approaches to addressing student behavior in high schools and adjustment to the delivery of Math curriculum and instruction to ensure it is culturally sensitive to the diverse needs and backgrounds of all students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement

School discipline is a crucial, but under-examined factor in achievement differences by race. One of the most extreme disciplinary responses available to a school is out-of-school suspension (OSS). OSS is defined in New York State as the removal of a student from the school environment for a period not to exceed 10 days (Insley, 2001). Out-of-school suspensions are strongly associated with subsequent participation in juvenile and criminal justice systems (Toldson, 2011) and has been used extensively during the past 25 years. Typically, school suspension is intended and perceived as a punishment (Costenbader & Markson, 1998). That is, in contrast to a consequence, suspension is a disciplinary action that is delivered in response to an inappropriate act or behavior, and it usually occurs in the absence of additional interventions focused on teaching or reinforcing students' more prosocial or appropriate responses to difficult situations.

From a theoretical standpoint, the primary goal of suspension is to decrease or eliminate the probability that a student recommit an offense that is so serious that another referral to the principal's office or another suspension is necessary. Unfortunately, given that many children are suspended multiple times during the year, it does not appear that OSS is effective in this aim (Costenbader & Markson, 1994; McFadden, Marsh, Price, & Hwang, 1992). Researchers Losen et al. (2015) estimate that

public school children lost nearly 18 million days of instruction during the 2011-2012 school year because of exclusionary discipline policies.

Suspension is often applied in an arbitrary manner, used for minor, harmless offenses and is disproportionately applied to different student groups (Morrison & D’Incau, 1997). Suspension and expulsion contribute to a gradual process of academic and social disengagement that increases the probability of subsequent disciplinary exclusions, academic failure, and drop out (Butler, Joubert, & Lewis, 2009). Over the past decade, suspension and expulsion have increasingly become the primary methods for responding to problematic student behaviors in school, due in part to the widespread and contentious adoption of rigid, automatic, and exclusionary zero tolerance approaches to discipline (Leone, Mayer, Malmgren, & Meisel, 2000). Suspension and expulsion, the most common responses in discipline policies (Bohanon et al., 2006), are not effective in meeting the needs of any student and, ironically, exacerbate the very problems they are attempting to reduce. Nationally, over three million public school students received at least one out-of-school suspension and 130,000 were expelled during the 2011-2012 academic year (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). A number of researchers have observed that suspension is used by some administrators to *push out* students with problem behaviors from the school environment by creating a paper trail that ultimately seems to justify a transfer to an alternative school, or, in other cases, results in the student dropping out (Skiba, 2000).

There are no data showing that out-of-school suspension or expulsion reduces rates of disruption or improves school climate; indeed, the available data suggest

that, if anything, disciplinary removal appears to have negative effects on student outcomes and the learning climate. (Skiba et al., 2003, pp. 66-67)

Most studies investigating rates of OSS have not reported the percentage of suspended students to the school population as a whole. McFadden et al. (1992) analyzed 4,391 discipline (not student cumulative) files from all the students (kindergarten through Grade 12) in a nine-school south Florida school district, finding that 13.6% of the disciplinary actions taken involved OSS. Additionally, Costenbader and Markson (1994) in a 10-state survey focusing only on disciplined students, noted that 42% of all OSS involved students had been previously suspended one or more times. The overrepresentation of Blacks among students impacted by discipline policies and practices has incontestably helped sustain the *school-to-prison pipeline*, a term that signifies the roles schools play in putting certain students on pathways into the criminal justice system. Weissman (2015) powerfully documents the troubling ways in which suspension and expulsion excessively funnel students of color out of classrooms and into jail cells. Monahan, VanDerhei, Bechtold, and Cauffman (2014) posit that the implementation of zero tolerance policies has increased the prevalence of suspension and expulsion to address behaviors that range from dress code violations, insubordination, inappropriate language, talking back to teachers, to weapons possession, and selling drugs.

“Students who were suspended and/or expelled, particularly those who were repeatedly disciplined, were more likely to be held back a grade or to drop out than were students not involved in the disciplinary system” (Balfanz, Brynes, & Fox, 2015, pp. 63-64). Balfanz et al. (2015) found that out-of-school suspensions in ninth grade are also

significantly and negatively correlated with high school graduation, as well as postsecondary enrollment and persistence. Marchbanks et al. (2015) posited that higher suspension rates are closely correlated with higher delinquency and high school dropout rates, which have tremendous economic costs for the suspended student, the school, and our larger society. Numerous studies have found that minority students are disproportionately suspended from school (Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2000), and that Black students are suspended on average, two or three times more frequently than White students (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). Welch and Payne (2012) suggest that suspended and expelled students are much more likely to dropout, fail, and become involved in illegal activity and the criminal justice system.

Exclusionary disciplinary policies appear to increase the risk of student dropouts and failures, although ironically, their use is designed to decrease risk for schools and students when viewed through a risk management lens. Although school exclusion, also known as school suspension, is one of the most common disciplinary responses, school exclusion is not considered an effective strategy for improving problem behavior (Skiba et al., 2008). According to Darling-Hammond (2008), once suspended, students are likely to become disconnected from school, often receiving subsequent suspensions, and even entering the juvenile justice system. School exclusion has been criticized for contributing to a loss of instructional time, inefficient use of school resources, disenfranchisement between families and school, and unsupervised time out of school (Butler et al., 2009).

For 3 decades, scholarly investigations of school discipline have consistently found patterns of overrepresentation for Black males, revealing a discipline gap wherein the responses to behavioral problems of Black males were met with harsher disciplinary

measures than other racial and ethnic groups (Shirley & Cornell, 2011). According to a study conducted nationally by the civil rights division of the United States Department of Education (2012), students of color, both boys and girls, were suspended three times the rate of White students. Nationally, 12% of Black females are suspended; in contrast, only 2% of White females are suspended. Additionally, Black males remain one of the most socially and academically marginalized student groups in United States' schools (Brown, Dancy, & Davis, 2013). The most disturbing finding is that nationally on average, 36% of all Black males enrolled in middle schools and high schools were suspended at least once in 2009-2010.

Research studies suggest there is an overrepresentation of Black students, especially Black males, in the population of students who are suspended and expelled from school because of existing zero tolerance policies (Moore, Sanders, Bryan, Gallant, & Owens, 2009). Black male students as a group, have low achievement levels, excessively high suspension and expulsion rates, and a disproportionate number of special education referrals (Kunjufu, 2005). Males also appear to be overrepresented in OSS. For example, McFadden et al. (1992) reported that male students comprised over three-quarters of all disciplinary referrals in their nine schools, and Imich (1994) found that males were suspended at a 4 to 1 ratio to females.

Skiba and Peterson (2000) summarized research indicating that overrepresentation of Black students is not limited to suspensions. Such overrepresentation has been found in studies of corporal punishment as well (Shaw & Braden, 1990). Notably, according to Skiba and Peterson (2000), although such overrepresentation in disciplinary action may

be related to greater misbehavior on the part of Black students, the available evidence suggests that referral bias is a more likely explanation.

Black students are disproportionately suspended, expelled, and referred to the criminal justice system by schools. Nationally, 1.2 million Black students were suspended from K-12 public schools in a single academic year – 55% of those suspensions occurred in 13 Southern states. During the 2011-2012 academic year, Black children comprised only 18% of preschoolers in the US, but were 42% of students suspended once, and 48% of students suspended multiple times from preschools (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Skiba (2002) found that Black students are most often disciplined for being disrespectful and threatening, loitering, and making excessive noise, whereas their White schoolmates are likelier to be referred to school discipline officers for less subjective offences (i.e., smoking, leaving school without permission, vandalism, and obscene language). Similar findings emerged in the comparative study conducted by Blake, Butler, Lewis, and Darenbourg (2011), of reasons Black, Hispanic, and White girls were disciplined in an urban school district.

Minority overrepresentation in school punishment is by no means a new finding in school discipline research. Investigations of a variety of school punishments over the past 25 years have consistently found evidence of socioeconomic and racial disproportionality in the administration of school discipline. (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002, pp. 318-319)

In July 2015, educators, policymakers, and others gathered at the White House for a national summit on school discipline. Much of the discussion there and on social media

focused on how suspensions and expulsions disproportionately affect students of color and students with disabilities.

Implicit bias is heavily implicated as a contributing factor when analysing the causes of racial disproportionality in school discipline (Wald & Losen, 2007). In this context, implicit bias is defined as the mental process that causes us to have negative feelings and attitudes about people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. Because this cognitive process functions in our unconscious mind, we are typically not consciously aware of the negative racial biases that we develop over the course of our lifetime. In the general population, implicit racial bias often supports the stereotypical caricature of Black youth—especially males—as irresponsible, dishonest, and dangerous. In an ideal world, teachers and school administrators would be immune to these unconscious negative attitudes and predispositions about race. But, of course, they are not. So, for example, a 2003 study found that students who displayed a “black walking style” were perceived by their teachers as lower in academic achievement, highly aggressive, and more likely to need special education services (Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003, pp. 49-50). Ethnic minority overrepresentation in exclusionary discipline is a pressing social justice issue. Rather than relying on punishment, more effective responses to disruptive behavior, integrated into proactive policy approaches that directly teach and acknowledge expected behavior, are required (Fenning, Theodos, Benner, & Bohanon-Edmonson, 2004).

Theoretical Rationale

Critical race theory. The critical race theory (CRT) movement represents a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the

relationship among race, racism, and power (Taylor, 2009). The movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourse undertake, but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, context, group and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious. Unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law. Critical race theory and methodology in education have at least the following five elements that form their basic insights, perspectives, methodology, and pedagogy (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). According to Solórzano and Yosso, 2001 (2001) the five elements are: the intercentricity of race and racism, the challenge to dominant ideology, the commitment to social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge, and the interdisciplinary perspective.

According to Delgado (1995), critical race theory emerged in the mid-1970s with the early work of Derrick Bell (African American) and Alan Freeman (White), both of whom were deeply distressed over the slow pace of racial reform in the United States. They argued that the traditional approaches of amicus briefs, conducting protests and marches, and appealing to the moral sensibilities of decent citizens, produced smaller and fewer gains than in previous times. Before long, they were being joined by other legal scholars who shared their frustration with traditional civil rights strategies.

The connections between law and education can be clearly established (Wellington, 2015). Since education in the United States is not outlined explicitly in the nation's Constitution, it is one of the functions relegated to individual states.

Consequently, states generate legislation and enact laws designed to prescribe the contours of education. One of the earliest legislative attempts was in Massachusetts, and it required citizens of the state to provide education for its children, to insure they received moral and religious instruction. In the modern era, the intersection of school and law provided fertile ground for testing and enacting civil rights legislation. Thus, the landmark *Brown v. Board of Educ.* (1954) decision generated a spate of contentious and sometimes violent instances of school desegregation in Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, the New Orleans Public Schools, the University of Mississippi, the University of Alabama, and the University of Georgia. By the 1970s, school desegregation and civil rights battles were being fought in northern cities (Wellington, 2015).

One recurring theme that characterized the school civil rights legal battles was equal opportunity (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This notion of equal opportunity was associated with the conviction that students of color should have access to the same school opportunities as White students, these being, curriculum, instruction, funding, and facilities. This emphasis on sameness was important because it helped boost the Constitutional arguments for equal treatment under the law that were important for moving African Americans from their second-class status. Beyond equal treatment was the need to redress past inequities. Thus, there was a move toward affirmative action and the designation of African Americans and other marginalized groups as protected classes, to ensure that they were not systematically screened out of opportunities in employment, college admission, and housing.

For the critical race theorist, intelligence testing has been a movement to legitimize African American student deficiency under the guide of scientific rationalism (Alienikoff, 1991). According to Marable (1983), one purpose of the African American in the radical capitalist state is to serve as a symbolic index for poor Whites. If the working-class White is achieving at a higher level than Blacks, they feel relatively superior. This allows Whites with real power to exploit both poor Whites and Blacks. Throughout U.S. history, the subordination of Blacks has been built on scientific theories (e.g., intelligence testing) that depend on racial stereotypes about Blacks that make their condition appear appropriate. Crenshaw (1988) contended that the point of controversy is no longer that these stereotypes were developed to rationalize the oppression of Blacks, but rather, the extent to which these stereotypes serve a hegemonic function by perpetuating a mythology about both Blacks and Whites even today, reinforcing an illusion of a White community that cuts across ethnic, gender, and class lines. In the classroom, a dysfunctional curriculum coupled with a lack of instructional innovation (or persistence) results in poor performance on traditional assessment measures. These assessment measures may tell us that students do not know what is on the test, but fail to tell us what students actually know and are able to do.

Although CRT began as a movement in the law, it rapidly spread beyond that discipline. Today, many in the field of education consider themselves critical race theorists who use the ideas proposed by CRT to understand issues of school discipline and hierarchy, tracking, controversies over curriculum and history, and IQ and achievement testing. Political scientists ponder voting strategies interpreted by critical race theorists. Ethnic studies courses often include a unit on critical race theory, and

American studies departments teach material on critical White studies developed by CRT writers (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Unlike some academic disciplines, critical race theory contains an activist dimension. It not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it; it sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better.

Ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner (2004) developed the ecological systems theory to explain how all aspects of a child's environment affects how a child grows and develops. He labeled different aspects or levels of the environment that influence children's development, including the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The microsystem is the small, immediate environment in which the child lives. Children's microsystems will include any immediate relationships or organizations they interact with, such as their immediate family or caregivers, and their school or daycare. How these groups or organizations interact with the child will have an effect on how the child grows; the more encouraging and nurturing these relationships and places are, the better the child will be able to grow. Furthermore, how a child acts or reacts to these people in the microsystem will affect how they treat her in return. Each child's special genetic and biologically influenced personality traits, known as temperament, affects how others treat them.

Bronfenbrenner (1986) developed his ecological systems theory to define and understand human development within the context of the system of relationships that form the person's environment. His definition of the theory is described as follows: The ecology of human development is the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation throughout the life course between an active, growing human being and

the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives. According to the initial theory purported by Bronfenbrenner (1989), the environment is comprised of four layers of systems which interact in complex ways and can both affect and be affected by the person's development. He later added a fifth dimension that comprises an element of time (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). This theory can be extended to model the development of an organization as well, and is particularly appropriate for describing the complex systems of a school district or even of an individual school.

The microsystem is defined as the pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships experienced by a developing person in a setting with particular physical and material features, and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of belief (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). In other words, this layer forms a set of structures with which a person has direct contact, and the influences between the developing person and these structures are bidirectional. The person influences and is influenced by the microsystem. If this theory is extended from human development to organizational development, and an individual school is the unit of interest, the microsystem of the school would include students, parents and family members, administration, teachers, and the surrounding community.

The mesosystem, simply stated, comprises the linkages between microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). Just as the direction of influence between the school and each structure within the microsystem is bidirectional, the mesosystem involves bidirectional influences between these various structures. An example of the mesosystem of an individual school can be seen in the interactions and dynamics between two of its three microsystems – students and parents. Parental expectations regarding the academic and

extracurricular success of their children can often create a dynamic that directly and indirectly impacts the atmosphere and climate of the school. Unreasonably high expectations and low tolerance for failure can create a dynamic between parent and child that is characterized by tension and fear. This dynamic impacts the school in various direct and indirect ways, including, for example, student behavior in the classroom resulting from such expectations, pressures to ensure their child's success placed on school personnel by the parent, or an attempt by school personnel to shield students from such parental pressures by restricting the amount of information that is communicated regarding student achievement (Kershner & Connolly, 1991).

The exosystem represents the larger social system, and encompasses events, contingencies, decisions, and policies over which the developing person has no influence. The exosystem thus exerts a unidirectional influence that directly or indirectly impacts the developing person. The exosystem of an individual school might be comprised of such structures as, for example, state regulations, local economics, federal mandates, and local disasters.

The macrosystem can be thought of as the *social blueprint* of a given culture, subculture, or broad social context, and consists of the overarching pattern of values, belief systems, lifestyles, opportunities, customs, and resources embedded therein. This system is generally considered to exert a unidirectional influence upon not only the person but the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem as well. The macrosystem of an individual school is embodied not only in the cultural, political, social, and economic climate of the local community, but that of the nation.

The chronosystem, although not one of the four system layers per se, represents a time-based dimension that influences the operation of all levels of the ecological systems. The chronosystem can refer to both short-term and long-term time dimensions of the individual over the course of a lifespan, as well as the socio-historical time dimension of the macrosystem in which the individual lives. The chronosystem of an individual school, therefore, may be represented by both the day-to-day and year-to-year developmental changes that occur in its student body, teaching staff, curricular choices, etc., as well as the overall number of years in operation (i.e., a newer school faces challenges and opportunities that differ from those of a school that has been in operation for a length of time).

In addition to defining the ecological systems in which development takes place, Bronfenbrenner (2004) also emphasized the importance of context in human development. In order to model development or change within an individual, Bronfenbrenner built upon the work of Lewin (1935), who is credited as one of the first theorists to recognize the importance of interaction between the person and environment in describing human behavior. The characteristics of a person at a given time in his or her life, are a joint function of the characteristics of the person and of the environment over the course of the person's life, up to the time of observation (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Similarly, the characteristics of a school, including the level of academic proficiency of its students at any given point in time, may be appropriately considered a joint function of the characteristics of the organization itself, and of the environment or ecological systems, over the entire course of the school's lifetime, up to the time of observation.

Bronfenbrenner (1989) distinguished between class theoretical and field theoretical models of research. Class theoretical models include what he termed social address models, or personal attribute models (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983), and person-context models; these are limited in that they provide little insight into processes that lead to particular outcomes. It may be useful to know that poor retention in any grade significantly increases the likelihood of dropping out of school among adolescent boys (Kratochwill, & Shernoff, 2003). However, it would be far more informative to investigate the system-level processes associated with retention in-grade as well as the interpersonal processes that lead to and result from retention in-grade, and how these interact to create a propensity to drop out of school. Instead, Bronfenbrenner (1989) advocated that research investigating human development should involve a field-theoretical approach in which the interaction of processes, person, and context are taken into consideration. Such research would focus on how developmental processes and outcomes vary as a joint function of the characteristics of the person as well as the environment, and their interactions over the course of time (Bronfenbrenner, 1989).

There appears to be a gender-by-race interaction in the probability of being disciplined. Some data suggest that Black males were 16 times as likely to be subjected to corporal punishment as White females (Thomas, 1992). At both the junior and senior high school levels, Taylor and Foster (1986) reported a consistent ordering in the likelihood of suspension from most to least: Black males ranked highest, then White males, followed by Black females and then White females. In one of the earliest explorations of evidence concerning school suspension, the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) studied national data on school discipline provided by the U.S. Department of

Education's Office for Civil Rights and reported rates of school suspension for Black students that exceeded those for White students on a variety of measures (Sherman & Edelman, 1994; Verdugo & Glenn, 2006).

The CDF reported that higher rates of Black students were suspended and, that Black students were more likely than White students to be suspended more than once, although no racial differences were found in the length of suspension administered (Sherman & Edelman, 1994). The outsourcing of discipline to external agencies has placed students, especially Black males, in a position in which they are more inclined to be formally prosecuted rather than simply being given in-house discipline (Caton, 2012). Black males are punished for wrongdoings resulting more from subjective school personnel judgment rather than objective observations (Long, 2012.)

Zero Tolerance

There is an overrepresentation of Black students, especially Black males, in the population of students who are suspended and expelled from school because of existing zero tolerance policies, according to studies (Moore et al., 2009). The term zero tolerance developed from state and federal drug enforcement policies in the 1980s. The first use of the term was in 1983, when the Navy reassigned 40 submarine crew members for suspected drug abuse. In 1986 zero tolerance was picked up and used by a U.S. attorney in San Diego, California, as the title of a program developed to impound sea craft carrying any number of drugs. By February 1988, the program had received national attention, and U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese authorized customs officials to seize the boats, automobiles, and passports of anyone crossing the border with even trace amounts of drugs, and to charge those individuals in federal court. Zero tolerance took

hold quickly and within months was being applied to issues as diverse as environmental pollution, trespassing, skateboarding, racial intolerance, homelessness, sexual harassment, and boom boxes.

One of the more troubling characteristics of the zero tolerance approach to discipline is that a disproportionate number of those at risk for a range of school punishments are poor and African American. In 1994, the Children's Defense Fund, studying data on school discipline from the U. S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, found high rates of suspension for Black students. Of the nearly 3,000 school districts represented in the OCR data, more than two-thirds showed rates of Black suspension that exceeded rates for White students.

The school-to-prison pipeline (SPP) refers to the increasing connection between school failure, federal, state or local school disciplinary policies, and student involvement in the justice system. Kim, Losen, and Hewitt (2010) defined the SPP as the intersection of a K-12 educational system and a juvenile justice system through education and discipline structures that facilitate school disengagement. The connection between these initially dissimilar institutions is spurred by failing schools with low graduation/high drop-out rates, zero tolerance disciplinary policies (which we will expand upon further) and student disengagement. These links are not new, however. Over the past 20 years the pipeline has begun to shuttle students, especially African American, low-income, or mentally disabled students, out of the classroom and into the juvenile justice system for offenses that were previously handled by school teachers, administrators, or parents (Theriot, 2009). The criminalization of student behavior (often considered or addressed through a risk management approach), coupled with failing schools and diminished

educational opportunities for some, funnels students into the criminal justice system (Theriot, 2009). Scholars posit numerous causes of the pipeline, including the criminalization of student behavior (Hirschfield, 2008), the passage of zero tolerance policies at the federal, state, and school levels (Heitzeg, 2009), fear of crime (Welch & Payne, 2012), increased educational inequity (Pettit & Sykes, 2015), and racial bias (Skiba, 2011). The criminalization of student behavior, zero tolerance policies and fear of crime fall within the parameters of an increased focus on risk.

Certain groups, specifically African Americans, American and Alaskan Natives, low-income students, those with mental disabilities, and those at risk of academic failure are disproportionately involved with the SPP (Welch & Payne, 2012). Disciplinary disproportionality in the form of office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions have serious implications as they are linked with worse academic performance and increased disciplinary infractions (Rocque, 2010). Furthermore, disproportionality's consequences persist past graduation, extending the reach of the pipeline: “students who are suspended at the secondary school level are over five-times more likely to be charged with a violent crime as an adult” (Wright, Morgan, Coyne, Beaver, & Barnes, 2014). Thus, there may be long-term effects of discipline in schools.

Statement of Purpose

The disproportionality in school discipline functions as the determinant in additional negative outcomes attributed to the African American students, such as failing grades, retention, recidivism, and incarceration. Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera, (2010) identified the exclusionary discipline practices in schools, especially for African American students. Despite the findings of a correlation between school suspension and

student performance, research in this area has remained relatively limited. This study focuses on the impact of suspension on the academic achievement of African American males. The purpose of this study is to investigate how suspension impacts the academic results of African American males on the Algebra I Regents exam as compared to the academic results of students of other demographics who have been suspended.

Research Questions

1. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2015 cohort of an urban high school who have been suspended as compared to Black males in the 2019 cohort who have not been suspended?
2. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2015 cohort of an urban high school who have been suspended as compared to the success of the White male students in the 2015 cohort who have been suspended?
3. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2015 cohort of an urban high school who have been suspended as compared to the success of the Hispanic male students in the 2015 cohort who have been suspended?
4. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2015 cohort in an urban high school who have been suspended compared to Black females in the 2015 cohort who have been suspended?

Significance of the Study

Disciplinary practices in schools may represent one of the greatest challenges to improved educational achievement for Black male students. Milner and Tenore (2010) studied how culturally relevant ways to engage in classroom management were needed in urban schools. The disproportionate representation of African American students in out-of-school suspension has increased substantially in the last 30 years (Losen & Skiba, 2010). Evidence of the discipline gap was first documented by the CDF in a seminal report revealing the disparities in discipline practices within American schools (Sherman & Edelman, 1994). The discipline gap, as it is referenced here, is much like the other gaps – the opportunity gap (Flores, 2007) and the education gap (Ladson-Billings, 2006) – in that disparities (i.e., in discipline, education resources, education experiences, etc.) between White and African American students have historically created advantages for some, and disadvantages for others. While attention to the other gaps tend to overshadow that of the discipline crisis, the understanding of both is quite pertinent to assessments of equitable schooling practices, as can be seen in the CDF report (Sherman & Edelman, 1994).

A recent study of racially biased discipline practices (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015) found that teachers were disproportionately biased toward African American boys in their punitive discipline and suspension practices. Okonofua and Eberhardt wanted to explore this pattern perception as a possible explanation for the discipline gap. In two controlled experiments, Okonofua and Eberhardt examined how student race may influence teachers' responses to classroom misbehavior. In the first experiment, researchers screened teachers for explicit racial bias, among other factors. They then

showed a racially diverse group of 57 female teachers a picture of a middle school and asked them to imagine themselves working there. The teachers then viewed a school record—based on an actual one—of a student who misbehaved twice. In a second experiment, researchers recruited 204 teachers—predominately White and female, but including men and people of other races—to go through the same exercise. This time, researchers also asked them to rate the extent to which they thought the student’s misbehaviors suggested a pattern and whether they could imagine suspending the student in the future. In this larger sample, racial bias emerged. Students whose names *sounded Black* were significantly more likely to be labeled troublemakers and to be more harshly punished. But, as a group, the teachers were also more likely to see the behavior as part of a pattern in the Black student and to say they could imagine suspending the student.

Okonofua and Eberhardt proposed that teachers would experience repeated infractions as more severe and disturbing if those infractions were committed by a Black student rather than a White student, and that this ultimately leads to harsher disciplinary responses for Black students. In sum, teachers escalated their response to a Black student more so than to a White student when the student had only one previous infraction, even though both infractions were minor, and each was distinctive from the other – insubordination versus classroom disturbance. As predicted, for the Black student, the first infraction seemed to influence how the second infraction was regarded. The theory purported by Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) held that teachers are more likely to view multiple infractions as a connected pattern when the student is Black as opposed to White. These studies and others like them reveal how a lack of understanding of the students’ culture and the teacher’s own biases undermine effective education.

Lags in academic performance are seen by some researchers as a function of Black males' inability or disinterest in fulfilling their roles as conventional learners in school settings (Holland, 1989). Furthermore, many scholars believe that negative school experiences and outcomes for students are often products of school contextual and structural factors that limit learning opportunities, especially for Black males (Ferguson, 1991). Black male students generally are placed in remedial classes or retained in grade because their performance is less than where it should be. Remediating students or holding them in grade seldom helps them get back on track (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 2003). Suspension is one of the most severe punishments schools administer to students, and previous research has shown that African Americans, males in particular, are disproportionately affected by suspensions (Garibaldi, 1988).

Definition of Terms

Academic achievement – is defined as a student's attainment of a certain level of competence after completing a phase of education, whether it is a classroom unit or 12 years of schooling (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001).

Academic success – is the measurement used to associate positive outcomes assessed for students. To be successful in academics means to take charge of learning by working hard at academic courses in middle school and high school while preparing for higher education (Rentner & Kober, 2001). In this study, academic success is defined as passing the Algebra I Regents exam by the end of sophomore year, as a critical milestone leading to high school graduation in New York State.

Black Males – is the term used to identify American students whose parents are of African descent. This also includes Americans born in the United States who may be

able to trace their lineage to an African racial group. This term can be interchangeable with the term *African American* for the sake of this study.

Cohort – is defined as a group of students who work through a curriculum together to achieve the same academic degree.

Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) – seeks to provide the State’s public elementary and secondary school students with a safe and supportive environment, free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying while on school property, a school bus and/or at a school function (New York Department of Education [NYSED], 2017b).

New York State Regents Exams – are statewide standardized examinations in core high school subjects, five of which are required to graduate from high school.

Out of School Suspension – is defined as the removal of a student from the school environment for a period not to exceed 10 days

The School-to-Prison Pipeline – refers to the increasing connection between school failure, federal, state, or local school disciplinary policies, and student involvement in the justice system.

Violent and Disruptive Incidents Report (VADIR) – is a report that must be filled out that indicates any disruptive incidents that occur on the school property as a requirement for New York State (NYSED, 2012).

Chapter Summary

The relationships a student develops in school become critical to his or her positive development and determine their academic and social experience. Because of the amount of time children spend in school, and the social and economic emphasis on the

importance of schooling, the attitudes and human connections developed here are important. Also, children may for the first time, be developing relationships with adults outside their immediate family. The relationships with non-family members help a child develop cognitively and emotionally. Bronfenbrenner (1979) highlighted the importance of these bidirectional interactions with caring adults in the child's life. He outlined interactions that describe how relationships that are developed both at home and at school, work together for the positive development of the child. When students are not successful in sustaining positive relationships in school, it may be inferred that there will be an impact in school success (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The overrepresentation of Black students, especially Black males, in the population of students who are suspended and expelled from school is due to existing zero tolerance policies, according to studies (Moore et al., 2009). The term zero tolerance developed from state and federal drug enforcement policies in the 1980s. The first use of the term was in 1983, when the Navy reassigned 40 submarine crew members for suspected drug abuse. In 1986, zero tolerance was adopted and used by a U.S. attorney in San Diego as the title of a program developed to impound sea craft carrying any number of drugs. By February 1988 the program had received national attention, and U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese authorized customs officials to seize the boats, automobiles, and passports of anyone crossing the border with even trace amounts of drugs and to charge those individuals in federal court. Zero tolerance took hold quickly and within months was being applied to issues as diverse as environmental pollution, trespassing, skateboarding, racial intolerance, homelessness, sexual harassment, and use of boom boxes.

One of the more troubling characteristics of the zero tolerance approach to discipline is that a disproportionate number of those at risk for a range of school punishments are poor and African American. In 1994, the Children's Defense Fund, studying data on school discipline from the U. S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, found high rates of suspension for Black students. Of the nearly 3,000 school districts represented in the OCR data, more than two-thirds showed rates of Black suspension that exceeded rates for White students. This overrepresentation of minorities in the application of harsh discipline appears to be related to the overall use of school exclusion: schools that rely most heavily on suspension and expulsion are also those that show the highest rates of minority overrepresentation in school disciplinary consequences. Black male students as a group, have low achievement levels, excessively high suspension and expulsion rates, and a disproportionate number of special education referrals (Kunjufu, 2005). Academic problems may foster behavior problems, which result in disciplinary practices that remove the student from academic instruction (McEvoy & Welker, 2000). A failure cycle perpetuates, in which the student falls further behind academically and receives fewer opportunities to learn appropriate behaviors. By failing to achieve academically and to graduate from high school with his peers, it has been demonstrated that the Black male student faces a future that is marked by such negative outcomes as unemployment, poverty, and incarceration.

The researcher posits, based on current research, that the prevalence of suspension as a response to behavioral transgression of Black male students impacts their achievement on critical high school graduation milestones. In this study student passing rates or achievement on the Algebra I Regents exam served as a proxy for school success

and was analyzed in relation to the frequency of school suspension. Chapter 2 provides a review of pertinent literature related to this study. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology. Chapter 4 provides a discussion of the findings of the research and Chapter 5 details the implications of the findings, recommendations for future research and recommendations for school districts.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

This study explored the educational and subsequent potential for social impact of suspension or exclusion from high school on Black male students. Research has demonstrated that Black students are suspended at significantly higher rates than White students, and that suspension and expulsion contribute to a gradual process of academic and social disengagement, which in turn, increases the probability of subsequent disciplinary exclusions, academic failure, and dropout rates (Butler et al., 2009). There is also evidence that suspension is often applied in an arbitrary manner for minor, harmless offenses and is disproportionately applied to different student groups (Morrison & D’Incau, 1997). Over the past decade, suspension and expulsion have increasingly become the primary method for responding to problematic student behavior, due to the widespread and contentious adoption of rigid, automatic, and exclusionary zero tolerance approaches to discipline (Leone et al., 2000). Furthermore, school exclusion is not considered an effective strategy for improving problem behavior (Skiba et al., 2008).

Mendez and Knoff (2003) suggest that suspension has serious implications for students' short-term academic performance as well as their longer term, social and economic well-being. Suspension and expulsion remove students from the learning environment, potentially increasing the amount of time they spend unsupervised, possibly with youth who are in the same situation. This strongly correlates with various negative outcomes including poor academic achievement, grade retention, delinquency, and

substance use (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Research by Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006), examined *cool pose* among Black males and argued that “many Black males are suspended or expelled from school for what they term ‘non-contact violations’-wearing banned items of clothing such as hats and jackets, or wearing these items in an ‘unauthorized’ manner such as backwards or inside out” (pp. 51-52). This study further examined the relationship between these frequent suspensions of Black males and their academic and social well-being in comparison to other groups identified in an urban high school.

Review of Literature

A critical race lens and the influence on suspensions. The critical race theory movement was formed by a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power (Taylor, 2009). The movement considers many of the same issues as do conventional civil rights and ethnic studies, but it places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, context, group and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious. Unlike traditional civil rights advocacy, which embraces incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundation of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment Rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law. Critical race theory and methodology in education include a minimum of the following five elements that form their basic insight, perspective, methodology, and pedagogy (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The five elements consist of:

1. The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination,

2. The challenge to dominant ideology,
3. The commitment to social justice,
4. The centrality of experiential knowledge, and
5. The transdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano, 1997).

Each of the five themes is not new in and of itself, but collectively they represent a challenge to the existing mode of scholarship. The critical race theory framework for education is different from other CRT frameworks because it simultaneously attempts to foreground race and racism in the research, as well as challenge the traditional paradigms, methods, texts, and separate discourse on race, gender, and class by demonstrating how these social constructs intersect to impact on communities of color. Further, it focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of communities of color and offers a transformative method for examining racial/ethnic, gender, and class discrimination. It also utilizes transdisciplinary knowledge and the methodological base of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, and the law, to forge better understandings of the various forms of discrimination. Indeed, critical race theory names racist injuries and identifies their origins.

One recurring theme that characterized the school civil rights legal battles was equal opportunity. This notion of equal opportunity was associated with the idea that students of color should have access equal to White students, to the same school opportunities, – curriculum, instruction, funding, and facilities. This emphasis on sameness was important because it helped boost the arguments for equal treatment under the law that were important for moving African Americans from their second-class status. Beyond equal treatment was the need to redress past inequities. Thus, there was a move

toward affirmative action and the designation of African Americans and other marginalized groups as protected classes to ensure that they were not systematically screened out of opportunities in employment, college admission, and housing. For the critical race theorist, intelligence testing has been a movement to legitimize African American student deficiency under the guise of scientific rationalism (Alienikoff, 1991).

According to Marable (1983), one purpose of the African American in the radical capitalist state is to serve as a symbolic index for poor Whites. If the working-class White is achieving at a higher level than Blacks, then they feel relatively superior. This allows Whites with real power to exploit both poor Whites and Blacks. Throughout U.S. history, the subordination of Blacks has been built on scientific theories (e.g., intelligence testing) that depend on racial stereotypes about Blacks that make their condition appear appropriate. Crenshaw (1988) contended that the point of controversy is no longer that these stereotypes were developed to rationalize the oppression of Blacks, but rather, the extent to which these stereotypes serve a hegemonic function by perpetuating a mythology about both Blacks and Whites even today, reinforcing an illusion of a White community that cuts across ethnic, gender, and class lines. In the classroom, a dysfunctional curriculum coupled with a lack of instructional innovation (or persistence) adds up to poor performance on traditional assessment measures. These assessment measures may indicate what knowledge the students lack, but they fail to identify what students actually do know or what they can do.

Milner (2013) explored poverty as an outside-of-school factor and its influence on the inside-of-school experiences and outcome of students. Milner (2013) considered the

interconnected space of learning, instructional practices, and poverty. Milner (2013) used critical race theory as an analytic tool to unpack, shed light on, problematize, disrupt, and evaluate how systems of oppression, marginalization, racism, inequity, hegemony, and discrimination are pervasively present and ingrained in the fabric of policies, practices, institutions, and systems in education that have made significant impact on all student outcomes. Milner (2013) analyzed the interrelationship between race and poverty. Milner's (2013) point in using race as an analytic site is not to suggest that people are in poverty because of their race, but to demonstrate how race can be a salient factor in how people experience and inhabit the world, and consequently experience education.

Milner (2013) posited that educators need to understand and question why a disproportionate number of students of color live in poverty and are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Milner (2013) also suggested that educators should not ignore this reality: Proportionally, more people/students of color live in poverty than do White people/students. Milner's analysis of the literature concerning students living in poverty and their educational experiences draws from CRT to help clarify the interconnected nature of race and poverty. However, his goal was to maintain the integrity of the studies reviewed and to simultaneously critique what is available through the posing of race-related questions. In their study of high-poverty urban schools, Slaughter-Defoe and Carlson (1996) explained that it is important to search for the main effects of race and culture in any study within a society that is as stratified as that of the United States. However, not only are race and culture important to society generally, they are also important to education.

Get tough policies and race as an influence on suspension. School punishment has become more centralized and rigid according to Hirschfield (2008). Enactment of get tough school policies has led to increased office referrals (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997), detentions, suspensions, and expulsions (Na & Gottfredson, 2013). Concurrently, schools have invested heavily in surveillance and security measures (Na & Gottfredson, 2013). Research suggests, however, that minority students have been disproportionately affected (Na & Gottfredson, 2013). Evidence of this impact can be seen in part by the greater use of punishment in schools with larger minority student populations (Finn & Servoss, 2015; Kupchik & Ward, 2013). Payne and Welch (2013) found that schools characterized by larger minority student populations are not only more likely to suspend and expel, but also less likely to utilize less restrictive sanctions, such as referrals to the school guidance counselor, to resolve problem behavior. Such patterns typically hold true even after controlling for potential racial and ethnic differences in rates of misconduct (Kupchik & Monahan, 2006). The following studies shed light on the booming epidemic of race as an influence on out-of-school suspensions in the educational system.

Skiba et al. (2002) explored in great detail the phenomenon of African American disproportionality in school discipline. Subjects for the study conducted by Skiba et al. (2002), were all middle school students in a large, urban Midwestern public school district. The 19 middle schools were in a predominantly urban setting. Of the 19 public middle schools, four had fewer than 400 students, 11 schools had student bodies ranging from 400 to 800, and four had a school population greater than 800. The participants in the Skiba et al. (2002) study accounted for 51.8% male students, compared to 48.2% female students. Students were categorized as either Black (56%) or White (42%). Latino

students represented 1.2% of the middle school population while 0.7% of the students were designated Asian American and 0.1% were described as Native American (Skiba et al., 2002). These researchers retrieved the data examined in this study from the disciplinary records of the varying schools.

When a formal discipline referral was made to the office of any of the middle schools, Skiba et al. (2002) created a standardized coding form that was filled out by the administrator receiving the referral. The form included information regarding the nature of the incident triggering the referral and the resulting action taken by the administrator. Other general information reported on the coding form was referral date and time, by whom and to whom the referral was made, previous actions taken, date of administrative action, and whether parents were contacted. Information regarding disciplinary referrals and consequences was based on the district's disciplinary policy, as outlined in the disciplinary handbook. The coding form required that at least one reason for the referral be marked, and an additional option for applying up to two secondary codes (Skiba et al., 2002).

The data from the Skiba et al. (2002) study were aggregated so that the students became the unit of analysis. In their research, Skiba et al. (2002) posited that gender, race, and socioeconomic status have all demonstrated evidence of disproportionate representation in their previous investigations; disparities for all three were explored in this data set, in terms of number of office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences in proportion of incidents resulting in suspension by race, or for the interaction of race and gender. There were also no significant race or gender differences in the mean number of days of

suspension assigned to those students who had been suspended. The data from this investigation described a pattern in which Black students were suspended disproportionately more due primarily to a higher rate of office referral.

In the same study, Skiba et al. (2002) found that large and consistent Black overrepresentation in office referrals and school suspensions were not explainable by either SES or racial differences in behavior. Rather, racial disparities in school suspensions appear to find their origin primarily in the disproportionate rate of office referrals for African American students. Significantly different patterns of referrals suggest that Black students are more likely to be referred to the office for more subjective reasons.

A study by Noltemeyer and Mcloughlin (2010) posited that when controlling for student poverty levels: (a) Black students were disproportionally represented as recipients of exclusionary discipline; (b) major, urban, very-high-poverty schools utilize these practices most frequently; and (c) disciplinary disproportionality was most evident in major urban districts with very high poverty and was least evident in rural districts with a small student population and low poverty. Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, and Valentine (2009) analyzed data on both school typology and disciplinary data for 595 school districts. Only 326 districts were included in the final sample due to an insufficient sample of either White or Black students in the 2007-2008 school year. The final sample represented all districts with more than 10 students in one or both ethnicities under investigation who were excluded from school at some time during the academic year (Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010).

In their study, Noltemeyer and Mcloughlin (2010) utilized A MANCOVA followed by univariate ANOVAS. The interaction between ethnicity and school typology was examined to determine whether disciplinary disproportionality differed significantly based on school typology when controlling for poverty. A MANCOVA on the district-level data revealed differences in the use of exclusionary discipline. The univariate ANCOVAS revealed this difference was significant when considering each of suspensions, expulsions, and other disciplinary actions. The data also revealed disciplinary disproportionality; specifically, the mean rate of each type of exclusionary discipline for African American students was two to three times the rate for White students (Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010).

In a study by Gregory and Weinstein (2008), the researchers explored defiant and cooperative student behavior in two different classrooms. First, a repeated-measures design was used to compare the classroom experiences of the same student in the referring teacher's classroom and in a classroom taught by an adult with whom the student reported having a good rapport. Second, multilevel modeling was used to identify teacher qualities at a classroom level that predicted students' shared trust in teacher authority, over and above individual differences in student perceptions of a teacher.

Gregory and Weinstein (2012) visited at least one morning period and one afternoon period to invite students who were referred to an on-campus suspension program for defiance-related reasons to participate in Study 2. Thirty-three of the 53 invited participants returned parental consent forms, which is a return rate of approximately 62%. According to the Committee on School Health (2003), this return rate was to be expected, given suspended students' high truancy rates and low parental

supervision. The 30 African American students were used in these analyses. Males made up 57% ($n = 17$) of the sample. Ninth ($n = 11$) and 10th graders ($n = 9$) represented 67% of the sample, with 11th graders ($n = 6$) and 12th graders ($n = 4$) comprising 30% of the sample. The subsample was not significantly different from the gender, grade level, or end-of-year grade point average from the population of 255 African American students who received at least one defiance-related referral. Spring semester student grades and attendance records were collected, and discipline records for on-campus and off-campus suspension were extracted from the school's database.

Gregory and Weinstein (2008), reported that Black students reported uncaring treatment and low academic expectations from teachers with whom they behaved more defiantly and less cooperatively, as rated by them and the teachers. In contrast, Gregory and Weinstein (2008) revealed that the students reported that their nominated teachers treated them with care and touted high expectations. Students expressed a willingness to comply with the authority of teachers who had earned trust and legitimacy according to Gregory and Weinstein (2008). The researchers' findings showed that perceptions of teachers as caring and holding high expectations predicted student trust in, and obligation to, teacher authority. These teacher qualities, in combination, are suggestive of an authoritative teaching style, through which both warmth and demandingness are communicated. Whereas parenting research has linked authoritative parenting with many positive adolescent outcomes in White middle-class families, this research also indicated that teachers who are warm demanders or compassionate disciplinarians earn the trust and obligation to teacher authority of African American students at risk for negative disciplinary trajectories (Irvine, 2002).

School setting and suspension. Schools with high academic press/expectations and high consistency in enforcement of rules (structure), as well as high care and sense of community (support) have positive academic outcomes for adolescents, according to various studies (Lee & Smith, 1999; Pellerin, 2005; Shouse, 1996). Given the persistent trends in the disproportionate suspension of Black students, it is important to ascertain whether these characteristics of authoritative schools are associated with low suspension rates for both Black and White students. Following the lead from research on the achievement gap (Lee & Bryk, 2008), the following studies examined whether characteristics of authoritative schools predict low gaps in suspension rates between Black and White students.

Hughes, Warren, Stewart, Tomaskovic-Devey, and Mears (2017), explored whether a school's racial or ethnic setting increased school suspensions for Black, Hispanic, and White students. The Hughes et al. (2017) study reviewed whether the intergroup contact among school board members reduced school suspensions for Black, Hispanic, and White students. Additionally, it investigated whether the effects of a school's racial or ethnic context on school suspensions, were conditioned by intergroup contact among school board members. Hughes et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study for this experiment. The results of the study (2017) study showed that a larger racial and ethnic student population within schools increased the likelihood of suspensions for Black and Hispanic students while decreasing suspensions for White students. Hughes et al. (2017) posited that important factors are associated with school punishment for Black, Hispanic, and White students.

Losen and Gillespie (2012) reviewed the reports by the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). Losen and Gillespie (2012) created a survey administered by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. The data collected covered the 2009-2010 school year. Losen and Gillespie (2012) shortened participants' last names to the first five letters to protect the identity of individual students. Losen and Gillespie (2012) requested that CRDC divide the number of suspended students by the total enrollment. Losen and Gillespie (2012), with the help of the CRDC, described this percentage throughout the report as the risk for out-of-school suspension. Losen and Gillespie (2012) analyzed only out-of-school suspension data. Losen and Gillespie (2012), through OCR, collected data on the number of students suspended out-of-school one time only and, separately, the number of students suspended out-of-school two or more times.

Losen and Gillespie (2012) identified three categories of students in the study: (a) all students, (b) students with disabilities, and (c) students without disabilities. The Losen and Gillespie (2012) study combined the number of suspended students with disabilities with the number of students without disabilities. The OCR provided the numbers for total enrollment and the enrollment of students with disabilities, but not the enrollment for students without disabilities. Losen and Gillespie (2012) subtracted the number of enrolled students with disabilities from the total enrollment to find the baseline enrollment of students without disabilities. This enabled Losen and Gillespie (2012) to report the risk for suspension for every major racial/ethnic group for all students, and to break it down further by both students with disabilities and students without disabilities. The OCR gathered data from 6,835 school districts, which included an estimated 85% of

all students attending public schools in the US. Depending on the state, the sample included anywhere from 59% to 100% of all students. Five separate rankings were created, one for each racial group. The data did not contain information on the reasons for suspensions or the extent to which similar students were treated differently. Losen and Gillespie (2012) denied the assumption that Blacks were misbehaving more and that differences in behavior adequately explained the large racial differences in the frequent use of suspension that were observed in the data.

Gregory, Cornell, and Fan (2011) examined the relationship between structure and support in the high school climate and suspension rates in a statewide sample of 199 schools. School climate surveys, completed by 5,035 ninth grade students, measured characteristics of authoritative schools, defined as highly supportive, yet highly structured with academic and behavioral expectations. Multivariate analyses, used by Gregory et al. (2011), showed that schools low on characteristics of an authoritative school had the highest school wide suspension rates for Black and White students after statistically controlling for school demographics. Furthermore, schools low on both structure and support had the largest racial discipline gaps. The findings from the Gregory et al. (2011) study identified the factors that may have negative outcomes developmentally and behaviorally for Black students, causing disproportionate disciplinary outcomes. The study by Gregory et al. (2011) drew from research on parenting and teaching style to provide a theoretical framework for characterizing authoritative school environments.

School climate surveys were collected from ninth grade students in 289 of the 314 public high schools in the state of Virginia in the Gregory et al. (2011) study. The researchers selected ninth grade because these students were completing the first year of

high school and had a high rate of discipline problems (45% of all discipline violations for Grades 9–12 in Virginia) (Gregory et al., 2011). The school participation rate was more than 92%, which was achieved with the cooperation of the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, which endorsed the study and encouraged participation. Surveys were completed online in each school. With a few exceptions (e.g., small rural schools), each school selected approximately 25 ninth grade students from their enrollment list using a set of random numbers generated for each school, based on class size.

The study by Gregory et al. (2011) showed that the suspension gap can be found across a diverse, statewide sample of schools. Disproportionate suspension cannot be attributed to school size, urbanicity, or student poverty, although these demographics are associated with White, but not Black, suspension rates. The proportion of Black students in the school appeared to be an important correlation to suspension rates that were associated with both Black and White suspension rates as well as the suspension gap (Gregory et al., 2011). The schools with the highest suspension rates were those perceived by ninth graders, as low in structure and support. The significant interaction term suggested that schools need to consider the combination of structure and support, which is consistent with the application of parenting theory to schools. However, the most consistent differences were found for the indifferent schools that are the opposite from authoritative schools. One implication is that efforts to improve student behavior and lower suspension rates should consider the potential role of school climate. Schools in which the students experience neither a strong sense of support by teachers, nor high

expectations of academic achievement, appear to be most vulnerable (Gregory et al., 2011).

Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) collected data on Black and Caucasian youth, aged 10-17, in 53 Missouri counties, to test assertions regarding the relationship between racial disproportion in out-of-school suspensions and the juvenile justice system. The researchers' focus was on racial disproportion. Counties must have had at least 30 Black youth comprising of at least 1% of the total youth population to be included in the sample. Juvenile justice records for youth ages 10–17 were obtained from the Missouri Division of Youth Services. School discipline records were obtained from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. County demographics, including racial composition, population density, and poverty rates for racial groups, were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau. Adult traffic-stop statistics were obtained from the Missouri Attorney General. Though the data were drawn from a single state, it is believed that the findings can be generalized, with appropriate caution, to counties in other states. Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) suggested that a single-state study is appropriate when the unit of analysis is a sub-state government, such as a school district or county.

The sample of observations from the Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) study encompassed the variation found nationally. It included rural, suburban, and urban jurisdictions, with median incomes that range from the poorest to among the wealthiest of U.S. counties. Overall levels of poverty, education, and income inequality were also similar in both mean and range to other jurisdictions throughout the nation. Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) conducted a multivariate analysis to determine if racial disproportion in out-of-school suspensions predicted racial disproportion in juvenile justice system

referrals once relevant environmental factors have been controlled. The researchers employed a measure of racial disproportion in out-of-school suspensions that has been purged of the influence of those factors.

Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) established a relationship between exclusionary discipline and justice system contact and conducted an additional analysis to address one alternative causal story for the observed association. Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) noticed that higher suspension rates reflect higher rates of disruptive behavior among Black students. This disruptive behavior in turn leads to legitimate disproportion in disciplinary actions, which was mirrored in referrals because this group continued to be delinquent once removed from the school environment. Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) attempted to address why the higher suspension rates for African American students reflect higher rates of disruptive behavior by examining suspension rates by race and offense type in the schools that fall within various counties. The real variables of interest in subsequent analyses measured the degree of racial disproportion in juvenile justice system contacts (dependent) and in school-level disciplinary decisions (independent). Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) measured disproportionate minority contact (DMC) in the manner recommended by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (USOJJDP), focusing on referrals to juvenile court because it is the first stage in the justice process for which reliable data are available.

Relative rate indices (RRIs) captured the referrals of minority youth relative to Caucasian youth (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009). For the measure of disproportionate out-of-school suspensions, Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) aggregated data from all districts that fell within a county. Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) then calculated the RRI of out-of-

school suspensions given to African American versus Caucasian youth in the same manner discussed above. The researchers focused exclusively on out-of-school suspensions for two reasons. First, they are one of the most common types of exclusionary discipline discussed in the literature on DMC in schools and, second, the rate of expulsions is too low in most jurisdictions to allow for reliable analysis. Findings indicated that the relative rate of Black versus White out-of-school suspensions, even after being purged of the influence of environmental predictors, is positively and significantly related to relative referral rates into the juvenile justice system. This suggests that greater racial disproportion in exclusionary discipline decisions is associated with an increase in racial disproportion in referrals, independent of factors such as poverty, unemployment, and urbanization that affect both.

The findings of Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) study suggested that an increase of one standard deviation in the relative rate of out-of-school suspensions for Black students results in a 0.38 standard deviation increase in the relative referral rate for Black youth, which represents a relatively large substantive impact. The researchers' analyses of 53 Missouri counties in 2005 and 2006 suggest that jurisdictions in which schools disproportionately target African American students for exclusionary sanctions also experience higher relative rates of juvenile court referrals for Black youth. The environmental factors that previous studies have identified as influencing juvenile referral rates also predict referral rates in Missouri, but even after controlling for these factors, school behaviors have a significant and substantively meaningful impact on the juvenile justice referral rates of Blacks relative to Whites (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009).

Behavior interventions and school officials' response related to suspension.

Identifying the predictors of problem behavior is essential both for understanding the causes of such behavior and for preventing it. Although a great deal of research has sought to identify the factors predictive of problem behavior, much of the research to date has been correlational and tells little about causality. Many believe that out-of-school suspension is necessary to maintain the health and safety of staff and students (Rosen, 1997). Some administrators used OSS to force parents to respond and participate in both the behavioral and academic development of their children and adolescents (Mellard & Seybert, 1996). The following studies investigated the interventions taking place in schools, as well as school official response to disruptive behavior by race.

Najaka, Gottfredson, and Wilson (2006), conducted an experiment where a probability sample of U.S. public schools was gathered to obtain information about the nature and extent of activity to prevent problem behaviors. Principals of 848 schools completed an initial questionnaire to identify prevention activities and arrangements; principals of 635 schools (50%) completed a second questionnaire to describe discipline practices. The Najaka et al. (2006) study attempted to improve upon the correlational research by applying meta-analytic techniques to existing experimental and quasi-experimental studies of school-based prevention. The following three risk factors were examined by Najaka et al. (2006): academic performance, bonding to school, and social competency skills. The most convincing evidence of a relationship between risk and problem behavior was found for bonding to school. Positive changes in attachment and commitment to school, resulting from the preventive interventions, were consistently accompanied by positive changes in problem behavior. Preventive interventions that

produced improvements in academic performance, produced moderate improvements in problem behavior. Regarding social competence, the association depended in large part on the type of measure used to assess social competency skills. Changes in self-report measures of social competency were unrelated to changes in problem behavior, whereas, a strong positive correlation was observed between changes in ratings and observations of social competency by others and improvements in problem behavior. (Najaka et al., 2006).

The results from Najaka et al. (2006) implied that schools were engaged in many activities ranging from security and surveillance, school climate change, counseling, and curricular or instructional programs. Most schools had strict rules about dangerous behaviors. Suspension was used extensively to respond to student misconduct, yet many schools failed to use the full range of available responses to desirable and undesirable behavior, and the consistency of responses was not always high. Many of the activities in which the schools were engaged to promote safety and prevent problem behaviors had not been the subject of evaluation, so the research provided little information about the effectiveness of what schools did. The large quantity of prevention practices undertaken in the typical school raised the question of whether so many different activities could be carried out in a high-quality fashion (Najaka et al., 2006).

A study in Miami-Dade County (FL) by Mendez, Knoff, and Ferron (2002) provided important evidence that principals' attitudes and practices were linked to a school's out-of-school suspension rate. This study by Mendez et al. (2002), included four middle schools, all of which served low-income students. Two of these schools had relatively high OSS rates while the other two schools had relatively low OSS rates.

Interviews with school personnel at each of the four schools showed that differences in OSS rates were consistent with the tone that the principal had set for the school. In the two schools with higher OSS rates, principals had adopted zero tolerance policies for misbehavior. In the other two schools with low OSS rates, principals had set the tone that no student should be suspended and thus responded to misbehavior through classroom-based intervention. Importantly, Mendez et al. (2002) noted that although these four principals were following the same district-wide code of conduct, their individual philosophies had much to do with how the code of conduct was actually applied. Such results, although limited by the small number of schools involved in the study, pointed to the need for future research to examine variables other than student behavior that have an impact on OSS rates (Mendez et al., 2002).

This study investigated school suspensions within the context of the students, staff, schools, and school district involved by analyzing the student suspension patterns of every elementary, middle, and high school in a large and ethnically diverse county school system in west central Florida. Initially, data was collected on all suspensions for the district's 142 regular education schools. Follow-up interviews were conducted on-site contrasting the 12 schools with the highest suspension rates and 12 demographically matched comparison schools, also in the district, that had school suspension rates at least 25% lower than their respective high suspension schools. These schools served a majority of low-income students. The researcher investigated high-suspending versus low-suspending schools so that a differential analysis and understanding of the variables contributing to these patterns could be discerned. The study also attempted to use both

quantitative and qualitative methodologies so that the results were as functional and pragmatic as possible and could best inform both policy and practice.

The district involved in Mendez et al. (2002) study was one of 67 in the state of Florida, all of which are organized by county. The county school system involved in this study was the 12th largest public school district in the United States and the 2nd largest in Florida. Demographically, the county that this school district served had a total population of 834,054, with approximately 72% of the population identifying itself as White, 13% as African American, and 10% of Hispanic origin. Also, 33% percent of Black and 10% of White individuals were reported to live below the poverty line, and 76% of adults held at least a high school diploma. In addition, almost 25% of the population was between the ages of 0 and 17, and 19% of all children or youth below the age of 18 lived in poverty. Most children (66%) were reported to live with a married couple, although a sizable minority lived in single parent homes (23%), with other relatives (9%), or outside of the family (3%). The district served just fewer than 146,000 children in 97 elementary schools, 30 middle schools, 15 high schools, and several special centers focused on early childhood education, exceptional student education, alternative education, or adult education. Only the 142 general education schools, which served 138,761 students – or approximately 95% of all students in the district, were included in the analysis. Schools in the district varied widely from inner city schools, where over 95% of children received free or reduced-price lunch, to schools in suburban areas, where the socioeconomic status of families was considerably higher. (Mendez et al., 2002).

Mendez et al. (2002) found that suspensions were unevenly divided across genders and races. Males accounted for over 70% of all suspensions according to Mendez et al. (2002). Black males were suspended much more frequently than were other students. At the elementary level, 12.15% of Black males experienced at least one suspension. This trend continued across middle school, where almost half (48.90%) of Black males experienced a suspension (compared to 25.00% of White males and 33.95% of Hispanic males), and into high school, where 36.46% of Black males were suspended (compared to 18.90% of White males and 27.36% of Hispanic males).

Overall, this study has shown that although schools serving higher percentages of students living in poverty tend to have more suspensions than schools serving more economically privileged students, the approach that a school takes relative to student discipline may be more important than the demographic or background conditions. Administrators seeking to lower suspension rates at their schools would be wise to consider the importance of the primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention strategies discussed previously, including social skills and tolerance training for students, training in culturally-responsive behavior management, conflict resolution for teachers, and encouragement of parent involvement in the educational process. School suspension is linked to the larger behavior management system of a school. Where there is little primary prevention, there are likely to be higher suspension rates (Mendez et al., 2002).

A study by Skiba, Trachok, Chung, Baker, and Hughes (2012) used a multilevel modeling approach to explore the contributions and interactions of behavior, student characteristics, and school level variables to exclusionary discipline and racial disparities in discipline. Discipline data were drawn from a data base containing records of all

incidents of suspension and expulsion in all public schools in a Midwestern state for a single year. The data reported by schools to the state was originally organized by disciplinary incident by student for the 2007-2008 school year. The database included a total of 104,445 in and out-of-school suspensions, and school expulsions. These incidents represented a total of 43,320 students suspended or expelled at 365 schools.

To measure principal attitudes towards suspensions and expulsion, Skiba et al. (2012) administered a survey, The Disciplinary Practices Survey (DPS), to all school principals in the state. Items were generated based on a review of previous surveys of principals' perceptions and practices as related to school discipline (Gottfredson et al., 2000). Principals were asked to rate their agreement with statements reflecting various attitudes about the purpose, process, and outcomes of school discipline; they also rated the usage of a number of preventive disciplinary strategies in their school. A cluster analysis of the results yielded two clusters representing two different perspectives on school discipline. Responding principals fell into one group representing a more preventive orientation, and another representing attitude more favorable to the use of school exclusion and zero tolerance as a disciplinary strategy. Hierarchical linear modeling was used to examine the relative contribution of incidents, student characteristics, and school variables to the severity of school punishment (Raudenbush, Bryk, & Congdon, 2004).

The model predicted the probability of two possible disciplinary outcomes, out-of-school suspension and expulsion, in comparison to the likelihood of in-school suspension. Predictor variables were contained within three levels: incident level (behavioral characteristics), student level (individual characteristics), and school level

(school characteristics). Two models were tested: model 1 contained incident and student level variables, while model 2 included those variables plus all level 3 (school level) variables. The most important finding of these analyses was the impact of the contribution of student race to discipline. Black students were significantly more likely to receive an out-of-school versus an in-school suspension, regardless of the type of infraction or poverty status. When school level variables, including percent of Black enrollment, school achievement, and principal perspectives on discipline, were introduced into the equation, the contribution of individual student race to the likelihood of out-of-school suspension was reduced to no significance. Skiba et al. (2012) found that racial disparities in out-of-school suspension was determined, not specifically by student behavior or poverty, but by status as measured by a range of school-level variables, including principal perspective on discipline. Racial disparities in out-of-school suspension are ubiquitous, and are more likely to occur wherever there are more Black students, regardless of SES and seriousness of infraction (Skiba et al., 2012).

The study by Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) of racially biased discipline practices found that teachers were disproportionately biased toward African American boys in their punitive discipline and suspension practices. Eberhardt and Okonofua (2015) wanted to explore this pattern perception as a possible explanation for the discipline gap. In two controlled experiments, Eberhardt and Okonofua (2015) examined how student race may influence teachers' responses to classroom misbehavior. In the first experiment, researchers screened teachers for explicit racial bias, among other factors. They then showed a racially diverse group of 57 female teachers a picture of a middle school and asked them to imagine themselves working there. The teachers then viewed a

school record—based on an actual one—of a student who misbehaved twice. In a second experiment, researchers recruited 204 teachers, predominately White and female, but included men and people of other races, to go through the same exercise as in experiment one. This time, researchers also asked them to rate the extent to which they thought the student’s misbehaviors suggested a pattern and whether they could imagine suspending the student in the future. In this larger sample, racial bias emerged. Students with Black-sounding names were significantly more likely to be labeled troublemakers and to be more harshly punished. As a group, the teachers were also more likely to see the behavior as part of a pattern in the Black student and believed they could imagine suspending the student.

Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) proposed that teachers would view repeated infractions as more severe and disturbing if those infractions were committed by a Black student rather than a White student, and that this would lead to harsher disciplinary responses for Black students. In sum, teachers escalated their response to a Black student more so than to a White student, even when the student had only one previous infraction, though both infractions were minor and each was distinctive from the other—insubordination versus classroom disturbance. As predicted for the Black student, the first infraction seemed to influence how the second infraction was regarded. The theory proposed by Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) held that teachers are more likely to view multiple infractions as a connected pattern when the student is Black as opposed to White. These studies and others like them reveal how a lack of understanding of the students’ culture and the teacher’s own biases undermine effective education.

Student achievement, race, and suspension. Arcia (2006) examined the issue by analyzing the achievement status of suspended students throughout 3 years in comparison to a matched group of students without suspensions and by perusing the 3-year enrollment status of students who were suspended in ninth grade. Arcia gathered the data from a large, urban school district in the Southeast. This study consisted of longitudinal, retrospective analyses of the associations between suspensions and achievement (Arcia, 2006). Students who were suspended at least once in 3 academic years, Years I, II, and III (2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004), were compared to matched students who were not suspended. Two comparisons were made. First, the average reading achievements of all suspended and non-suspended students at the beginning and at the end of the 3-year period were compared. Second, to examine the pre-suspension academic status of students, students who were not suspended in Year I and suspended in Year II and/or III were compared to students who were never suspended in the 3-year period. In addition to these comparisons, the 3-year enrollment status of students suspended in ninth grade was examined. Arcia (2006) gathered data for this study from a large, urban school district. In the midyear of the study, the student population was 58% Hispanic, 29% Black, 10% White, and 3% other races.

In elementary schools, almost three-fourths of all students participated in the free and/or reduced lunch program. Two samples were used in this study: a sample of suspended students and a matched comparison. The sample of suspended students consisted of all students in the district who were suspended at least once in the 3 academic years of analyses: 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004. Arcia (2006) used data on suspended students who had documented reading achievement scores for each of

the 3 years examined ($n = 49,327$). The comparison sample was drawn from students who had not been suspended at all in those 3 years, also had standardized reading achievement scores, and in Year I matched suspended students on grade, gender, race, participation in the free/reduced lunch program, and were designated limited English proficient ($n = 42,809$). Data were downloaded from the district's student database system for each of the 3 academic years. Enrollment counts, which served as denominators for percentages of students suspended, were derived from October full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment. The measure of reading achievement used was students' developmental scores on the state's reading competency test. Developmental scores for all grades were on the same metric, such that increases in scores reflect increases in achievement, and comparison of scores can identify gains.

All suspension data was recorded by event; one record for each suspension specified its type and duration (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009.) Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) summed for individual students for each academic year and, as appropriate for the analyses, throughout the 2 or 3 years studied. For most analyses, suspensions were summed by type (indoor or outdoor). Students were grouped by suspension history, differences between groups were tested with ANOVAs, and significant differences were noted. Differences in dropout rates were tested with Pearson's chi-square. With large samples, such as those used in this study, tests of significance identify as significant differences that in practical terms, may not be meaningful. Thus, the importance of findings was also assessed relative to their magnitude. This study found widespread and increasing use of suspensions that rose sharply in middle school grades and continued to rise into senior high grades. The Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) study expanded on earlier

findings by other authors with the results of longitudinal retrospective analyses on pre- and post-suspension achievement and on post-suspension drop-out rates. In addition to statistical significance, it shows the magnitude of the differences in achievement and in enrollment status between suspended and non-suspended students.

The analyses by Rumberger and Losen (2016) contained in their study were carried out by three researchers. In the first, Russell Rumberger, conducted an analysis of suspensions and expulsions for the US and California, based on data from the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (Bozick & Ingels, 2008). In the second, Robert Balfanz and colleagues, conducted an analysis of suspensions and expulsions for Florida, based on data from the Florida state data system. In the third, Clive Belfield, estimated the fiscal and social costs of dropping out for the states of California and Florida. The results of all three analyses were then combined to generate the fiscal and social costs of suspensions and expulsions in California and Florida, and for the entire US. One strength of this approach was that the analyses enabled the researchers to estimate the causal impact of suspensions and expulsions by drawing on student-level longitudinal data and applying rigorous, quasi-experimental methods. An additional strength is that the analyses provided detailed state-specific and national estimates of the fiscal and social impact of suspensions and expulsions, the first time such a comprehensive estimate of this impact has ever been generated.

Two longitudinal student databases were conducted by Rumberger and Losen, (2016) with disaggregated racial/ethnic data were used in this study. The first is the ELS 2002, a longitudinal study of 16,252 high school sophomores (representing a national sample) who were enrolled in a public and private U.S. high schools in 2002.

Participating students were administered questionnaires and standardized tests in Mathematics and reading. Questionnaires were also administered to students' teachers, parents, and high school administrators. The students were resurveyed in 2004, when most were high school seniors, and again in 2006, and 2012. Transcripts were collected in the spring of 2005 for most of the original students in the study. The Rumberger and Losen (2016) study was based on the national sample of 13,379 students with valid outcome data and two state samples – 1,560 California students and 599 Florida students. The national and California samples were also used to estimate the causal impact suspensions have on graduation, but the Florida ELS sample was too small to yield accurate estimates (Rumberger & Losen, 2016).

The data followed these students forward to 2005-2006 for high school outcomes (2 years past the expected time of graduation, 2003-2004) and on through 2007-2008 for postsecondary outcomes. Both databases contained critical information on the dependent variables in these studies and a series of control variables used to generate more precise causal impacts. This extension captured both the typical on-time graduates and the relatively few students who graduated after the normal date of 2004. Data from all three sources show much higher suspension rates for Blacks and Hispanics than for Whites. For example, in the CRDC data, out-of-school suspension rates were 23% for Black secondary students, 11% for Hispanic secondary students, and 7% for White secondary students. The racial disparities reported in the ELS data were less severe among 10th graders, at least in figures for the US and California, but in Florida the rates for Black 10th grade students were more than twice the rates for Hispanics and four times the rates for Whites. Although the Florida administrative data show the highest rates for each

racial group, the rate for Blacks was 17 percentage points higher than for Whites, which is the same percentage point difference observed in the data from both the ELS and the CRDC. The ELS data further suggest that almost one-third of all Black students and more than one-fifth of Hispanic students experienced either an in-school or out-of-school suspension in the first semester of 10th grade (Rumberger & Losen, 2016).

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that suspension has on the educational outcomes of African American male students. Most of the literature reviewed points to disproportionate punishment of Black male students in all grade levels. A great deal of attention was given to the frequency and duration of suspensions in relation to student achievement on the Algebra I Regents exam that represents a milestone in student achievement in New York State schools. The implications of the study suggest recommended interventions be put into place by school's officials to support the academic needs and progress of these students. Finally, the researcher sought to discover the reason for the disparity and ways to resolve this growing epidemic to put an end to disproportionality in response to discipline in schools.

Billson and Majors (1992) examined *cool pose* amongst Black males and argued that, "Many Black males are suspended or expelled from school for what they term 'non-contact violations'-wearing banned items of clothing such as hats and jackets, or wearing these items in an 'unauthorized' manner such as backwards or inside out" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006, pp. 51-52).

Hopkins (1997) looked critically at power structures, school, and community in regard to educating Black males. Disciplinary practices in schools are the greatest challenges that

can undermine effective education in urban schools. Milner and Tenore (2010) studied how culturally relevant ways to engage in classroom management were needed in urban schools. The study by Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) of racially biased discipline practices found that teachers were disproportionately biased toward African American boys in their punitive discipline and suspension practices.

Lags in academic performance are seen by some researchers as a function of Black males' inability or disinterest in fulfilling their roles as conventional learners in school settings (Holland, 1989). Furthermore, many scholars believe that negative school experiences and outcomes for students are often products of school contextual and structural factors that limit learning opportunities, especially for Black males (Ferguson, 1991). Black male students generally are placed in remedial classes or are retained in a grade because their performance is less than where it should be. Remediating students or holding them in grade seldom helps them get back on track (Alexander et al., 2003). Suspension is one of the most severe punishments schools administer to students, and previous research has shown that the achievement of African American males and therefore, their future economic status, and social outcome, are disproportionately affected by suspensions (Garibaldi, 1988).

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

The research on suspension indicates that, despite its frequent use, this practice is not effective in reducing the behavior problems it is intended to address (Christie, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004). Research also indicates that suspension is used disproportionately with students who are: (a) male, (b) from low socioeconomic families, (c) of a minority ethnic background, and (d) identified as having a disability or low academic competence (Skiba et al., 1997). Suspension and expulsion contribute to a gradual process of academic and social disengagement that increases the probability of subsequent disciplinary exclusions, academic failure, and dropout rates (Butler et al., 2009). The zero tolerance approach to discipline has caused suspension and expulsion to be the main response to challenging students. (Leone et al., 2000).

Although school exclusion, also known as school suspension, is one of the most frequent methods used as a disciplinary response, school exclusion is not considered an effective strategy for improving problem behavior (Skiba et al., 2008). Research has shown that certain students are being pushed out of school. According to the Darling-Hammond (2008), once suspended, students are likely to become disconnected from school, often receiving subsequent suspensions, and even entering the juvenile justice system. School exclusion has been criticized for contributing to loss of instructional time, inefficient use of school resources, disenfranchisement between families and school, and unsupervised time out of school (Butler et al., 2009).

There appears to be a gender-by race interaction in the probability of being disciplined. Using data from the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, Thomas (1992) found that Black males were 16 times as likely to be subjected to corporal punishment as White females. At both the junior and senior high school levels, Taylor and Foster (1986) reported a consistent ordering in the likelihood of suspension from most to least: Black males, White males, Black females, White females.

The OCR reported that higher rates of Black students were suspended and that Black students were more likely than White students to be suspended more than once, although no racial differences were found in the length of suspension administered. The outsourcing of discipline to external agencies has placed students, especially Black males, in a position in which they are more inclined to be formally prosecuted rather than simply being given in-house discipline (Caton, 2012). Black males are punished for wrongdoings resulting more from subjective, rather than objective, school personnel judgments (Long, 2012).

For 3 decades, scholarly investigations of school discipline have consistently found patterns of overrepresentation for Black males, revealing a discipline gap, wherein the responses to behavioral problems of Black males were met with harsher disciplinary measures than other racial and ethnic groups (Shirley & Cornell, 2011). According to a study conducted nationally by the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (2012), students of color, both boys and girls, were suspended at three times the rate of White students. Nationally, 12% of Black females are suspended; in-contrast, only 2% of White females are suspended (McCarter, 2017). Additionally, Black males remain one of the most socially and academically marginalized student groups in the United States

schools (Brown et al., 2013). The most disturbing finding is that nationally, on average, 36% of all Black males enrolled in middle schools and high schools were suspended at least once in 2009-2010.

Research Context

Research shows that African American students, and especially African American boys, are disciplined more often and receive more out-of-school suspensions and expulsions than White students. Perhaps more alarming is the 2010 finding that over 70% of the students involved in school-related arrests or those referred to law enforcement were Hispanic or Black (Education Week, 2013). A 2009-2010 survey of 72,000 schools (kindergarten through high school) shows that while Black students made up only 18% of those enrolled in the schools sampled, they accounted for 35% of those suspended once, 46% of those suspended more than once, and 39% of all expulsions. Overall, Black students were three and a half times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their White peers (Lewin, 2012).

Studies also suggest that there is an overrepresentation of Black students, especially Black males, in the population of students who are suspended and expelled from school because of existing zero-tolerance policies (Moore et al., 2009). Black male students as a group have low achievement levels, excessively high suspension and expulsion rates, and a disproportionate number of special education referrals (Kunjufu, 2005). Academic problems may foster behavior problems, which result in disciplinary practices that remove the student from academic instruction (McEvoy & Welker, 2000). This perpetuates a failure cycle in which the student falls further behind academically and receives fewer opportunities to learn appropriate behaviors (Wilson, 2006).

Research on academic achievement suggests that suspension has serious implications for students' short-term academic performance as well as their longer term, social and economic well-being. Suspension and expulsion remove students from the learning environment, potentially increasing the amount of time that they spend unsupervised and with other out-of-school youth, and strongly correlate with various negative outcomes including poor academic achievement, grade retention, delinquency, and substance use (Mendez & Knoff, 2003).

Research Questions

1. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2019 cohort of an urban high school who have been suspended as compared to Black males in the 2019 cohort who have not been suspended?
2. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2019 cohort of an urban high school who have been suspended as compared to the success of the White males in the 2019 cohort who have been suspended?
3. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2019 cohort of an urban high school who have been suspended as compared to the success of the Hispanic males in the 2019 cohort who have been suspended?
4. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2019 cohort in an urban

high school who have been suspended compared to Black females in the 2019 cohort who have been suspended?

Research Participants

The participants for this study were selected from eight urban high schools in Westchester County within the fourth largest school district in New York State, located in the lower Hudson Valley, immediately north of New York City. The county of the high schools' location contains both affluent cities and villages as well as some areas where the schools primarily serve poor and minority students including many students for whom English is a second language. Because of its status as a major city, the only one in Westchester, it is defined by New York State as a Big Five district. Other Big Five districts include Rochester, Syracuse, Buffalo, and New York City (NYSED, 2017a). There are approximately 27,000 students and 39 schools throughout the City. As the second largest employer in Westchester County, the district has a diverse workforce of 3,300 educators and support staff. The district has a centralized school registration for all students. Figure 3.1 provides details on the ethnicities of the student population within the district. The student population is diverse: 56% are Hispanic, 19% are Black, 17% are White, 7% are identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% are multiracial. Students with disabilities represent 16% of the student population and 12% are limited English proficient. Additionally, 76% of the student population is eligible for free and reduced lunch.

The original study was going to include only one high school for the study. After consulting with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the district of study, they suggested that all eight high schools be included, creating a more robust study. IRB

documentation was resubmitted and permission was granted. St. John Fisher College IRB approved the study. See Appendix A and Appendix B.

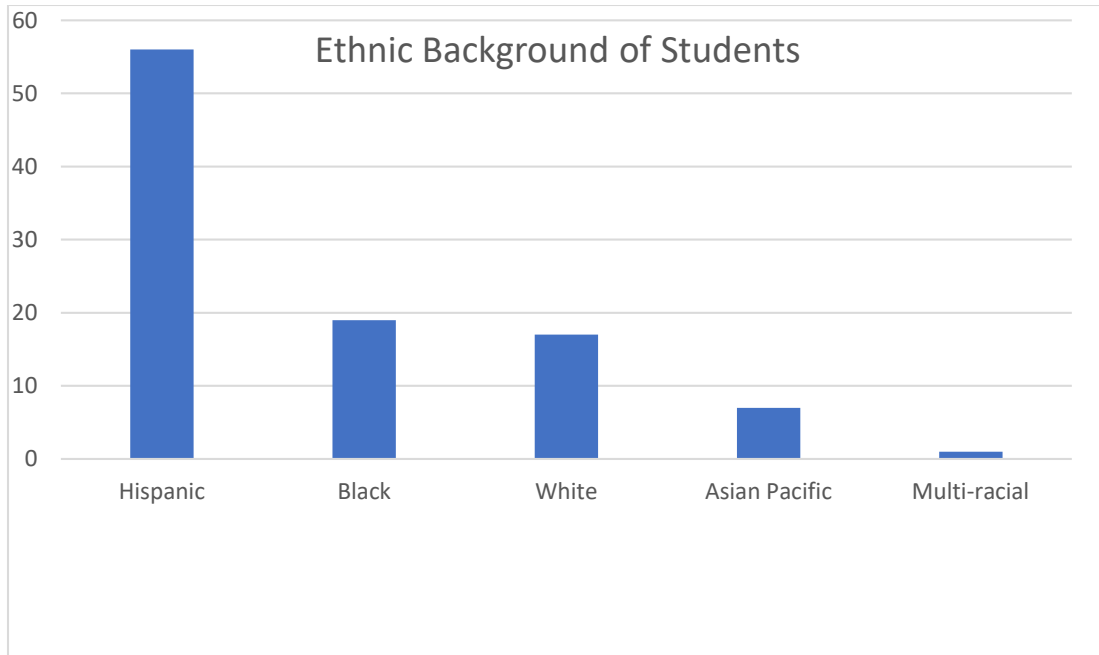


Figure 3.1. Student Population within the District – Ethnic Backgrounds.

Figure 3.2 shows the breakdown of employees within the District. The vast majority of employees are either teachers or are support staff. There is a total of 3,579 employees within the District. Figure 3.3 provides detail on the number of schools and the grades they include.

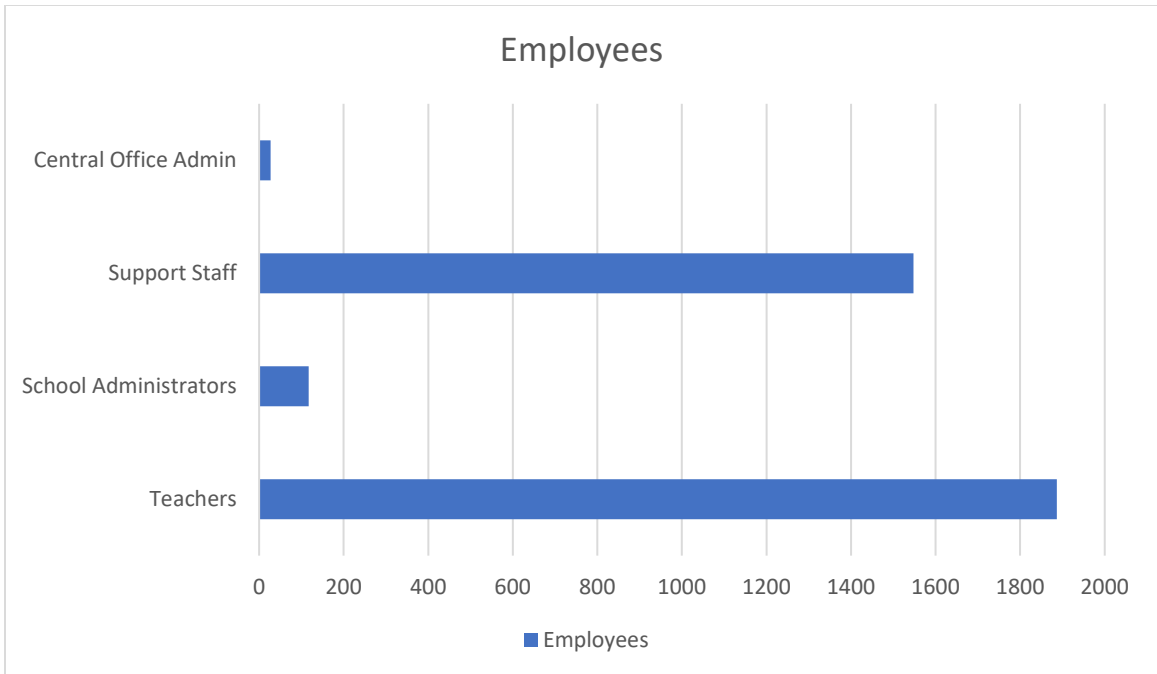


Figure 3.2. Breakdown of Employees within the District.

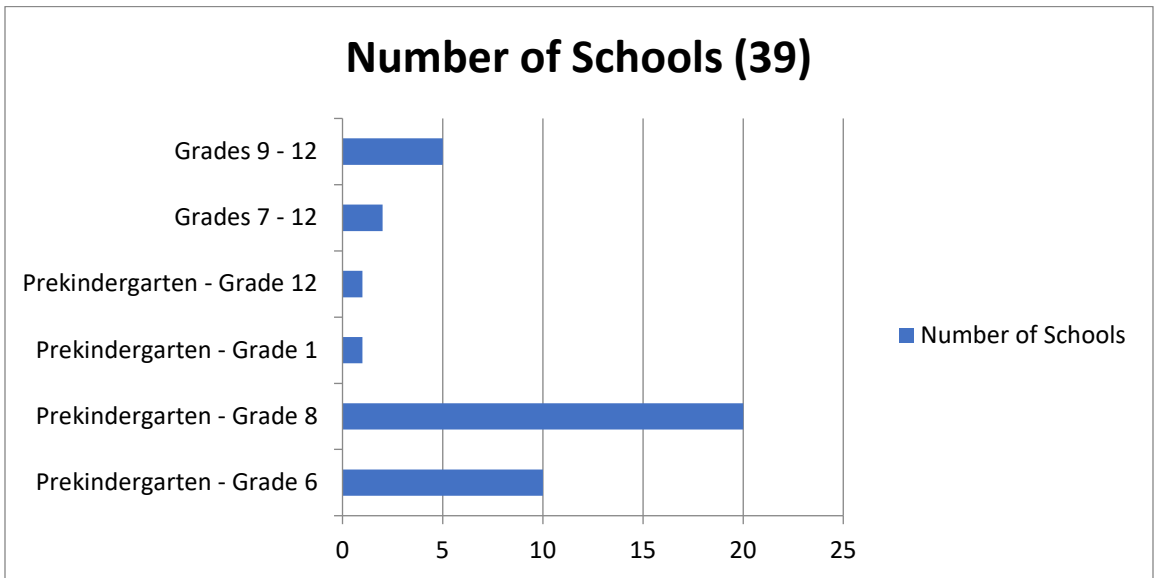


Figure 3.3. School Designation.

The participants selected for this quantitative study were all Black male students in urban high schools in the 11th grade, with an expected graduation date of June 2019. The study examined the participant's performance on the Algebra I Regents examination conducted in June and August 2016. The high schools where this study was conducted enroll approximately 5,500 students, of which 85% were minority students. Over 90% of the students received free or reduced lunch and 95% of the students were bused to school, using subsidized public transportation based on income.

Instruments Used in Data Collection

Selecting the instrument and design used in an evaluation is one of the most important decisions researchers/evaluators make (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). Archival data were utilized with the permission of the school board president and superintendent of the school district analyzed in this study. The researcher used the archival data from the New York State Board of Regents to collect data pertaining to annual dropout rates and achievement levels on the Algebra Regents exam as it relates to suspension. Student identity was safeguarded by the removal of identification numbers (I.D.) and names from the charts and graphs that were included in the study. Upon consulting with a research expert, the following were tested by the researcher:

1. Descriptive data (statistics) aim to summarize a sample, rather than use the data to learn about the population that the sample of data is thought to represent (Creswell, 2013). Descriptive data also includes mean, median, range, and frequency. The researcher matched the sample group by age, grade level, and GPA, to make sure experimental groups and controls were not biased.

2. A linear regression was applied to see if there was a relationship between the amount of times Black males were suspended, the duration of the suspension and their Algebra I Regents scores.
3. Student *t*-tests were used to see if the differences in the mean Algebra I Regents Scores were statistically significant between suspended Black males and all of the other control groups.

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

A quantitative research analysis was used to assess whether there is a relationship between suspension and the academic achievement of Black male students enrolled in the 11th grade in eight urban high schools in the same district during the 2015-2016 school year. Test scores are the most prominent indicators used by schools to measure academic success. Archival data from NYS Algebra Regents exams were used to evaluate academic success. The Algebra Regents is considered a marker of achievement by the end of 10th grade, thus it was used by the researcher. The researcher used the archival data from the New York State Board of Regents to collect data pertaining to achievement levels on the Algebra Regents exam as related to suspension.

Suspension data were retrieved from archival information stored in the VADIR documentation of suspensions and other penalties for disruptive behavior. Data were also collected on the violations that were the cause of the suspension. A comparison of the frequency and duration was conducted between the Black male students and their counterparts.

The New York State (NYS) Regents exams are a set of required tests administered to students in the state of New York, which allows them to receive a high

school Regents diploma after passing (NYSED, 2018). For general education students, the passing rate on the NYS Regents exam is 65. However, for students with an individualized education plan (IEP), 55 is passing. There are 10 different NYS Regents exams overall. Five need to be taken and passed to graduate from high school in the state of New York. Required subjects are English, algebra I, science, global studies, and U.S history. The Regents examinations are given each year during January, June, and August. All the exams are available during January and June, but only some can be taken in August. Students can take the Regents exams anytime during their high school career, after they have completed the required coursework (NYSED, 2018).

According to the New York State Education Department, the specifications for the Regents examination in Algebra I (Common Core) are as follows:

All questions on the Regents Examination in Algebra I will measure the Common Core Algebra I standards as specified in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Model Content Framework for Algebra I. The standards define what students should understand and be able to do at the high school level. The Model Content Framework describes which content is included and emphasized within the Algebra I course, specifically. The test blueprint for the Regents Examination in Algebra I (Common Core) demonstrates NYSED's commitment to ensuring that educators can focus their instruction on the most critical elements of the Algebra I course. The test blueprint shows that the Algebra conceptual category contains 50% - 56% of the credits, the Functions conceptual category contains 32% - 38% of the credits, the Number and Quantity conceptual category contains 2% - 8% of the credits and Statistics and Probability

conceptual categories contain 5% - 10% of the credits on the exam. (NYSESED, 2003, p. 4)

The description of the exam is as follows:

The exam consists of four parts: Part I consists of 24 multiple-choice questions with four possible answers labeled (1), (2), (3), and (4). Part II consists of 8 constructed-response questions that require students to show their work as they answer a question that has real-world mathematical applications. Parts III and IV consist of 4 constructed-response questions and 1 constructed-response question, respectively. These questions are more extensive and may require multiple tasks that must be solved. These questions will also have real-world mathematical applications. The answers and the accompanying work for the questions in these three parts must be written directly in the question booklet. All questions in each of the four parts of the test must be answered. NYSED, 2003, p. 6)

Chapter Summary

Several methods have been used to test the idea that differential punishment is due to different rates of misbehavior. Regardless of the method, such studies have provided little to no evidence that Black male students in the same school or district are engaging in more seriously disruptive behavior that could warrant higher rates of exclusion or punishment. Mendez and Knoff (2003), suggest that suspension has serious implications for students' short-term academic performance, as well as their longer term, social and economic well-being. Suspension removes students from the learning environment, potentially increasing the amount of time that they spend unsupervised and with other out-of-school youth, and strongly correlates with various negative outcomes

including poor academic achievement, grade retention, delinquency, substance use and adjudication in the court and prison system (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Through a quantitative methods approach, this study examined the relationship of suspension and Mathematics achievement of 10th grade Black male high school students in an urban high school. A passing grade on the Algebra I Regents served as proxy for academic achievement in this study given its status in the high school graduation process. Without passing the NYS Algebra I Regents, the NYS high school student cannot graduate with a Regents diploma, which is a gateway to determination for college admissions.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

A quantitative research analysis was conducted to assess whether there was a relationship between suspension and the academic achievement on the NYS Algebra Regents examination of the 2015 cohort of Black male students enrolled in the 11th grade in an urban high school as compared to Hispanic and White male students as well as Black female students. Archival data from the NYS Algebra Regents examination were used to evaluate academic success. The researcher used the archival reports from the New York State Education Department to collect data pertaining to achievement levels on the Algebra Regents examination as related to suspension. A *t*-test was conducted to determine whether the difference in the mean Algebra Regents scores in the 2015 cohort of Black male students who were suspended was statistically significant when compared to the mean scores of their counterparts in the same cohort for eight high schools in an urban district. Data were reviewed for a 2-year window, as students transitioned from the ninth grade to the 10th grade from the same cohort. This study was conducted with the help of two experienced researchers who have conducted quantitative studies. One researcher assisted in analyzing the data using Microsoft Excel. The second researcher associated with the institute of study, verified the application of Excel used to support the findings. See Appendix C.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

1. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents examination of Black male students in the 2015 cohort of an urban high school who had been suspended as compared to Black male students in the 2015 cohort who had not been suspended?
2. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2015 cohort of an urban high school who had been suspended as compared to the success of the White male students in the 2015 cohort who had been suspended?
3. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2015 cohort of an urban high school who had been suspended as compared to the success of the Hispanic male students in the 2015 cohort who had been suspended?
4. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2015 cohort in an urban high school who had been suspended compared to Black female students in the 2015 cohort who had been suspended?

Data Analysis and Findings

Inferential statistics were used to draw conclusions from the sample tested. Microsoft Excel (2007) was used to code and tabulate information collected from archival data. This information provided summarized values, where applicable, including the mean, variance, and hypothesized mean difference, utilizing a one tail designation. Profile analysis was used to evaluate the following research questions:

1. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents examination of Black male students in the 2015 cohort of an urban high school who had been suspended as compared to Black male students in the 2015 cohort who had not been suspended?

The findings suggested that the difference in the mean Algebra Regents score between Black male students who were suspended and Black male students who were not suspended was statistically significant $p < .05$.

Table 4.1 provides detailed results on Black males who were suspended as compared to Black males who were not suspended.

Table 4.1

Black Males Suspended as Compared to Black Males Not Suspended

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	61.41935	53.07895
Variance	184.8685	158.9936
Observations	155	38
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	60	
<i>t</i> Stat	3.596894	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000326	
<i>t</i> Critical one-tail	1.670649	

2. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2015 cohort of an urban

high school who had been suspended as compared to the success of the White male students in the 2015 cohort who had been suspended?

The findings indicate that the difference in the mean Algebra Regents score between Black male students who were suspended and White male students who were suspended was not statistically significant $p > .05$.

Table 4.2 provides detail on Black males who were suspended compared to White males.

Table 4.2

Black Males Suspended Compared to White Males Suspended

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	61	53.07895
Variance	567.4286	158.9936
Observations	8	38
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	8	
<i>t</i> Stat	0.913958	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.193727	
<i>t</i> Critical one-tail	1.859548	

3. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2015 cohort of an urban high school who had been suspended as compared to the success of the Hispanic male students in the 2015 cohort who had been suspended?

The findings indicate that the difference in the mean Algebra Regents score between Black male students who were suspended and Hispanic male students who were suspended was not statistically significant $p > .05$ for both their freshman and sophomore years.

Table 4.3 provides information on Black males who were suspended as compared to Hispanic males who were suspended.

Table 4.3

Black Males Suspended compared to Hispanic Males Suspended

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	53.07895	55.1206897
Variance	158.9936	198.318512
Observations	38	58
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	85	
t Stat	-0.74046	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.230532	
t Critical one-tail	1.662978	

4. What is the difference, if any, in the success on the New York State (NYS) Algebra Regents exams of Black male students in the 2015 cohort in an urban high school who had been suspended compared to Black female students in the 2015 cohort who had been suspended?

The findings indicate that the difference in the mean Algebra Regents score between Black male students who were suspended and Black female students who were suspended was not statistically significant $p > .05$.

Table 4.4 provides detail on Black males who were suspended as compared to Black females who were suspended.

Table 4.4

Black Males Suspended Compared to Black Females Suspended

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	61.8	53.07895
Variance	285.7	158.9936
Observations	5	38
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	5	
t Stat	1.113662	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.158038	
t Critical one-tail	2.015048	

Summary of Results

This study analyzed the data for 400 students. Students selected had to mirror the following requirements for the initial study: identify as male in the 2015 cohort, be Black, Hispanic, or White, and have been suspended. Black female students who had been suspended in the same cohort as well as Black male students of the same cohort who were not suspended were also analyzed. Although the difference in the mean Algebra

score between Black male students who were suspended and Black male students who were not suspended were statistically significant, the findings in this study revealed that regardless of whether the Black male students were suspended or not, they still scored lower on the Algebra regents as compared to their Black male counterparts who were not suspended, as well as Hispanic male students, White male students, and Black female students who were suspended for the 2015 cohort. Consequently, the data revealed the mean test score for Black male students, whether suspended or not, was at an average 8-12 test points lower than the traditional passing score needed for passing, which is a 65.

The final chapter of this study, Chapter 5, provides insight into the implications of the findings of this quantitative study. Recommendations for future studies are discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter provides an overview of the problem statement, methodology, and data analysis. A summary and discussion of the findings regarding each research question is included, as well as conclusions drawn from the findings, related implications, recommendations for practice, and suggestions for future research.

Introduction

Youth who consistently receive out-of-school suspension are more likely to develop negative psychosocial and academic outcomes that include further truancy, diminished self-esteem, grade retention, dropping out, and involvement in the criminal justice system (Corkett, Hatt, & Benevides, 2011). In 2006 more than three million youth were suspended from public schools in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013) and, unfortunately, this translates into one in every 10 youth in public schools are disciplined by a school suspension. While OSS provides a clear consequence for youth who do not adhere to school policies, it disengages youth from the school context and can diminish a youth's ability to maintain bonds found in school with teachers and peers (Henry & Huizinga, 2007). Moreover, diminishing school bonds may lead to further engagement in truant and anti-social behavior and, for some youth, academic failure (Gregory et al., 2010). Given these deleterious outcomes, there has been an increasing call to provide alternatives to OSS (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009).

The sweeping changes in the regime of school discipline and security in the United States that have occurred over the past 2 decades have resulted in many negative consequences. Schools of all kinds and in all parts of the country have increasingly adopted harsher, more punitive disciplinary policies, such as zero tolerance and

mandatory arrest. They have augmented their use of police, metal detectors, and closed-circuit surveillance. As Hirschfield (2009) and Nolan (2011), suggest among, other negative effects, harsh school discipline and rigid security practices may socialize students into docility and obedience, whereby they accept authority of adults rather than participate actively in political and civic exchange, though to date, these conclusions have not been tested empirically.

Purpose of the Study

Black students receive exclusionary discipline at rates that are disproportionate to their White peers (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2014). Lost instructional time, resulting from frequent use of exclusionary discipline practices, such as out-of-school suspension have reduced students' chances to narrow the achievement gap, thus eliminating students from the valuable parts of engagement and their overall schooling (Skiba et al., 2011). The negative outcomes resulting from school suspensions affect Black male students more profoundly than other groups, according to Skiba et al. (2011). Currently, there are discrepancies in district and state reports regarding whether or not out-of-school suspension has an impact on student academic achievement, although suspension represents time away from the class.

The purpose of this quantitative, archival, comparative study was to investigate the extent to which, if any, Black students' Algebra I Regents scores are impacted by out-of-school suspension in an urban high school. In this quantitative, archival, comparative study, a purposive sample was used, consisting of Black students, who were selected from the School database based on their days of suspension. The Algebra I Regents has

been selected as a gateway to high school graduation in New York State and, hence, a surrogate artifact representing academic achievement.

Implication of Findings

Based on the study conducted on the academic impact of suspension on Black male students, it was found that regardless of whether they were suspended or not, Black boys in this district of study did significantly worse on the Algebra I Regents examination than their female counterparts as well as the Hispanic and White males in their schools. A *t*-test was conducted to see if there was a difference in the math performance. Although there was a significant finding between males suspended and not suspended, both groups did not achieve a mean passing score.

School suspension correlates significantly with several negative outcomes, including students' poor academic achievement, grade retention, delinquency, dropping out, disaffection and alienation, and drug use (Brooks, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 2000). Coleman et al. (1966) found that a combination of factors was heavily correlated with academic achievement of minority students. The research indicated that the composition of a school (who attends it), the students' sense of control of the environments and their futures, the teachers' verbal skills, and their students' family background, all contribute to student achievement.

The results of this study suggest that frequent use of suspension has no measurable positive deterrent or academic benefit to either the students who are suspended or to non-suspended students. The findings from this study also infer that while suspension inhibits student progress, there are clearly other factors that are barriers to the success and academic achievement of Black male students. Those factors are

related to the deeper context of the educational environment. It has been consistently found that students who receive school suspension are often already disadvantaged. Suspended students are more likely to belong to an ethnic minority group or are of low socioeconomic status and many suspended students are male (Skiba & Rausch, 2006).

When discussing income of African Americans and Latinos with incomes comparable to those of Whites, there was still an achievement gap as measured by standardized testing (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). Research indicates that often, students who are suspended from school do not receive assistance with academic, social, or emotional issues that contributed to the incident for which the student was suspended (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). An effective conclusion is that suspension, when used, should follow a series of interventions that attempt to remedy the precipitating causes of a student's misbehavior and assimilate the student back into the classroom environment preparing them for academic success.

Limitations

This study looked at only one factor that had been found to impact the achievement of Black males: out-of-school suspension. Other factors could be examined to access why there were lower test scores. Those factors might include:

1. Study of the frequency of the suspension and the number of times and the length was outside the scope of the study.
2. A qualitative study of how students perceive the reasons for their low passing score.
3. The number of years the students has been enrolled in the district.

4. The quality of the Algebra I teacher and the performance/passing rate in their individual classes.

Recommendations

Increased training for teachers and administrators on classroom behavior management may help curb implicit bias to create fair and inclusive school environments that respect diversity. Mindfulness and stress management training for school staff also may help resolve classroom disputes early without resorting to suspensions. Schools also should consider discipline alternatives besides out-of-school suspensions, which have been consistently linked to many negative outcomes for students regardless of race, including a greater likelihood of juvenile delinquency and school drop-outs. The involvement of Black youth in school committees or other efforts to reform discipline practices also could increase feelings of belonging and fair treatment at school.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) play an important role in facilitating and delivering prevention and intervention programs for youth (Hansen, 2013). Consequently, CBOs serve as community assets in the development of youth and, in some cases, prevent youth from engaging in such risky behaviors as substance use, unprotected sex, and violence (Mozaffarian et al., 2010). In addition, evidence consistently cites the important role CBOs play in promoting positive youth development; this is especially true among youth in low-income neighborhoods (Wong, 2010). These organizations often serve as extensions to and partners for the youth's family and school by reinforcing community bonds and sustaining a network of positive adults who youth can access (Edwards, Mumford, & Serra-Roldan, 2007) by supporting positive connections with adults and facilitating youth competence (Bowers, 2010). Youth who have strong social connections

with adults across their neighborhood and family are less likely to engage in risky behavior and substance use (Karcher & Finn, 2005). These connections are central to interventions that seek to promote resilient functioning among youth (Karcher & Sass, 2010).

When youth have a sense of connectedness to their social ecology it fosters active engagement in their community and optimal trajectories. CBOs serve as an essential component to a youth's socioecology and play a vital role in providing social support and promoting asset-building (Cicchetti, Rogosch, Maughan, Toth, & Bruce, 2003). Moreover, CBOs are relevant social institutions that provide meaningful resources to support youth's well-being (Ungar et al., 2008). As a community resource, CBOs can further counter the negative effects of suspension and support youth's successful transition back into the school context. Unfortunately, very little is known about how CBOs promote resilience and serve as alternatives to OSS. The limited evidence does suggest that alternative to suspension models in CBOs support engagement in pro-social behavior and reduce resuspension rates among youth (Weissman, 2015).

1. It is essential that, along with the development of comprehensive district-wide discipline plans, school districts develop comprehensive district discipline data monitoring plans. These monitoring plans should be designed to disaggregate discipline data by school level, ethnicity, types of infractions, sanctions administered, and interventions attempted.
2. Monitoring by school districts to identify schools where the greatest disparity for Black students exists, offers an opportunity for specific support and

resources to be provided. If disparity exists for other racial/ethnic groups, then schools should receive resources to address the disparity.

3. School districts should conduct regular reviews, either quarterly, by semester, or annually to determine the impact of the implemented interventions.

Interventions should be monitored through the collection of attendance and discipline data that is gathered by school and district administrators for accuracy.

4. School districts should also identify other variables that are linked to student discipline including, but not limited to, gender, exceptional education status, and free or reduced lunch status and provide support to address interventions for these students.

5. School districts should attempt to staff schools with teachers and support personnel that reflect the diversity of the schools. Professional development regarding cultural diversity, the impact of poverty, and effective discipline practices should be required of all personnel and be ongoing in nature.

6. A review of the math curriculum should occur to ensure that it is culturally sensitive, specifically to Black male students.

7. Build a district-wide foundation that includes supporting students' needs through a positive school climate and support services for students and their families.

8. Intervene early by creating support and services for students at risk for serious academic or behavioral problems.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study investigated the overrepresentation of Black students in the administration of school discipline suspensions in a high school and their performance on the Algebra I Regents examination. The following are suggested topics for further research:

1. This study should be expanded beyond the use of suspension data. Students who are currently enrolled in the eighth grade and have been a part of the same school system since third grade (the grade level in which the first state exam is issued) and see foundationally what their levels of skill and knowledge are pertaining to the Math curriculum. A uniform exam should be given to all students.
2. This research should be expanded beyond the analysis of out-of-school suspensions to include less severe consequences such as referral rates and in-school suspensions. Further research should be conducted to determine if disparity in school discipline exists for Black students in the numbers of referrals for discipline and to determine if Black students receive other discipline consequences at a disproportionate rate.
3. Further research should investigate the reasons Black students were referred for discipline, such as open defiance, disrespect, and class disruptions, etc. Research should be conducted to determine if those who administer discipline use uniform definitions in the application of consequences and if individual judgments and interpretations of behavior influence the administration of discipline consequences.

4. Further research should investigate teacher training to ensure cultural relevance for students and how these trainings help to ensure academic success in the classroom, leading to a high school degree.
5. The New York State Algebra Regents curriculum should be examined and studied to see if changes need to be made to the modules to make them more relevant and conducive to engaging the minority population.
6. New York State should consider changing the administration grade for the NYS Algebra Regents to 11th grade with the implication that students would have more of a foundation to accurately complete the assessment, thus being able to graduate on timely manner.

Dominant Culture Context

A growing body of research indicates that exclusionary school discipline practices disproportionately impact students of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Some scholars have theorized that racial disparities likely vary across school sub-contexts, as implicit bias in perceptions of student behavior may be more influential in locations where students and adults have weaker relationships (Anyon et al., 2018). The critical race theory (CRT) is a framework for approaching issues of education and social justice. CRT suggests that “race and races are products of social thought and relations” and that racism is non-aberrational (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p.7). CRT has grown rapidly since its early development as an insurgent movement among US legal scholars of color in the 1970s and 1980s (Bell 1980a, 1980b; Crenshaw, 2002; Delgado 1995; Delgado & Stefancic 2017; Matsuda et al., 1993).

Guided by CRT, this study used archival data from eight high schools in a large urban district to consider the relationship between the academic impact of suspension on Black male students as related to the Algebra I Regents exam, by comparing the results of Hispanic males, White males, and Black females who have been suspended, as well as Black males who have not been suspended. Based on the findings from this study, suspension does not appear to be related to the underachievement of Black male students. Attention needs to be paid to the role of systemic bias and colorblind policies and practices in discipline disparities. The construct of the educational system continues to empower the dominant cultures, with little room to support those whose life experience is distinctly different as analyzed by Bronfenbrenner (1995) and Milner (2013) in their discussions of an ecology of relationships. The current school culture relies on traditional instructional and disciplinary strategies and constructs, therefore, resulting in a cycle of failure for many Black male students.

Conclusion

Despite mounting evidence that suspensions are ineffective at correcting behavior and commonly precede dropping out (Dupper et al., 2009), out-of-school suspensions continue to be the most widely used form of school discipline in the United States. The value of suspension has been widely debated, but there is general support for the belief that out-of-school suspension does not result in behavior change (Skiba & Knesting, 2001). Research shows that frequent suspensions appear to significantly increase the risk of academic underperformance (Davis, 2003). The school disciplinary practices used most widely throughout the United States may be contributing to lowered academic performance among the group of students in greatest need of improvement. A

longitudinal study found lower academic achievement levels among students prior to suspension, but also found significantly lower levels of academic gains throughout the 3 years post-suspension (Arcia, 2006). Unfortunately, as a result, among students of all races, being suspended frequently (Carpenter & Ramirez, 2007) and being retained in a grade (Stearns, Moller, Potochnick, & Blau, 2007) often precedes dropping out (Balfanz, Herzog, & Mac Iver, 2007).

According to the National Governors' Association, the achievement gap is "a matter of race and class" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, pp. 49-50). In the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress results, the gap between Black and Latina/o fourth graders and their White counterparts in reading scaled scores was more than 26 points. In fourth grade mathematics the gap was more than 20 points (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). In eighth grade reading, the gap was more than 23 points, and in eighth grade mathematics the gap was more than 26 points. The findings from this study of students in an urban high school finds that students' underachievement in this subject area is significantly lower than their classmates whether in the classroom or suspended.

This study supports the research on the underachievement of Black males on a state examination, the Algebra I Regents, that serves as a gateway to college and is required for graduation from New York State high schools, as compared to males from other minority groups and to Black females, whether they have been suspended or not. This study found that Black male students did not reach academic success on the Algebra I Regents exam, regardless of whether they were suspended or not. In the long term, school suspension had been found to be a moderate to strong predictor of dropout and not

graduating on time (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Discipline sanctions resulting in exclusion from school may damage the learning process in other ways as well. Suspended students may become less bonded to school, less invested in school rules and course work, and subsequently, less motivated to achieve academic success. Students who are less bonded to school may be more likely to turn to lawbreaking activities and become less likely to experience academic success. Consistent findings highlight the importance of school bonding for reducing the risk of delinquency (Hawkins, Smith, & Catalano, 2004).

Only 70% of all ninth graders graduate from high school (Hirschman, Pharris-Ciurej, & Willhoft, 2006), and the graduation rate for minority students is much lower (Wolk, 2011), sometimes falling to below 20% (Shanahan, 2007). Bruner (1960) suggested that curricula be organized spirally, so the same essential questions are repeated, widened, and their concepts developed over time and grades (Heritage, 2008). This kind of curriculum organization increases domain knowledge, creates more sophisticated and deeper learning, and helps students see the relationships between subjects. Teaching with active engagement leads to deeper student learning, allowing both teachers and students to deepen the learning experience because it is based on wider conceptual understanding.

Disengaged students are less likely to aspire to higher educational goals, have lower grades, and are more likely to drop out of school (Kaplan, Peck, & Kaplan, 1997). Findings from Crosnoe, Johnson, and Elder (2004) suggest that strong teacher-student relationships are positively related to higher levels of student academic achievement. To improve the learning environment for Black students, there must be more positive and

productive teacher-student relationships (Crosnoe, 2002), restructuring of the education system (Boykin, 1994), and student investment in achievement (Newmann, 1981).

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Appendix A

District Approval



Innovation • Inspiration • Excellence for All

One Larkin Center
Yonkers, New York 10701
Tel: 914-376-8232
Fax 914-376-9144

Dr. Edwin M. Guezada
Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Andrea S. Coddett
Deputy Superintendent

Felix Artao, Ph.D.
Manager of Administration-Superintendent's Office

Carla B. Collins, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Research, Evaluation, Assessment & Reporting

Giannina Frino
Director
Research and Development

Date: March 20, 2018

To: Sandy Hattar

From: Giannina Frino

Re: Approval of "The Academic Impact of Suspension on Black Male Students"

Please accept this letter as official approval of the above titled research proposal. In the context of this study no District staff or students will be contacted. Instead, the researcher will utilize specified data sets from District records. Unless otherwise noted by the District, schools involved in the study shall remain unnamed in all reports and findings.

Any changes to the study design must be resubmitted for approval.

Good luck!

Appendix B

Letter of Amendment



Innovation • Inspiration • Excellence for All

One Larkin Center
Yonkers, New York 10701
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Fax 914-376-9144

Dr. Edwin M. Quezada
Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Fenix Arias
Manager of Administration

Carla B. Collins, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Research, Evaluation, Assessment & Reporting

Giannina Frino
Director
Research and Development

Date: March 16, 2018

To: St. John Fisher

From: Giannina Frino

Re: Letter of recommendation for proposal "The Academic Impact of Suspension on Black Male Students"

Upon reviewing the research proposal; "The Academic Impact of Suspension on Black Male Students" the following recommendation has been made:

- Increase the sample size of the study by including additional high schools in the district to be able to conduct reliable statistical analyses

We strongly believe that broadening the scope of this research will result in meaningful findings.

If there are any questions or further information is required, contact Giannina Frino at 914-376-8234.

Appendix C

Communication Concerning Use of Excel

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **VanDerLinden, Kim E** <kvanderlinden@sjfc.edu>

Date: Mon, Jun 4, 2018 at 5:21 PM

Subject: Example t-test report

To: "sandyhattar@aol.com" <sandyhattar@aol.com>, "Hattar, Sandy" <sh08813@students.sjfc.edu>

Hi Sandy! Attached is a screenshot of a very simple version of a report of a t-test. (SEM = standard error of the mean - which you may want to add when you add S.D., the standard deviation).

I saw a couple of dissertations that used the exact same export that you had already from Excel. I am more used to SPSS - which does the output horizontally in one row. But, I believe that you could use your Excel output as is. It is really up to your Chair and their preferences. I like the SPSS view, but your Chair may be fine with the Excel table that you have.

See you soon, Dr. Kim V.