

Black [Out]: Discipline Inequity Matters for Black Females at the Elementary School Level

By

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DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Faculty of
The University of Texas at Arlington
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

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May 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS***Ecclesiastes 4:9-10***

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.

Dear God, thank you for more than two who helped me during this degree.

I recognize that no person achieves anything on their own. This Doctorate will have my name but is representative of many hands and hearts who gave of their time and effort to support me on this journey. First, to my parents (Oliver, Sr. and Lois), the love of learning you gave to me at a young age encouraged me to always seek to find answers and to read voraciously. Thank you for the push to achieve. You often reminded me that I deserve this and my dream of acquiring my Ph. D. was within my reach if I just kept going.

To my daughter, Morgan, thank you for the random comment where you said “Dad, if it doesn’t scare you, the goal is not big enough.” I have held that thought during this work and used it as encouragement when I felt that I was too tired to read one more article or edit one more page.

To my friends, cohort, church family, and others, whose names I cannot list, know that your questions and check ins came at just the right time to give me the energy I needed to complete this task.

An unsung hero, who I must acknowledge, is Courtney L. Jones. You were my academic advisor throughout this whole journey and provided priceless assistance for class registrations, deadlines, information, and guidance. If, I could give all my tuition to you, I would still owe you for the role you played in this degree. Thank you!

To My Committee!

Dr. Casey Brown, your pointed thoughts and suggestions helped me to see the exactness of research and provided a great balance in the conversation for what I could accomplish in the field of education. Thank you for the random conversations in the breezeway.

Dr. Ambra Green, your pushes early on in the process and mapping out of my ideas for this particular study, the approach to the data, and the conversations we had provided focus to my work. Additionally, as one of the few Black women in the College of Education, your suggestion to look at Black females as an understudied group solidified my research agenda and direction for my dissertation.

Dr. Catherine Robert, you are an amazing person. I do not have space or words to describe how well you fulfilled the role of chairperson. Thank you for your willingness to take on the crazy and difficult type of research I chose. Thank you for giving me just what I needed, whether I wanted to hear it or not, and encouraging me through all the ups and downs of this process. Only you know how hard this was for me and the challenges I faced along the way. I look forward to collaborating with you in the future as a colleague. I am forever grateful for having crossed your path.

Finally, to my fiancé, Dr. Kristi Baker. When we started this journey for our Doctorates, we said Master's degree to Doctorate and nothing less. We supported one another through the late nights and endless rewrites. I was happy to help you cross the finish line in 2020 and thank you for your help to finish in 2021. WE MADE IT! You are my heart. I will forever say, I do to you.

With humble appreciation.....Oliver K. Patterson, Jr.to my friends, simply known as Ken.
Dr. K.

ABSTRACT

Nearly 3.5 million American students (K-12) experience some form of ostracization from educational settings yearly in the form of In-School-Suspension (ISS), Out-of-School suspension (OSS), or expulsion. Impact research reveals that exclusionary practices correlate with negative outcomes for students including academic achievement (e.g., lower test scores, higher dropout rates), socio-emotional struggles, and increased problem behaviors and interactions with the criminal justice system. Studies have also demonstrated that school systems tend to promote negative attitudes towards Black children beginning in elementary grades. Many studies indicate that the inevitability of academic exclusion stems from teacher bias against Black students and lack of training to support all students. Black females experience similar negative outcomes as Black males, yet the literature lacks information as to when Black females experience the most risk for ISS or OSS. This study addresses an important gap in discipline literature as it focuses on the extent to which femaleness and ethnicity converge to influence time to first elementary exclusion experience. Findings indicate Black females are overrepresented in ISS or OSS discipline infractions in each of the first eight years of the study. Analysis revealed Black females' risk of receiving a first ISS or OSS is significantly greater than White females at each grade level.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction, Problem, & Purpose

Nearly 3.5 million American students (K-12) experience some form of ostracization from educational settings yearly in the form of In-School-Suspension (ISS), Out-of-School suspension (OSS), or expulsion (Losen, 2014). Losen and Whitaker (2018) found that in the 2015-2016 school year students lost nearly 17 million days of instruction due to suspensions. Although overall suspension rates have decreased in recent years, discipline inequity and overrepresentation of students of color receiving discipline infractions across subgroups (e.g., Black students vs. White students, Low SES vs. High SES, male vs. female) remain largely unchanged with Black students constituting the most overrepresented group across all exclusionary practices (suspension and expulsion) (NCES, 2019). As a whole, 13.7 % of Blacks received Out-of-School suspension whereas 3.4 % of Whites received the same. Among males, 13.7 % of Black males received OSS compared to 5.0 % of White males. Additionally, 9.6 % of Black females incurred an OSS compared to only 1.7 % of White females. In each instance, Black children experience higher percentages of suspensions when compared to their White peers.

The issue of discipline inequity is not new. Researchers indicate that prolonged discipline disparities between gender and racial groups (e.g., Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Skiba, Arredondo, & Rausch, 2014; Welch & Payne, 2010). The shift to zero tolerance drug enforcement during the 1980s influenced greater rates of inequity in the penal system and ultimately in academic settings with sanctions disproportionately affecting Black, Latin X, and male populations (Skiba & Leone, 2001). Though zero tolerance policies required specific exclusionary responses to gun possession on school campuses they were quickly extended to

lesser non-violent offenses such as truancy, disrespect, or having a bad attitude with harmful effects for Black students beginning as early as kindergarten (Wright, Morgan, Coyne, Beaver, & Barnes, 2014).

Impact research reveals that exclusionary practices correlate with negative outcomes for students including academic achievement (e.g., lower test scores, higher dropout rates), socio-emotional struggles, and increased problem behaviors and interactions with the criminal justice system (Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2001; Milner, 2012; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016). While student behavior may at times warrant exclusionary discipline, little research supports that reliance on discipline policies which remove students from class increases school safety or improves student behavior (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Noltemeyer, Ward, and McLoughlin (2015) identified an inverse relationship between suspension and exclusion. The anticipated reduction in negative behavior did not occur and administrators cited increased incidents of problem behaviors. In schools where administrators used suspension and expulsion at high rates, increased undesirable behavior was most prevalent. Additionally, the use of exclusion as a “quick fix” to remove students exhibiting unwanted behaviors negated the opportunity to implement interventions to address behavior. Curran (2019) explained that most suspensions result from non-violent, non-weapon related and subjective minor infractions such as poor attitude and disrespect. Students often face removal by teachers who subjectively interpret behaviors differentially and unevenly from one classroom setting to another. Studies have also demonstrated that school systems tend to promote negative attitudes towards Black children beginning in elementary grades (Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Many indicate that the inevitability of academic exclusion stems from teacher bias against Black students and lack of training to support all students (see Allen, Scott, & Lewis,

2013; Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015). Forsyth, Biggar, Forsyth, & Howat (2015) suggested that teacher training regarding appropriate student interventions could mitigate many negative behaviors.

Appropriate support is vital as studies such as Balfanz, Byrnes, and Fox (2012) argue that even one instance of academic exclusion raises the likelihood of additional exclusion with negative academic outcomes as a result. Much is known about the numbers of ISS or OSS infractions relative to various student characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic status. Little research delves into the risk of discipline at different grade levels (i.e., elementary, middle, or high) based on the aforementioned student characteristics. Further, the extensive literature regarding the overall issue of discipline inequity informs the field primarily about males of color, students with disabilities, and those from low socio-economic backgrounds. Most literature tends to address female discipline solely as the comparison group to males rather than as a separate area of discipline inequity research. A few recent discipline inequity studies focus on Black females. These studies identify similar challenges and outcomes as males when dealing with discipline inequity (e.g., Annamma et. al, 2019; Slate, Gray, & Jones, 2016).

That Black females experience similar negative outcomes as Black males suggests discipline and discipline inequity for females is worthy of study (Blake, Keith, Luo, Le, & Salter, 2017). Researchers such as George (2015) suggests an increasing discipline problem stemming from stereotypes of Black females as loud, abrasive, lacking femininity, and characterizations of “ghetto” mannerisms produces inequity in school discipline. Others (Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015; Morris, 2007; Morris & Perry, 2017) propose that teachers attend to Black females’ behaviors unnecessarily which leads to incorrect perceptions and increased risk for policing and suspension. Most of the studies center on discipline for Black females across K-12 schooling.

Limited work in elementary discipline risk informs the field when risk is greatest for Black females relative to their White female peers. The lack of studies regarding how grade level increases or decreases risk of ISS/OSS across groups hinders the ability of stakeholders (*i.e.*, parents, schools, policy makers) to employ early intervention strategies for students who exhibit undesired behaviors (Yang, 2009). This study addresses an important gap in discipline literature as it focuses on the extent to which femaleness and ethnicity converge to influence time to first elementary exclusion experience. The following research questions were answered:

Research Questions

RQ 1: What is the association between grade level and the risk of first In-School or Out-of-School suspension?

RQ 2: What is the association between race and Pre-Kindergarten attendance and the risk of a first In-School or Out-of-School suspension for Black females relative to White females?

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Previous critical work around school discipline clarified the extent to which differing student groups face differences in severity and length of suspensions and expulsion. The research also explains negative educational outcomes as well as negative life outcomes (e.g., Milner, 2012; Skiba et. al, 2002) for ethnic minority children (*i.e.*, Black, Latin X, Native American). For example, in a 2007 study, Suh and Suh found students who are suspended are 77.5 % more likely to drop out of school compared to students who have not received exclusionary experiences. Educators do not agree on how to define student success, though all would agree that dropping out does not represent an ideal outcome.

While relevant, much of the literature duplicates well-worn paths of study yet overlooks female elementary students. The tendency to overlook predictors of exclusion for females, leaves

gaps in educator knowledge though, as previously mentioned, data indicate students begin experiencing expulsion and suspension as early as Kindergarten (Wright et. al, 2014). This study extends the current body of knowledge beyond the common discourse of who faces discipline inequity (e.g., Blacks, Latin Xs, males, low SES) by centering on the rate of risk associated with student characteristics (femaleness, ethnicity, and Pre-K attendance status) in influencing the time to a student's first ISS or OSS.

Previous work in the area of discipline inequity provides a myriad of theoretical frameworks which may explain ways to understand the phenomenon as it relates to gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc. Much of the research employs theoretical frameworks relative to race or ethnicity. Limitations of theories such as Critical Race Theory do not provide the ability to understand all aspects of discipline from a longitudinal lens or do not adequately address the why behind discipline differences. For the current study, Racial Threat Theory and Black Female Adultification Theory provide a foundation to explain the mechanisms which promote discipline inequity for young black females.

Racial Threat Theory

Racial Threat Theory (Blalock, 1967) describes the role of social avoidance of a growing minority population by White individuals. Discipline policies In-Schools promote social avoidance by separating students of color (Asian, Black, Latin X, Native American) who appear as a symbolic threat to the White power structure. Blalock explains that symbolic threat emerges when Whites perceive non-Whites as connected with criminal behaviors. The response by Whites is to institute sanctions against the growing minority population. For example, when the population of minority children increases (specifically Black and Latin X), Whites in power create increasingly harsh disciplinary rules as a way to create perceived safety. In schools,

perceived safety occurs when the increasing population of ethnic minorities face policies which separate them from the majority (Whites) student population. Separation in the context of this study refers to the exclusionary practices of ISS or OSS. Blaylock further suggests that teacher prejudices and the subjective nature of school discipline practices promote increases in policing and severity of discipline responses. As social avoidance becomes systematized through rules and policies, large rates of ostracism become possible.

Black Female Adultification Theory

Researchers such as Ocen (2015) point to historical constructs of slavery which change the expectations of childhood for black females to account for reasons why they are adultified. The term Black Female Adultification (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017) specifically refers to the ideal that school systems do not afford the same childhood behavior expectations for White females as they do Black females. Instead, teachers favor passive, light-skinned, middle classed females (Thompson, 2016). Females from lower socio-economic backgrounds face characterizations of loud, abrasive, hypersexualized, and adult-like though they may display similar behaviors as their White female counterparts (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017). This difference of perception influences teachers' subjective decision to discipline females perceived as acting out of the norm (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010).

Methodology

An open records request to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) provided relevant data for the current study. The longitudinal study included nine years of discipline records for the cohort of Texas public school students who began kindergarten during the 2010-2011 school year. The cohort data followed students from kindergarten through their eight-grade year. Longitudinal data allows for discrete time survival analysis to understand the differences in the

likelihood (risk) of ISS or OSS for the population of interest. The purpose of the current study is to ascertain the extent to which ethnicity influences the time to first In-School or Out-of-School Suspension for females.

Definition of Key Terms

Alternative school. Alternative schools serve to meet the needs of students struggling to function in regular schools and provide nontraditional education which falls outside of regular, special education, or vocational definitions. Examples relevant to the current study include: Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP) and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs (JJAEP; Gagnon, Rockwell, & Scott, 2008). For this study, when referenced, locations refer to schools only in Texas.

Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP). Established by Texas Education Code (TEC), §37.008, a DAEP represents an alternative educational and self-discipline instructional program for students in K-12 schools who have been removed from their schools due to mandatory or discretionary disciplinary purposes. A DAEP may be located on-campus or at a separate institution in adherence with requirements specified in TEC §129.102.

Discipline inequity. Discipline inequity occurs when students belonging to specific demographic groups experience rates of discipline greater or less than their proportionality within the group as a whole. Discipline disparities have been found between Black, Latino, and Native American students (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010).

Exclusionary practices. Exclusion from the educational setting involves removing a student from class or from the school to limit the influence had by the offending student over others. Additionally, removal intends to improve the learning environment for the remaining students while simultaneously messaging appropriate and inappropriate behavioral expectations

(Lamont et al., 2013). Exclusionary practices include disciplinary actions such as office disciplinary referrals (ODR), corporal punishment, suspension (In-School or Out-of-School; ISS or OSS), expulsion, and juvenile justice referrals (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008).

Gun Free Schools Act 1994. The Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 was a national policy requiring each state receiving Federal funds to enact law requiring local educational agencies to expel a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to a school, or to have possessed a firearm at a school, under the jurisdiction of local educational agencies in that State for at least one year, though it may be modified on a case-by-case basis.

Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs (JJAEP). JJAEP is an alternative schooling program for students expelled for criminal action or for serious misbehavior. Students must be assigned by court order to JJAEP. Assignment to a JJAEP program results after a student violates Texas Education Code Chapter 37. Three primary infractions categories initiate an expulsion including serious infractions of the Student Code of Conduct, serious off-campus infractions of the Student Code of Conduct, or court ordered assignment.

Latin X vs. Hispanic/ Latino. Terminology in the state of Texas data identifies students with backgrounds from Spanish speaking countries as Hispanic/ Latino. For the purpose of the study, I chose to use the term Latin X due to its gender-neutrality. The suffix -a or -o in Spanish refers to females or males.

Racialization. Racialization refers to “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified social relationship, social practice or group” (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 111). Additionally, Powell (2012) explains that racialization usually results in negative outcomes for

the group racialized. The impacts of racialization generally occur for those who are the poorest and often darkest skinned (Gans, 2012).

Risk Ratios (Relative Risk). Risk ratios, also termed relative risk, are a measure of the risk of a certain event happening in one group compared to the risk of the same event happening in another group. A risk ratio of one means there is no difference between two groups in terms of their risk. A risk ratio of greater than one indicates the group of interest has greater risk than the comparison group for the event to occur. A risk ratio of less means that the group of interest has less risk than the comparison group.

School-to-prison pipeline. The hostile environment experienced primarily by Black students influences a negative outcome labelled the school to jail or school-to-prison pipeline. Wald and Losen (2003) define the school-to-prison pipeline as the increasingly *punitive* and *isolating* school discipline policies Black students receive in response to undesirable behavior. The school-to-prison pipeline represents a theoretical pathway that “ushers [students] into the delinquency and criminal systems through both the condition of their schools and the official responses to their behavior at school” (Buckingham, 2013, p. 181). Researchers such as Rocque and Snellings (2017) posit that a precursor to adult incarceration is a series of exclusions (suspensions and expulsions) faced by students beginning in elementary school. An inequitable application of discipline to students of color initiates the future overrepresentation within the prison population.

Suspension. In general, suspension represents the response of a school to remove a student from the classroom setting. In Texas, provisions for the type and length of removal are set forth in the Texas Education Code within the student code of conduct (TEC 37.001). Though it does not specify infractions requiring ISS or OSS, Texas Education Code does require schools

to create a student code of conduct. Schools also must designate an administrator for each school to serve as the campus behavior coordinator.

Zero tolerance. Zero tolerance policies in schools call for mandatory disciplinary responses to behavior infractions regardless of the severity of the student's misconduct (American Psychological Association [APA] Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). The title zero tolerance refers to provisions within the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 which required mandatory expulsion of no less than one year for weapons possession on school campus G.F.S. (1994).

Personal and Professional Positionalities

Researching discipline in many ways stems from the challenges I observed my students experiencing at all levels. The K-12 public school system intends as its main goal to educate the masses of students who arrive at district doors daily. Education requires student presence in the place where information is disseminated. Presence in class provides access to the acquisition of information. I regularly faced comments of "I got suspended" from students leaving the building with their relatives. I began to see patterns of discipline which became disturbing. First, I noticed the inconsistencies in who received minor discipline infractions compared to those who received more severe consequences such as ISS, OSS, and even expulsion. Some students received ISS while others returned to class for similar infractions. Second, I noticed how often my class served as the time-out space for students to think about their behavior and then return to class. A high school student named Sarah (pseudonym) knew the exact class she would get kicked out of at the start of that class and would ask if she could do her work in my class every day. In effect, she intelligently problem solved how not to get in trouble and still get her work done. Her

teacher, Ms. Jones (pseudonym), did not seem to care, nor did she attempt to figure out how Sarah could attend class without student-teacher conflicts occurring.

I wondered if teacher factors such as cultural competence could explain the differential discipline of students. Could it be that longevity in the field which helped some to know how to deal with difficult students made a difference? To be certain, recent research does support teacher tolerance, training, and background as factors which have influence on the application of discipline (Fallon et al., 2017; Flynn et al., 2016; Larson et al., 2018; Townsend-Walker, 2012). Additionally, teacher ethnicity and understanding of student diversity helps, but something beyond these factors seemed amiss.

During my years as a classroom teacher, I noticed a disturbing trend; my Black students faced suspension at higher rates than others. This was highest among females and resulted from female conflict with other students. For example, if there were males fighting, generally I found it to be related to some form of gossip perpetuated by the females. If the conflict were between females, the result was generally a fight where one of the two parties was badly injured. To mitigate this reality, I often informally worked with administration to mentor students, meet with their parents, offer my classroom as a safe space, and offer my off periods as a time where students perceived as most difficult could come and “cool off” when needed. These small interventions often worked for a short period of time, but inevitably many of my students, especially females, would find themselves back in the same trouble.

Particularly troubling were the middle school females who seemed to simply need direction. In this setting, I noticed swift suspensions and repetitive academic problems for those absent from class. This in turn created an even greater sense of frustration for teachers and students as we attempted to tutor students after they missed information. We found that sending

work home with students who struggled rarely returned completed or with quality after an ISS or OSS. In reflection, I recognize my complicity in perpetuating a cycle which may have begun for these students early in their academic career. Poor behavior, exclusion, lack of understanding, which begets poor behavior, additional exclusion, and greater academic gaps all resulted as we, in many ways, pushed certain students to the side in favor of those who readily complied, or seemed to comply, with our instructions.

I admit that I often wondered why we did not attack the problem when the initial problem became obvious. Yet, in my research regarding Black females, I realized the trend of marginalization begins much earlier than I thought. The research leans so heavily towards males of color when discussing problems within education that even while conducting a systematic literature review on discipline I had difficulty finding extensive work on the problem of discipline inequity as it relates to females. Research literature is devoid of topics, in general, related to Black females to render them into nonexistence. This is especially true of discipline literature. Evan-Winters and Esposito (2010) stated it perfectly:

... because feminist epistemologies tend to be concerned with the education of White girls and women, and race-based epistemologies tend to be consumed with the educational barriers negatively effecting Black boys, the educational needs of Black girls have fallen through the cracks (p. 12).

While I am not a Black female and I have raised a Black female who did not have problems in school, I wonder what if she had? She could have been Sarah, kicked out beginning in elementary, yet intelligent. The research on Black females and their interaction with school discipline policies focus on teacher attitudes and biases, teacher relationships with students. Few studies attend to when the problem begins. During my career as a teacher, I sought to provide

answers to the deep questions of how to provide greater access and equity to those often marginalized educationally. This study serves as a way for me to continue in that goal of equitable education for all students.

Overview of Chapters

I use the following structure to organize the current study. **Chapter 2** presents the literature of differential discipline for students by examining national education policy of zero tolerance from a historical aspect, factors of discipline inequity, outcomes of differential discipline, issues specific to elementary, and issues specific to females. I conclude the chapter discussing gaps in the literature followed by a short summary. In **Chapter 3**, I explain the methodology used in the study. I begin by reviewing the problem and revisit the research questions. I discuss the rationale which warrants discrete time survival analysis and identify the “when” aspect of the study. **Chapter 3** concludes with a discussion of the population and power analysis. In **Chapter 4**, I present findings of the data analysis of the cohort in general and for females specifically relative to their student characteristics. Additionally, I describe the risk ratios at each grade level for the various student groupings (gender, ethnicity, Pre-K status). In **Chapter 5**, I discuss the data and implications of the risk of ISS or OSS. I make recommendations for stakeholders regarding discipline inequity and discuss limitations of the study before finalizing the study with conclusions and opportunities for future study.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

The literature surrounding discipline inequity provides a broad base of information to support the current study, yet it mainly focuses on males (e.g., Cook, Duong, McIntosh, Fiat, Pullmann, & McGinnis, 2018; Fabelo et al., 2011; Irby, 2014; Skiba et al., 2002)). A small but growing body of work relates to female rates of exclusion (Annamma et al., 2019; Blake, Butler, Lewis, & Darensbourg, 2011; Morris, 2005; Murphy, Acosta, & Kennedy-Lewis, 2013; Smith & Martin, 2017; Yang, Harmeyer, Chen, & Lofaso, 2018). Though minimal research focuses on Black females specifically, research on exclusionary practices by race suggests disproportionately higher rates of discipline for Black students in general, and Black females specifically in relation to their non-Black peers (Annamma et al., 2019; Slate, Gray, & Jones, 2016; Yang et al., 2018).

The following literature review covers studies relevant to discipline inequity with a focus on precipitating factors and outcomes (academic and life) of exclusionary discipline beginning with policy changes initiated by the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994. Next, I discuss factors of discipline inequity by focusing on school level policies which impact rates of discipline. I follow with a discussion related to the intersection of race (Black, White, Latinx) and gender (female). Afterwards, I discuss Racial Threat Theory and Black Female Adultification Theory as the two theoretical frameworks guiding the study. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of gaps in the literature which form the basis of the current study.

National Education Policy of Zero Tolerance

During the 1980s, American society perceived growing threats to public safety due to the “war on drugs” initiated during the Reagan administration (Newburn & Jones, 2007). In

response, the federal government passed laws predetermining police response to societal issues including sex offending, environmental pollution, homelessness, sexual harassment, trespassing, and even skateboarding (Molsbee, 2008). These laws represented a national desire to meet real or perceived threats with deterrence, incapacitation, and retribution (Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Ristenberg, 2006). The genesis of predetermined legal responses to criminal activity reflected policymakers' frustration with the society's inability to control rising crime rates. As a result, constituents embraced policies that "weaken[ed] 'due process' considerations in favor of those of youth 'crime control'" (Newburn & Jones, 2007, p. 223). Soon afterwards, the Clinton administration enacted the Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) as part of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Cerrone, 1999). This legislation required states to add policy to expel, for no less than one year, any student bringing a firearm onto school grounds as a condition for receiving federal safety funds (Peterson & Skiba, 2000; Triplett, Allen, & Lewis, 2014). Zero tolerance operates under two core assumptions: 1) harsh sanctions will deter student misconduct, and 2) removal of the most serious offenders from schools will improve the school climate (Skiba et al., 2011). Prior to GFSA, some states such as California, Kentucky, and New York began zero tolerance policies for drugs, fighting, and even gang activity (Skiba, 2000). The Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 formalized federal policy and tied funding to the adherence of the law by schools. Most states had some form of zero tolerance in place by 1993.

Proponents of the GFSA highlighted the ability to equally apply the law to all in an efficient and consistent manner. Additional benefits included the close relationship between schools, police, and juvenile justice system. The direct association between law enforcement and school systems intended to deter gun possession by increasing student fear of consequences (Levesque, 2011). However, critics, as early as the late 1990s began to discuss the broadening of

the application of zero tolerance policies (e.g., Skiba & Peterson, 1999). It was noted that the range of offenses expanded from guns and drugs to talking back and bad attitude as policy makers supported intolerance of unwanted behaviors (Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). Critics also suggest that school officials' use of discretion in the interpretation and application of consequences does not follow the intent of zero tolerance policies. Most importantly, critics cite the ineffectiveness of zero tolerance policies to accomplish the intended goal while creating an additional area of inequity between Black and White students due to the biased application of the policies (American Psychological Association, 2008; Raffaele-Mendez, 2003; Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Zehr, 2010).

Discipline inequity became a largely debated topic as the results of zero tolerance policies did not make schools safer. Rather, these policies created an educational “criminal complex” that matches America’s prison complex. The results of “three strikes and you are out” laws which channeled thousands of males and females of color to jail expressed itself in the harsh penalties of schools (Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). Unlike the justice system, the vast majority of students who face ISS or OSS are suspended due to subjective behaviors such as bad attitude or disrespect. Researchers concluded that these outcomes illuminate what Critical Race Theorists propose: American schools perpetuate hegemonic practices (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2013). Further, schooling promotes ideas that Black students (especially males) are a threat and need to be controlled through harsh discipline policies similar to zero tolerance (Blalock, 1967).

In the following sections I discuss two additional factors which researchers suggest influence rates of discipline. First, I discuss school policies as a mechanism of exclusion. Then I discuss school leadership as the campus enforcement agent for school policies. Each function in

the school setting daily and though teachers may initiate an ISS or OSS, school leaders serve to interpret policies and deliver consequences or enforcement.

Outcomes of Discipline Inequity

Discipline inequity impact studies indicate numerous potential outcomes. Few if any represent positive results for those who experience exclusionary discipline. The intended desire for decreased behavioral problems precipitates what many deem a pathway or pipeline from school-to-prison. Studies generally categorize outcomes as academic outcomes (high school persistence, grade point average) or school-to-prison outcomes (juvenile justice interaction, future job attainment, drug use). Following, I survey the literature by category to highlight the impacts of exclusionary practices on students.

Academic outcomes. Research consistently indicates an inverse relationship between exclusion and academic achievement. For example, in a study focused on English/Language Arts (ELA) classes, Allday and Christle (2015) found that students who had previously experienced expulsion demonstrated decreased grades in reading. Though this study focused on secondary schools, the researcher attributed root causes of academic underachievement in elementary expulsion.

Losen and Whitaker (2018) noted that students on the receiving end of harsh disciplinary practices missed staggering amounts of class time. For instance, Arcia (2006) found in a national study that over one year, students, in total, missed more than 11 million days of instruction due to discipline infractions and missing instruction was associated with negative academic affects. Similarly, Perry and Morris (2014) noted that suspension, expulsion, and policing negatively correlated with math and reading scores with each successive suspension. The negative impact also collaterally impacted non-offending students in schools with high degrees of exclusion such

that in these schools, the atmosphere of harsh discipline appeared to influence additional undesirable academic results. Further, in a study of 160,000 West Virginia students, Whisman and Hammer (2014) found students' risk for scoring below math proficiency to increase when they received an ISS or OSS. Exclusion, even if occurring one time, impacts students academically. Balfanz (2003) surmised that a student's likelihood of dropping out increased twofold (16% to 32%) due to receiving a singular ISS or OSS consequence.

Secondary school and beyond. Another body of literature considers high school persistence and post-secondary enrollment in relation to discipline outcomes. Examples include Marchbanks and colleagues (2015) who posit two categories of student dropouts; those pulled-out and those pushed-out. Students who are pulled-out (e.g., Black females) often face a life issue (pregnancy, illness, family emergency) which prevents them from completion, though they would have finished otherwise. Students who are pushed-out face incompleteness due to disengagement brought on by factors such as disciplinary incidents. In a qualitative study of Black males, Jeffers (2017) shared stories of how student push-out occurred. The six participants identified elementary school as a nurturing setting with teachers who helped. Once they transitioned to middle school, discipline became the focus and support diminished. In each case, leaving school somewhere between ninth and twelfth grade seemed a better solution than facing continued disciplinary infractions.

Jordan and Anil (2009) found that for the 592 students who quit high school between 2003-2008 on average received five discipline referrals each. In most cases, referrals and suspensions began in middle school. Similarly, Balfanz, Byrnes, and Fox (2012) studied the connection between dropout and discipline in high school students finding that each successive suspension correlated with a decreased chance to graduate by nearly 13% and decreased post-

secondary enrollment by an average of 8.5%. Further, Jones et al. (2018) explained that harsh discipline measures in high school increased the risk of dropouts by showing that the application of consequences often exacerbates students' disciplinary status. For instance, students reported court mandated discipline hearings during school hours for truancy. While attending truancy hearings for missing school, they were counted absent from school, compounding infractions for their truancy.

School-to-prison outcomes. Yet another body of literature reveals that physical characteristics of school buildings often imitate characteristics of prison thus psychologically identifying the *real* intent of the physical space. Kupchik and Ward (2014) studied school safety and crime and found that elementary and middle schools with higher levels of poverty were most likely to use surveillance. These surveillance measures typically included metal detectors, police, School Resource Officers, badges, drug sniffing dogs, and video surveillance (Kupchik & Ward, 2014; Schept, Wall, & Brisman, 2014). Intended to create safety, they instead create a feeling of "school as prison" starting at the building's entrance (Robers, Kemp, Rathburn, & Morgan, 2014; Skiba & Leone, 2001) thus psychologically creating a sense of the criminal complex to come. The feelings of prison, as evidenced by uniformed guards or police, set a visual structure for the discipline experienced by students while in the school setting (Schept, Wall, & Brisman, 2014). The prevalence of officers in schools has grown so large that the size of the New York City Police Department School Safety Division exceeds the police forces of Boston, Detroit, Washington D.C., and Las Vegas (Gonzalez, 2012). Thus, students, prior to any disciplinary infractions, may casually interact with the juvenile justice system daily as they enter their schools.

When students encounter results of discipline policies, “criminalization” of behavior often elicits direct contact with the justice system (Hirschfield, 2008). Research points to the role discipline inequity has in facilitating a process whereby students are “funneled” from school towards the juvenile and criminal justice system (see Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Crawley & Hirschfield, 2018). The school-to-prison pipeline represents a theoretical pathway that “ushers [students] into the delinquency and criminal systems through both the condition of their schools and the official responses to their behavior at school” (Buckingham, 2013, p. 181). The term not only describes the pathway for many students of color, but also identifies the link between the school discipline system and the juvenile justice system (Wald & Losen, 2003). The similarity between the school system and prison complex can be seen in that Black overrepresentation in consequences exists. In schools, Black students receive more office referrals, longer suspensions (ISS and OSS), and more expulsions (Wright et al., 2014). Further, exclusion lengths exceed White students for the same infractions indicating racial bias which may exacerbate the chance for higher rates of Black student exclusion (Rocque & Snellings, 2011, 2017).

The school-to-prison pipeline is not a single outcome for a single event. The convergence of discipline and the outcomes of discipline inequity move students towards prison. For example, Welch and Payne (2010) noted that suspended and expelled students are more likely to struggle academically. Academic struggle is a predictor for additional disciplinary infractions and dropout (Skiba & Williams, 2014). Dropping out increases the likelihood for involvement in criminal behavior (Perry & Morris, 2014). Thus, those most at risk for involvement in criminal behavior are the students who face exclusion because students who are not present for instruction face greater academic difficulties. In the case of school discipline, the disproportionate group of

students facing exclusion continues to be Black students (Petras et al., 2011; Townsend, 2000) Thus, those most likely to experience the school-to-prison pipeline are Black students.

Mowen and Brent (2016) found there were turning points for students based on school approaches to discipline that resulted in the school-to-prison outcome. One such turning point is early relationships with teachers. Cogshall, Osher, and Columbi, (2013) found that positive teacher-student relationships reduced the likelihood of negative discipline interactions. They also noted that:

a “teacher[‘s] sense of responsibility for student outcomes, their belief that they are able to realize these aspirations and the relational trust they have with students, their family and the community are all linked to positive and [or] negative student outcomes” (p. 436).

However, researchers such as Rashid (2009) and Barbarin and Crawford (2006) posited that early childhood educational experiences paved the pathway for life outcomes. The researchers found, as early as preschool, poor relationships with teachers as early as preschool predicted increased risk of separation from their peers which in turn predicted a greater likelihood for negative life outcomes.

Other research attempts to explain the school-to-prison pipeline as a hegemonic struggle between students and teachers. Allen, Scott, and Lewis (2013) posit that the negative responses of many students result from the many microaggressions which label them as less intelligent and deviant. They further suggest that a Black male’s negative behavior is at times a defense to White racialized stereotypes which express themselves through criminal justice trappings (surveillance, policing, harsh disciplinary responses). The disruptive responses, unfortunately, lead to further exclusion. The pipeline is further facilitated after exclusion because the likelihood

for criminal behavior increases. Cuellar and Markowitz (2015) found that push out from the academic setting nearly tripled the likelihood (13% to 35%) for an offense. In similar research, Fabelo et al. (2011) studied Texas students and found that of the population ($n = 928,940$), more than half of the students (59.6%) experienced some form of exclusion and that nearly 90% of the time, the offenses were related to minor school code of conduct infractions such as lateness to class, cursing, perceived bad attitudes, and talking loudly. Further, of those disciplined, 23% had contact with the juvenile justice system. This was nearly 12 times the rate for those who did not have a school disciplinary consequence. Further analysis revealed that while Black females were less likely to experience disciplinary infractions than Black males, they were still over-represented in discipline data relative to White and Latin X females, suggesting a correlation between race (Black) and gender (female) as an explanation for the high rates of suspension. In many cases exclusion was discretionary, and the researchers suggested changes in the school policies to improve student outcomes.

School Level Factors of Discipline Inequity

Research supports the connection between schools to the system of discipline inequity (Annamma et al., 2019; Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2012; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Forsyth, Biggar, Forsyth, & Howat, 2015; Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Though teachers enforce policies and initiate most disciplinary actions, the districts' disciplinary policies prescribe what is to be done in response to student behavior. Additionally, school administrators serve as the primary policy enforcement agents within the schools as teachers generally do not have the power to suspend students. For example, in Texas, each school must have a campus behavior coordinator (principal or other administrator) who may exclude a student from campus

activities per TEC 37.0012. The following sections briefly describe research which suggests the role of policies and administrators in perpetuating discipline inequity for students.

School policy connection. The 2014 *Dear Colleague* letter by the Office of Civil Rights, reminded school districts of Title IV and Title VI which protects students from racial discrimination in all areas including discipline (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014). Research supports the need for a clearer understanding of the connection between race and discipline policies as data consistently show a connection between the two. Fenning and Rose (2007), for example, suggest that school policies may create opportunities for racial discrimination by teachers who lack skill in managing students. Others (e.g., see Irby, 2014; Jacobsen et. al, 2018) suggest the problem is issuing overly reactive responses to minor instances of student misconduct by teachers. Regardless of the lack of agreement as to the root cause, there is consensus that the result is often student disengagement particularly when applied to students of color and students with disabilities (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006).

Ipsa-Landa (2017) suggested that school resource officers (SROs) function within what she classified as Criminalizing Policy. When schools add police officers or SROs the intent is to create connections with parents, students, and the community. The outcome of these types of policies has been to increase the risk for students to attend schools with an authoritarian feel. Further Theriot and Dupper (2010) found a greater chance for students to be arrested for disorderly conduct due to an SRO presence, thus criminalizing behaviors which are subjectively determined to warrant juvenile justice interactions. Others such as Merrill (2015) point to the danger of criminalization policy as it increases the chance that student behavior may require a criminal justice involvement. Such was the case in 2015 when Toledo, Ohio's laws made classroom disruption an illegal act.

Other scholars have suggested analysis of school discipline policies themselves. Yang (2009) studied exclusion at the classroom level and suggested discipline policies tend to be written in such a way that may punish students rather than help them to improve behavior and academic success. He proposed viewing school discipline policy as teacher pedagogy because discipline policy primarily proceeds from the classroom level to the administrative level. Yang also concluded professional development could help promote more equitable application of discipline policies for all students.

Researchers have further highlighted concerns around the wording used in discipline policies. Fenning and Rose (2007) observed 64 discipline policies from schools and identified punitive wording. The discipline policies' use of language promoted negative outcomes rather than promoting positive behaviors and positive consequences. Relatedly, Anderson and Ritter (2020) found, in a three-year study, that wording of policy, plus subjective determination of punishment length, influenced inequity. They concluded that length of suspension was related to a school's concentration of Black students. Across Arkansas schools, those with higher concentrations of Blacks suspended students for longer periods of time than schools with fewer Black students. Thus, the wording of the rule did not matter, rather the interpretation of the policy's consequence created inequity.

The school policy issue is not the exception. Triplett and Ford (2019) studied schools in North Carolina and concluded that inequitable forms of discipline represented a crucial area where policy reform should be addressed. They suggested that discipline inequity raises legal and human rights issues because discipline difference continues to fall along racialized lines at all schooling levels.

School leader factors. Due to the large discrepancy in rates of suspension and expulsion based on ethnicity, the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education jointly released guidance in 2014 directing that school administrators “must examine their data and discipline practices” due to the persistence of racialized discipline inequity (Losen, Keith, Hodson, & Martinez, 2016). Though school policy influences suspension rates, Losen and colleagues (2016) surmised the greatest factor in differential rates of suspension related to differing district and school administrator approaches to discipline. Williams et al. (2020) further posit that school leadership includes assistant principals (AP) as well. Many schools leave discipline decisions to APs though little research specifically focuses on the AP role in discipline. As approaches vary by administrator, rates of suspension varied. In this section, I discuss the role of school leader attitudes about discipline, the influence of how school leaders view students on disciplinary decisions, and the influence of school leadership style on disciplinary decisions.

School leader attitudes about discipline. Research on school leaders’ attitudes relative to suspension rates generally concerns attitudes about zero tolerance policies or exclusionary discipline. Losen and colleagues (2016) pointed out that differential rates of discipline do not occur in all schools. However, some commonality was found among those with high rates in discipline inequity. For instance, Skiba, Edl, and Rausch (2007) identified the variance of discipline rates across schools correlated with administrator attitudes regarding suspension. Skiba and colleagues (2007) categorized principal attitudes about discipline as either prevention-oriented or exclusion-oriented. Administrators with a prevention-oriented attitude administered fewer exclusionary consequences, favoring interventions and other programs to help students. Additional research also suggested that those with prevention-oriented attitudes advocated for their staff to receive ongoing training in alternative discipline methods geared towards reducing

instances of exclusion (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2019). Administrators with an exclusion-oriented attitude favored removal of students deemed problematic thereby increasing rates of exclusion. In a follow up study to Skiba et al. (2007), Heilbrun, Cornell, and Lovegrove (2015) found a small but significant administrator contribution to rates of suspension. Their Zero Tolerance Attitude (ZTA) scale identified that school leaders influence who gets suspended. Heilbrun and colleagues concluded that leader attitudes about discipline had the potential to impact thousands of students and contributed to higher rates of disciplinary sanctions. Due to such racial inequality in rates of suspension and expulsion, in 2014 the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education jointly released guidance directing that school administrators “must examine their data and discipline practices” due to the persistence of racialized discipline inequity (Losen et al., 2016).

Administrators’ views of students. Administrators’ views of students offer additional insight into the influence school leaders have on discipline inequity. Welch, and Payne (2010) found school leaders’ views differed based on the percentages of Black students relative to White students in their schools. In schools with greater percentages of Black students, principals expressed a greater likelihood to use policies of exclusion and to use more aggressive forms of behavior management. DeMatthews and colleagues (2017) raise a concern that administrators wield great power to exclude groups of students. Further, they cite research such as that of Khalifa, Jennings, Briscoe, Oleszweski and Abdi (2014) which supports that principals, regardless of racial background, regard racism as tangentially important but not central to their mission of education. Thus, discipline and race do not coincide in the same space of importance for administrators. Perhaps more disturbing is the finding that students perceive the biased nature of school disciplinary decisions and the manner in which school leaders apply consequences (Bradshaw, Mitchell, O’Brennan, & Leaf, 2010). This awareness of the unfair practices of

discipline further alienates pupils and increases negative behaviors and has implications for overall school climate.

Leadership style. A third area of interest relates to leadership style. Mukuria (2002) observed leadership style as an influencer of rates of suspension and concluded that principals with high suspension rates in their schools lacked functioning discipline partnerships/cooperation with their teachers. Lack of relationships resulted in teachers distancing themselves from their school leaders. This, in turn, was shown to increase the number of students' reported behavioral problems. In schools with close teacher-principal relationships, the level of disciplinary infractions was lower. The reduction correlated with principal willingness to see individual discipline situations with flexibility based on teacher recommendation rather than rigidly based solely on an expected and inflexible code of conduct (Mukuria, 2002).

Student Factors of Discipline Inequity

Many studies describe the student socio-demographic characteristics which influence discipline inequity (e.g., Blake et. al, 2011; Paget, Parker, Henley, Heron, Ford, & Emond, 2017; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011). Here, I discuss research regarding the roles of race, gender, and disability status as key predictors of disparate rates of disciplinary sanctions (Sullivan, Klingbeil, & Van Norman, 2013).

Race. A bulk of discipline literature identifies race as a dominant factor for inequity (e.g., Anyon, Zhang, & Hazel, 2016; Cook et al., 2018; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Paget et al., 2017). Rocque (2010) examined inequity as a result of either students' differential behavior or teachers' differential treatment to explain the overrepresentation of Blacks in suspension and expulsion. He found no reason why race should increase incidents of discipline and concluded that differential treatment by teachers based on student ethnicity most likely explained inequity.

The conclusion that race predicts discipline inequity repeats in study after study. Even after accounting for factors such as socio-economic status, parental involvement, poverty, and prior behaviors, race still persists as a predictor for Black children to face more discipline with longer consequences (Anyon et al., 2014; Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2012; Skiba et al., 2014).

When researchers analyze discipline inequity fully, the extent of the problem becomes more apparent. For example, analyzing discipline inequity by the impact of disparity on time out of class and the difference in discipline infractions between ethnicities further suggests the connection between race and discipline rates. Triplett and Ford (2019) found that Blacks in states like North Carolina were 84% more likely to receive an ISS assignment and 158% more likely to receive an OSS assignment than Whites. When race was the only variable, the likelihood of receiving an exclusionary sanction nearly doubled. Further, when explaining discipline as the loss of instruction, researchers observe number of days lost per 100 days of instruction. Loss of instruction analysis means that each time a student is excluded from class due to ISS, OSS, or expulsion, that day is counted as a day of lost instruction. Researchers analyze how many days students lose in total and divide the total number of days lost by 100 to determine the average number of days lost per 100 days of instruction. Triplett and Ford (2019) reported that 16 states had more than a year's loss of days of instruction per 100 days of instruction. For example, in 2015-2016, Black students in Grand Rapids Public Schools (Grand Rapids, MI) lost 740 days of instruction per 100 days of instruction. Assuming that a year's worth of instruction consists of 180 days of instruction, this would mean that Black students lost nearly four years of instruction due to ISS and OSS consequences.

The data indicate that race alone could not explain the disparate rates of disciplinary consequences between White students and students of color (Barrett, McEachin, Mills, & Valant,

2017). Skiba et al. (2011) explained that no research supports the premise that Black student behavior differs from their White peers. However, Skiba et al. (2014) did identify the difference in White students' types of infractions leading to ISS or OSS. In the study, the researchers found suspensions and expulsions for White students were related to objective behaviors such as possession of drugs or weapons while Black students faced suspensions for subjective offenses such as bad attitude or defiance.

Further, in a study of 135 elementary teachers, Gilliam et al. (2016) found that teachers spent an unexplainable amount of time following the actions of Black children even when their behavior warranted no such attention, suggesting a link between differential discipline and racial bias. Likewise, Skiba and Williams (2014) controlled for the extent and type of behavior at the school, state, and national level, and found that race rather than behavior type was the overall predictor for the discipline difference. For those students with past incidents of negative behavior, teachers began to anticipate future negative behaviors which were also tied to race though no evidence suggested that students were about to misbehave (Rocque, 2010).

Disability designations. Disproportional rates of exclusion from the academic setting (ISS or OSS) for students with disability designations represents another aspect of discipline literature with extensive research (e. g. Annamma, Morrison, & Jackson, 2014; Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2010; Skiba et al., 2008). Researchers find that students with disability designations are the third most overrepresented student group in office discipline referrals, ISS, OSS, and expulsions (Sprague, Vincent, Tobin, & Pavel, 2013). Since the mid-1990s, researchers have studied incidence of disproportionality for students receiving special education services and describe issues such as standardized testing which does not appropriately assess student abilities, misinterpretation of culturally based behaviors, limited services due to inequitable funding of

schools, teacher bias, and lack of data to track the phenomenon of disproportionality as related factors (Grossman, 1991; Ochoa, Robles-Pina, Garcia, & Breunig, 1999; Salend, 2015; Townsend, 2000).

Gage et al. (2018) more recently compared national risk ratios of disproportionality for students with and without disability status. Their research identified that of all ethnicities, Black students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) had the greatest risk difference to Whites. For all discipline categories, expulsion ranked highest with a risk ratio of 3.91 indicating that for each White student receiving an expulsion, 3.91 Black students receive the same consequence. These data and others such as that of Blake et al. (2011) support long standing knowledge of disproportionality in discipline for students with IEPs, and especially Black students with IEPs.

Discipline outcomes for students with disability designations. Researchers have shown that risk for ISS or OSS increases for those with disability designation (Annamma, Morrison, & Jackson, 2014). Some (*e.g.* Annamma, Morrison, & Jackson, 2014) and posit labeling of students as disruptive or emotionally disturbed is a first step in pushing them towards the school-to-prison pipeline. Kim, Losen, and Hewitt (2010) suggest disability designations alone funnel students into the school-to-prison pipeline. Thus, youth incarceration rates for students with disabilities come as no surprise. Juvenile justice system data informs that the population of incarcerated youth with disability designations is nearly three times the average (33% - 37%) than that of the student population without disability designations (12% - 14%). Of this roughly one-third of incarcerated youths who have disabilities, 85 % are diagnosed as having either a learning disability (LD) or emotional disturbance (ED) (Quinn et al., 2005). While the process for diagnosing students with disabilities would ideally be completely objective, identifying certain disabilities, such as LD and ED, inherently relies on greater subjectivity (Harry & Anderson,

1994). Due to the subjective nature of many discipline distinctions, researchers agree that students with disability designations are particularly at risk (Skiba et al., 2008). Taken together, disability designations further determine one's likelihood to receive an ISS or OSS assignment.

Discipline, disability, and racial disproportionality. The convergence of ethnicity and disability, which Skiba et al. (2008) defined as a multi-determining factor of overrepresentation in disability designation, elevates the risk for ISS or OSS (Bal, Bettor-Bubon, & Fish, 2019). Researchers found that Black students with disabilities are overrepresented in disability categories that are more subjective such as Intellectual Disabilities (ID), Emotional Disturbances (ED), and Learning Disabilities (LD; not related to Dyslexia) whereas White students with special needs are most often identified for more objectively diagnosed disabilities such as Autism Spectrum Disorder and Dyslexia in which Black students are underrepresented (Harry & Klingner, 2006). Due to the nature of Black students' disability designations, educators can more easily define some undesirable behaviors as disabilities. Skiba et al. (2008) found:

Teachers feel highly challenged to meet the needs of students with economic disadvantages, yet feel they are given insufficient resources to meet those needs...

Perceiving special education as the only resource available for helping students who are not succeeding, classroom teachers were quite willing to err in the direction of over-referral if it meant access to more resources for their neediest students (p. 278).

Medically diagnosed designations are not subjective in nature. A student is either blind or is not; has Autism, a Traumatic Brain Injury, or a hearing impairment or does not. As Skiba and colleagues (2008) discussed teachers' feelings about the different disability categories, they found less hostility for those that were medical in nature. Cassady (2011) also suggests that teacher attitudes towards medically diagnosed disabilities elicit more positive responses than

those of behavioral disabilities. The teacher attitudes serve to marginalize and alienate some students. McElderry and Cheng (2014) described student alienation and found that it led to biased exclusionary discipline for those who needed the most academic and emotional support. The long-term effect of the academic alienation was found to produce negative life outcomes. Further, Skiba and colleagues describe a reticence of White educators to engage in conversations about equity gaps in special education which hinders the ability for the application of appropriate and culturally relevant interventions.

Gender. Gender inequity discourses appear in education literature regularly with various attempts to explain persistent gaps between males and females based on numerous factors (race, socio-economic factors, etc.) (Clark et al., 2003). Many researchers explain that gender is predictive of inequity (Cook et al., 2018; Morris, 2005; Skiba, 2000, 2014; Townsend, 2000, 2012; Yang et al., 2018) yet gender alone cannot explain differential rates of discipline. Researchers suggest that of the two genders (male, female) males, in general, face greater risk for negative academic outcomes due to differential treatment by teachers and administrators. Skiba and colleagues (2014) found that males face unexplainable risk for ISS or OSS, compared to the risk for females to receive ISS or OSS, which has significant academic ramifications. Duckworth and Seligman (2006) further underscore the academic difference by highlighting female academic success over males at every level of schooling which may be tied to males feeling excluded.

The issue of discipline inequity begins as early as preschool where male rates of suspensions significantly exceed females (Gilliam et al., 2016; Gilliam & Shahar, 2006). While males may exhibit difference in self-regulation and attention span as compared to females (Owens, 2016), the differences do not indicate problems in and of themselves. However,

researchers explain that male behavior differences often trigger responses from teachers and parents that begin reducing opportunities to additional educational resources and opportunity (DiPrete & Jennings, 2012). The negative discipline responses from teachers occur even though males may exhibit developmentally appropriate behaviors (Skiba et al., 2014). Owens (2016) further identified elevated risk resulting from teacher responses to male differences in approaches to self-regulation, attention span, and social competence relative to females (Owens, 2016). Said differences indicate teacher bias for preference for stereotypical behaviors of females, such as the ability to sit still for longer periods of time and the appearance of being more interested in learning as a result.

The literature on gender differences identifies that males account for 7.3 % of the OSS consequences to 3.2 % for females. Of the male population, Black males have the highest rate of suspension at 17.6 % which nearly doubles the 9.6 % of Black females receiving OSS consequences (NCES, 2017). The nearly 4 million males that experience some form of exclusion as reported by NCES (2017) suggest that maleness alone predicts inequity (Thomas & Stevenson, 2009) though some argue the intersectionality of various factors (race, family economics, teacher gender, teacher race, school culture) influence gendered inequity in schools. What research makes clear is the early risk of exclusion (Townsend, 2000, 2012; Yang et al., 2018).

Owens (2016) states: “Boys’ behaviors on school entrance initiate cumulative cascades that shape educational attainment and ultimately help account for the gender gap in college completion in the United States” (p. 240).

This makes clear that the challenge to understand the problem must begin in early years research to further parse how gender, ethnicity, and teacher bias combine to influence disproportionate rates of ISS and OSS.

Elementary Discipline Literature

Literature for academic exclusion acknowledges that discipline inequity begins in the early grades. Losen and Martinez (2013) found approximately 500,000 elementary students in the U.S. receive either in-school or out-of-school suspension yearly. Gilliam (2005) and Gilliam and Shahar (2006), among others, identified the number of exclusions reflect an overall negative atmosphere for Black children in Pre-K through elementary school. Though just over 2% of students experience ISS or OSS, the correlation with teacher attitudes about race, maturity level, and socio-economic background appear to increase negative responses to some students' behaviors while overlooking others (Moore, 2002). Therefore, as teachers treat lighter complected and middle-class students more favorably, students with darker skin tones, and those from lower SES backgrounds receive negative differential treatment (Thompson & McDonald, 2016). When coupled with elementary teacher subjectivity in writing office discipline referrals, a negative school climate raises the likelihood of inequity between Black students and White students (Blake et al., 2017; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Horner, Fireman, & Wang, 2010). Following, I share literature regarding elementary discipline occurrences for all students then I share literature specific to females.

Manifestation of early discipline occurrences. In research focusing on policies and practices, Irby (2014) suggested that early interactions with harsh school discipline can serve as an entry point to the school-to-prison pipeline when applied unfairly. Early evidence of entry points occurs as elementary students disengage because of racially motivated disparate treatment

(Rocque & Paternoster, 2011). Smolkoski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, and Horner (2016) studied vulnerable decision points in elementary discipline to determine how bias impacts the decisions of discipline and to understand how that impacts rates of subjective office discipline referrals (ODRs). They found that of the more than 500,000 ODRs, 88 % ($n = 442,840$) were for subjective offenses. When analyzed by ethnicity, they found that Black children had the highest odds compared to White peers for receiving subjective ODRs, with the greatest odds happening within the classroom setting.

Indeed, research supports the reality of racialized rates of discipline at the elementary level. Recently, a few researchers have begun to (e. g. Boonstra, 2021; Lindsay & Hart, 2017) look for ways to describe how discipline manifests for elementary students daily. Boonstra (2021), used an ethnographic approach to understand how children get into trouble. The study focused on discipline as a social practice within the school culture. Boonstra identified that discipline may create identity or may assign an identity to those disciplined. The findings indicated that someone in each class observed acquired the role of *behavior problem* (p. 7). She further suggested that early patterns of discipline inequity which appear in Kindergarten are often reinforced due to staff labelling. For instance, Black males were considered problems, endured more scrutiny than their White peers, and had overall negative connotations ascribed to them. In comparison, White students displaying undesirable behaviors were considered to be displaying individual expression, developmentally appropriate, or as one teacher described “[they are] working through their impulsivity” (p. 13).

Charter schools. Charter schools represent an additional elementary option for parents and have been touted as a better option than traditional public schools (Almond, 2012). The large numbers of parents who began to move their students to these schools of choice hoped to avoid

what was perceived as underprepared teachers, lack of resources, and lack of cultural sensitivity the Black students. Studies indicate that parents of children of color have the desire to choose their children's schooling, similar to families of wealth, and to escape schools that were academically failing (McEachin, Lauen, Fuller, & Perera, 2020). However, in many charter schools, discipline- termed "no excuses"-actually meant (means) zero tolerance, and the atmosphere of discipline parents desire does not match the experiences of students. In regard to discipline, Losen et al. (2016) found wide variance in rates of OSS across the national landscape of charters with some systems providing equitable discipline. Overall, however, for elementary students, 8.4% of Black students in charter schools received OSS which was four times that of Whites which suggests that even in systems designed to create equity, Blacks still face discipline inequity.

Elementary females. Few studies present the picture of discipline inequity for females. Blake et al. (2011) explained that the absence of data regarding females may reflect the overabundance of males receiving discipline infractions relative to females. Their study, however, identified that Black females in elementary and secondary schools faced more than two times the risk of ISS or OSS to their White counterparts. When compared to Latin X females, the overrepresentation was less than the disparity between Black males and White males, but still significantly disparate. Of note is the finding that teacher perceptions of what constitutes lady-like behavior (polite, quiet) played a role in high rates of infractions for Black females. Likewise, Morris (2005) found perceptions of femininity influenced differential rates of reprimand and discipline for females. The phrase "behave like ladies" (p. 506) emerged as the most pervasive theme towards elementary Black females even in instances which seemed innocuous such as getting up to get tissue or laughing loudly with friends during recess.

Slate, Gray, and Jones (2016) studied ISS, OSS, and disciplinary alternative educational placements in Texas meted out to Black, Latin X, and White females in grades 4-11 during the 2013-2014 school year. In fourth grade, Black females had double the ISS, OSS, and expulsions of both Latin X and White females; while in fifth grade, Black females' disciplinary events exceeded Latin X females' discipline by 14 % (50.9 % to 36.4 %) but quadrupled rates of White females' (50.9 % to 12.7 %) infractions. As with previously mentioned studies, Slate and colleagues (2016) surmised that subjectively assigned discipline promotes middle class, Westernized, and White expectations of acceptability for females. Thus, as Black females work to navigate the biased expectations, they face harsher and more frequent sanctions. In a related study, Yang and colleagues (2018) identified that for elementary students, race and gender were predictive of discipline differences. Their study included an additional layer of consideration by suggesting that kindergarten and first grade students risk teachers' assessments of their behavior. If the behavior assessment was negative, suspension risk increased. Black females who were deemed disruptive experienced higher rates of suspension in each grade and the model predicted further suspension up to three years from the initial occurrence.

Transition year. A body of research suggests the link between transitions from one level (elementary to middle, middle to high school) to another and discipline issues (e.g., Akos & Galassi, 2004; Binning et al., 2019; Theriot & Dupper, 2010). Researchers identified that transition years may influence negative educational outcomes which include reduced student motivation and engagement while increasing rates of undesirable behaviors (Theirot & Dupper, 2010). Factors such as new stresses, new environment, and new expectations seem to facilitate many of the issues associated with transitioning (Elias, 2001). For example, as students move

from their elementary schools to middle school, they often face concerns of how to follow the rules and how to fit in with other students.

A few studies define transition years to mean school changes *and physical changes*. For instance, Sparks (2011) highlighted that puberty adds an additional layer of difficulty and exacerbates the risk of discipline problems. The pressures to socially integrate, manage bodily changes, and achieve academically seem to promote increases in discipline infractions. Malaspina and Rimm-Kaufman (2008) describe the time as one where students must cope with “biological changes and a new context simultaneously” (p. 2). Figuring out the newness of their environment increased student discomfort and was found to raise the potential for difficulty in school (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Bailey, Giles, and Rogers (2015) highlighted transition year anxiety for students who moving from being the oldest students in their elementary schools (5th grade) to the youngest in their middle schools (6th grade). These anxieties were found to facilitate disengagement as students worked to find their place in their new surroundings. Further, the researcher found these anxieties increased rates of depression (Fite, Frazer, DiPierro, & Abel, 2019)

The bulk of literature regarding transition years suggests that students succeed when they feel part of the school environment. Successful engagement reduces disruptive behaviors and increases academic achievement (Wang & Holcombe, 2010). In a longitudinal study of middle school students, Binning and colleagues (2019) identified that transition year difficulty did not have to be the rule. When students felt self-affirmed, their undesirable behaviors were 69% less than their peers. They additionally found that teachers impacted student engagement- either positively or negatively. Students transitioned better in schools where staff promoted positivity, gave support, and provided programming for the transition into the school (Akos, Creamer, &

Masina, 2004). Further, researchers (e. g. Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006; Fite et al., 2019; Shoshani & Sloane, 2013) found when promoted effectively, a combination of programming, peer mentors, and family helped students transition in a way that reduced anxiety and increased sense of belonging and school attachment and safety.

Pre-Kindergarten. A small body of research explains discipline for Pre-Kindergarten students. Across the U.S., approximately 1.5 million students attend public Pre-K programs. Clayback and Hemmeter (2021) report that in 2016 about 250 preschoolers per day faced expulsion. By the end of the year nearly 50,000 students experienced some form of exclusion from their preschool. With rates similar to K-12 schools, Black students comprise nearly 19 % of the Preschool population but account for nearly 50 % of the suspensions which indicate racial biases seen in K-12 discipline studies (Garro, Giordano, Gubi, & Shortway, 2019). Researchers surmised that these early educational exclusions expose the most vulnerable students to academic risk as they begin school.

Studies such as Barbarin and Crawford's (2006) found the overall percentage of students facing separation from OSS or expulsion to be limited. However, a more subtle form of exclusion emerged as Black males were found to regularly face separation or isolation near the teacher or teacher's desk. This form of exclusion did not require the documenting of an incident however the early cycle of exclusion set the stage for future academic failure. Studies into the importance of early positive teacher-student relationships (Rashid, 2009) describe the long-term academic influence. Rashid (2009) identified high quality instruction and close teacher-student relationships as two indicators for future academic success. For communities at risk, close teacher-student relationships were shown to influence long term success.

Though some states experienced decreases in Pre-K suspension rates, Black children faced exclusion at 2.7 times that of their White peers (Malik, 2018). Rates for other populations of students such as those with disability designations exceed Black children's rates at more than 3 times that of other students (Tamagni & Wilson, 2020) which indicates a need to study exclusion at all levels of schooling including Pre-K.

The literature regarding elementary discipline inequity presents a difficulty and challenging prospect for many students. In fact, Pre-Kindergarten responses to undesired behaviors may set the path to prison for children of color. The difficulty for these children at the onset of education does not represent opportunity, rather it creates an out. Among the most damaging revelations from the literature is that negativity increases based, in many instances, on the darkness of one's skin tone (Thompson & McDonald, 2016). For those families looking for options, unfortunately the prevalence of increased risk emerges whether one attends their regular assigned public school or a charter school, though studies indicate high rates of discipline inequity do not have to be the norm in either setting.

Much of the literature discussing the issue of discipline inequity proposes that biases against students of color influence teacher responses and thus rates of ISS or OSS. In the following section, I explain the literature regarding two unique theories as a way to explain why Black students and Black females specifically experience discipline inequity. The first, Racial Threat Theory (Blalock, 1967) explains the fear response Whites have towards the growing minority population. The second, Black Female Adultification Theory (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017) explains why teachers and school officials approach the behaviors of Black females harshly and inappropriately.

Theoretical Frameworks

Nearly 40 years of research provides a myriad of theoretical frameworks to explain the phenomena of inequitable application of discipline. Much of the literature within this review employs theoretical frameworks relative to race/ethnicity. For instance, *implicit bias theory* suggests that our attitudes, stereotypes, and biases influence our behavior, decisions, and thinking. These may result in differential treatment which is injurious to some (Bertrand, Chugh, & Mullainathan, 2005). In an educational context, negative implicit biases create increased risk of exclusion for students who may not fit within subjective boundaries of behavior. Examples of subjective behaviors may be as simple as what Feldman (1985) describes as problems in cross-racial nonverbal communication which include speaking volume, speech patterns, or differential approaches to showing respect to adults. These and other abstractly defined modes of conduct represent the largest cause of student removal (Peterson & Skiba, 2000). When applied specifically to race, ethnicity, and SES, implicit bias studies (e.g., Drwecki, Moore, Ward, & Prkachin, 2011; Staats, 2016) describe a bias for lighter skinned, socially mature, and middle classed background while viewing dark skin, immature, and low SES as less acceptable. These divergent views of “acceptability”, which begin in elementary school settings seem to contribute to an increase in levels of policing, surveillance, and discipline.

Additionally, critical race theorists (CRT) (e.g., Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2013, 2016) propose that Whiteness can be equated to a commodity such as property which provides status, power, entrance, and enjoyment that people of color cannot employ. Whiteness as a commodity helps to explain school policies which inherently favor White middle-class culture (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016). Harris (1993) suggested that White individuals expect

preferential treatment and rely on the benefits of Whiteness which over time have been affirmed, legitimated, and protected by the law.

CRT theorists also argue the institution of school builds upon deeply embedded racism which is structured towards inequality and presents micro and macro aggressions against people of color. Said practices devalue students' culture to such a degree as to ensure their failure in school and post-schooling (e.g., Blaisdell, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Howard, 2008). Thus, competition for the scarce resource of education, limited success due to exclusion at key junctures of learning, and defeat in the classroom relegates some students to what Bowles and Gintis (1976) described as social position.

While Implicit Bias Theory and Critical Race Theory each attempt to explain how discipline inequity occurs, each lacks specificity as to why harsh punitive discipline serves as a tool for social control of students. Also, neither attempts to explain differential rates of exclusion based on gender. Using Racial Threat Theory as proposed by Blalock (1967) and Black Female Adulthood theory (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017) one gains a deeper perspective of the perceived threat posed by Black students and how that threat simultaneously promotes stereotypical caricatures of Black females which result in exclusion.

Racial Threat Theory

Racial Threat Theory explains how the growing percentage of ethnic diversity relative to the dominant White American population influences racial inequity (Dollar, 2014). Blalock (1967) explained that much of minority discrimination results from Whites' social desire to avoid persons of color. This is achieved by the avoidance of situations which imply social equality or involve close social contact through voluntary segregation. Segregation in the context of this study refers to the exclusionary practices of suspension and expulsion. As the avoidance

becomes systematized through rules and policies, large rates of ostracism become possible. When applied to the school system, Racial Threat Theory explains that increased rates of discipline stem from the potential political and economic threat educated minority children present to the White majority (Blalock, 1967).

Racial Threat Theory provides a lens for researchers to account for discipline difference at the micro level (classroom level), meso level (school) and at the macro level (district, state, or national level). Blalock (1967) explained the White dominant power structure experiences three types of threat: political threat, economic threat, and symbolic threat. He posited that racialization is a reaction to perceived threats caused by a growing minority population, resulting in increased social control practices (e.g., policing, laws, surveillance, incarcerations) which ensure the maintenance of ethnic majority control. When employed at the micro level (e.g., classrooms), exclusionary policies mitigate the threat felt by Whites as they encounter minority students (Welch & Payne, 2010). At the macro level, feelings of racial threat can be seen in policies such as zero tolerance. At that level, Stolzenberg, D'Alessio, and Eitle (2004) explain that racial threat is often expressed in contexts that should promote less punitive measures (*i.e.*, schools) and create access and opportunity, but in practice increase barriers to specific segments of the student population.

This study uses the lens of racial threat to examine the high rates of exclusion for Black females. The main tenets, when applied to students, allow researchers to make sense of discipline inequity. As teachers perceive a threat to their positions of power and status (symbolic threat) they respond with punitive policies (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011). Therefore, minority students who seemingly resist enculturation to the dominant White school culture face larger degrees of formal punishment than their White schoolmates. Racial Threat Theory explains why discipline

functions as a tool for separating racially undesirable students from the dominant White student population rather than as an intervention tool to support change in behaviors which impede learning (Lindsay & Hart, 2017).

Black Female Adultification Theory

Epstein et al. (2017) define adultification as the perception or expectation that a child is older and more mature than their biological age and developmental level. Misperceptions of biological and developmental level places a child at risk for negative responses from adults who do not understand, what is considered, immature behaviors. Further, the expectation of adultlike behaviors increases the risk that a child will not receive the same nurturing responses from adults as other children may receive (Gonzalez, 2018).

Current studies in adultification extent work begun in the late 1940s by psychoanalysts such as Schmeidler (1948) who recognized how war (i.e. World War I.) diminished childhood as adolescents began to embody adultlike behaviors to provide for the family or protect themselves. Minuchin et al. (1967) utilized the term *parental children* to describe an implicit or explicit requirement on children to personify adult behaviors such as child rearing. Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1984) broadened the parental child concept and used the term parentification to define a child who may fulfil any adult familial role such as child rearing, cooking, and relationship roles. In each instance, the role of the child engaging in adultlike behaviors initiates from the adult family member and extended outward to children.

The literature regarding adultification reveals various areas in which adultification works to the detriment of children. For example, in medical care, recent work by Baetzel et al. (2019) explains that adultification bias leads to Black children receiving significantly less preoperative care compared to White children. In their study, the adultification biases influenced pediatric

anesthesiologists to reduce choices families have to relieve anxiety in Black children prior to medical procedures.

Adultification studies about young males from low socio-economic backgrounds describe the role of man of the house assigned to many youths (Roy, Messina, Smith, & Waters, 2014). Patriarchal expectations whereby young males take on roles such as leading the house or providing for the family may have negative consequences. The incongruity between expected roles and developmental abilities may cause undue stress and confusion about where they fit within their families and community relative to their peers.

A subset of adultification research most relevant to the current study proposes the term Black Female Adultification Theory (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017). Researchers define Black Female Adultification Theory as bias where school age females face stereotypes from adults which presume Black females need less nurturing and should behave as an adult with little to no empathy for their actual developmental stage of childhood. The assignment of adult-like characteristics to young Black females truncates their childhood and allows them to be treated or perceived as adults. Blake and Epstein (2019) found that Black females experience adultification bias regularly which correlates with higher expectations and harsher discipline treatment and found that this treatment impacted Black females as early as age five.

Ferguson's 2010 ethnographic study highlighted how adultification often inappropriately assigns adult expectations and definitions to race-specific behaviors for Black children. This can be particularly difficult for Black females, due to perceptions and images connected with stereotypical expectations of bad attitude, loud talking, and hyper-sexuality. Adultification theory in general describes the incongruity between institutions such as family and school. The adultification socialization (Blake et al., 2017) provides children with knowledge and skills

which family situations may necessitate. Thus, in familial structures which may expect high levels of maturity or caretaking in an “adult” manner, children may be considered assets. The ability to cook and take on household duties or even serve as caretakers for other family members advantages Black females in one setting but could have unintended consequences and may constitute liabilities in the school setting as teachers may perceive disrespect and construe behaviors as abnormal (Burton, 2007).

Research has begun to focus on the influence Adulthood has on exclusionary practices when applied to Black females (see Boo, 2001; Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017). Ocen (2015) suggests that adulthood reflects historic constructs such as slavery and Jim Crow, which devalued childhood with an expectation that Black youth should work as soon as they were able. These hegemonic attitudes have persisted which in turn reduce the idea that Black females should be of concern. He noted that in school systems, adulthood dehumanized Black females and reduced their ability to “make mistakes, learn, grow, and benefit from correction of youthful missteps” (p. 6). While females from the majority culture are afforded the chance to experience childhood innocence, Black females are perceived as needing less nurturing, protection, support, and comfort (Epstein, Blake & Gonzalez, 2017).

Researchers also posit that adulthood increases the potential for negative treatment in schooling and negative life outcomes (Burton, 2007; Gonzalez, 2018; Ocen, 2015). Burton (2007) found that teachers used terms such as *grown woman in a little girl's body* (p. 341) when describing Black girls who display maturity and knowledge beyond their age. These monikers which describe behaviors uncommon to most children also create perceptions that a child may be difficult or bossy when in actuality, their take-charge behaviors serve as assets within their familial roles. Gonzalez (2012) found status offenses (*e.g.* truancy, underage drinking) were the

main reasons for Black female interactions with the juvenile justice system. Behaviors considered illegal for youth but not for adults (staying out too late, drinking) disproportionately impact females because police detain females in general and Black females specifically at higher rates than White females. The result was that Black females experienced differential treatment based on the perception they were taking on adult roles. However, researchers found status offenses to result from youth trauma that Black females experience (Miller, 1996). Gonzalez (2018) suggests that adultification behaviors do not represent a singular act of defiance, rather they “express an unmet educational, emotional, or economic need” (p.11).

Black female stereotyping which resulted in criminalization mirrored similar attitudes espoused by teachers (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017). Whether in the juvenile justice system or education system, the researchers noted that White females were considered passive, in need of nurturing and protection, and non-threatening. Latin X descriptions, while not as favorable, had some positive labels of dependent, family-oriented, and submissive along with negative ones such as highly sexual. Black female descriptors often only included negative labels of loud, aggressive, unfeminine, and violent. Morris (2007) found when Black females experienced adultification by teachers they faced increased negative discipline interactions. The negative outcomes facilitate negative life outcomes and increase the chance for teen pregnancy, dropout, and interactions with the police (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017).

Gaps and Limitations of Previous Literature

The discussion surrounding discipline and females reveals data worthy of study, as females lack representation in suspension and expulsion literature. The presence of Black girl exclusion rates generally serves as a comparison to male suspension rates without further acknowledgement of the factors, influences, or outcomes for females. For instance, of the more

than 400 related pieces of literature and nearly 200 studies which support the current study, only nine explicitly focused on gender. Additionally, only one study focused on longitudinal data which provide a multi-year picture of the impacts of discipline inequity. In many ways, Black males and females mirror one another in discipline inequity. This lack of focus often ignores Black female disproportionality which begins as early as Kindergarten (Blake et. al, 2011).

Studies such as Wun (2016) indicate that Black females experience triple the rate of suspensions as Latin X females and six times the rate of suspensions as White females. The true picture of actual exclusion may not be fully recognized since many teachers do not record all their exclusions. In these instances, teachers separate students (females) for minor offenses but do not account for the discipline in a traceable manner (Wun, 2016).

Researchers focus upon oft discussed aspects of discipline inequity which creates a need and opportunity to analyze available data in unfamiliar ways. To observe the data more broadly than an “if it happens” aspect and identify the risk specific to “when it happens” provides a rarely seen analysis of the data. Specifically, current research (a) too narrowly focuses on Black males and (b) too often focuses on middle and high school discipline and outcomes.

Summary

The literature reveals findings regarding discipline inequity and Black males. National advocacy for states’ enactment zero tolerance policies such as incentives provided within the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 were intended to create safety. The unintended consequence of over-policing schools harshly penalized student groups from low SES, underserved, and predominantly minority schools (Skiba et al., 2014). Studies show that over-disciplined students, beginning in elementary school (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014), experience greater degrees of negative life outcomes. Often influenced by negative teacher attitudes (Moore, 2002) based on

race and gender, discipline outcomes continue to justify research in this area. A limited body of literature creates an opportunity for new studies of Black females and the phenomena of discipline inequity.

Two theoretical frameworks provide a lens to view my study. Racial Threat Theory clarifies that the unbalanced discipline system emerges due to perceived threats of the growing minority presence (Blaylock, 1967). Black Female Adultification Theory focuses on the devaluation of and redefining of Black female childhood behaviors. Ocen (2015) and others posit that school systems misinterpret certain behaviors of and impose different expectations on behavior of Black females which results in eliminating opportunities for age-appropriate socio-emotional growth.

The proposed study adds to the body of knowledge by focusing on females and the disparities in discipline across ethnicities. Research previously identified similar outcomes for females and males who experience exclusion from school. Studies also indicate a difference in the intensity of discipline and length of suspensions (ISS and OSS) between White, Black, and Latin X students. Few studies concentrate on when exclusion begins and fewer focus on time to first instance of exclusion for females. To that end, this study extends a relevant yet limited conversation regarding discipline inequity for Black females who often face relegation to obscurity in this area of research.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Statement of the Problem

Exclusion from American K-12 academic settings impacts nearly 3.5 million students per year with a disparate number of suspensions and expulsions meted out most often to Blacks, low SES groups, and males (Losen, 2014). Black children represent less than 15% of the Kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) public-school student population (NCES, 2019) nationally but are overrepresented in all suspension categories. Studies regarding females by ethnicity indicate Black females are six times more likely to be suspended than White females (1.7% vs. 9.6%).

Impact research reveals that school exclusionary practices correlate with negative outcomes. For example, Perry and Morris (2014), describe lower math and reading scores, while others (Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2001; Milner, 2012; Skiba, 2000; Skiba et al., 2002; Smolkowski et al., 2016) found increased problem behavior in school, socio-emotional struggles, and increased interaction with the criminal justice system due to academic exclusion with no resulting increase in safety.

The limited research regarding discipline inequity among females offers an opportunity for greater understanding of the discipline phenomena. It is clear that ISS or OSS infractions are precursors to academic struggle and signal potential life challenges (e.g., dropout, criminal activity). Among the emerging literature, Black elementary females represent an under-researched group. Specifically, studies which reveal how the risk of receiving ISS or OSS increases or decreases over time for Black females specifically, and females in general, are absent within the literature. Through this study, I added to the knowledge which will increase the

ability of school officials to know when the risk is greatest for students to receive ISS or OSS so that interventions can be implemented at the right time. Additionally, the findings of this study continue a needed conversation about discipline inequity for Black females in relationship to White females.

Purpose of the Study

Discipline inequity research primarily centers on factors and outcomes for males of color, students with disabilities, and students with behavioral challenges (e.g., Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2001; Skiba & Leone, 2001; Suh & Suh, 2007). NCES data (2019) identifies that at every level, Black males disproportionately receive discipline consequences which remove them from the classroom setting longer than their non-Black peers. Much of the disproportionality has been linked to zero tolerance policies initiated during the Clinton Administration (Newburn & Jones, 2007). The tendency of researchers to focus on Black male rates of exclusion masks the growing disproportionality faced by Black females. Similar to males, Black females face a disproportionate risk for ISS or OSS at nearly 6 times their White female classmates (NCES, 2019). Few studies focus on discipline inequity for females with limited research on when exclusion specifically occurs for females based on ethnicity. The purpose of this study is to identify the extent to which ethnicity influences time to first exclusionary experience for a cohort of students in Texas.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study regarding elementary females and academic exclusion:

RQ 1: What is the association between grade level and the risk of first In-School or Out-of-School suspension?

RQ 2: What is the association between race and Pre-Kindergarten attendance and the risk of a first In-School or Out-of-School suspension for Black females relative to White females?

Data Source and Collection

Data, for this study, were provided as a response to an open records request to the Texas Education Agency. The Texas Education Agency data system warehouses an array of variables including students, educators, and school finance. For this study, variables requested were acquired from Texas Student Data System Public Education Information Management System (TSDS-PEIMS) data collection which requires reporting of all Texas public K-12 schools per the Texas Education Data Standards (TEDS) and includes student variables such as attendance, discipline, and grades. The request specified discipline data from the population of interest; Texas public school students entering Kindergarten during the 2010-2011 school year. I utilized the full 2010-2011 cohort of students' discipline data for a nine-year period (2011-2019). The cohort consisted of 342,389 students. The cohort consisted of 166,199 females and 176,190 males. Discipline data for this cohort was provided beginning in Kindergarten culminating with their eighth-grade year.

Research Design

This study represents one of a few focused on the risk of an ISS and OSS for Black females relative to other ethnicities. The recurring conversation about discipline inequity in general indicates differential application of discipline, yet the focus rarely extends to when the pattern begins or to what extent students face the possibility of said discipline. I utilize quantitative, non-experimental design of discrete-time hazard modeling introduced by Singer and Willet (2003) which models the percentage likelihood that an event occurs within a given time period. Non-experimental design was chosen as there was no treatment applied to answer a

hypothesis. Rather, I utilized nine years of longitudinal data to identify the risk ratio of Black females to receive an ISS or OSS infraction for the first time relative to White females. For the purposes of this study the following four variables were of interest: Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Pre-Kindergarten status, and Grade level when suspension occurred.

Discrete-time hazard modeling

Discrete-time hazard modeling (also known as survival analysis) is a method of analyzing event histories. Time is measured as a continuous variable and as such cannot take a negative value (Allison, 1982). The researcher in the modeling determines how to measure the event in question. In some situations, the researcher may determine to measure the event at regular intervals such as every other Monday, at the beginning of every year, etc. Likewise, a researcher may recognize that an event may occur at irregular times. In each instance, discrete-time hazard modeling methods are capable of accounting for these differences.

A unique aspect of discrete-time hazard modeling is that it can account for incomplete data. Incomplete data (censored) represents participants whose data may not be available. This may occur due to students entering the study late, leaving early, or not having the event occur during the time of the study (Gruber, 1999; Leung, Elashoff, & Afifi, 1997). I elected to limit the entrance of participants to 2010-2011 to control for right censoring. Right censoring occurs when the subject enters when the time is zero ($t = 0$) for the study. Time is zero represents the beginning of the study.

I use discrete time survival analysis, as neither regression models nor multilevel modelling are designed to analyze data from a time to event standpoint (Camacho & Krezmien, 2018). Discrete time survival analyses allow researchers to (a) describe patterns of occurrence, (b) compare these patterns among groups, and (c) build statistical models of the risk of

occurrence over time. Initially, researchers in the medical field used this method to determine issues such as time to death (Singh & Mukhopadhyay, 2011). The method also allows for the prediction of students experiencing an event (Nicholls, Wolfe, Besterfield-Sacre, & Shuman, 2009). Discrete time survival analysis methods can account for lost data (censored) whether due to leaving the study or whether experiencing the event. This feature allows for accurate statistical analysis of the phenomenon and provides a flexible approach to identify trends within data. The trend of concern for the current study relates to the risk of Black females compared to the risk of White females to receive a first ISS or OSS at a given grade level.

Survival analysis methods have been used to describe a variety of school-based events. For example, teacher attrition studies such as Marinell's (2011) have identified the average length of time middle school teachers worked within their schools (by predicting the hazard of a teacher leaving within a given time period). In another study, Davis, Gooden, and Bowers (2017) analyzed the amount of time for teachers moving to principalship. Petras et al. (2011), in particular, informs the current research. Their study focused on time to first removal for students transitioning from Kindergarten to elementary school. Additionally, Petras and colleagues identified the hazard of a student to receive their first school removal at a given grade level. This study hypothesized that maladaptive behavior (as identified by aggressive behavior prior to first grade) influenced time to first school exclusion.

The use of longitudinal data to understand the phenomena of first suspension provides a unique view of discipline inequity. Data regarding the inequitable disciplining of students has been discussed by numerous researchers (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2013; Skiba, 2000; Townsend, 2012) yet few studies focus on elementary children. Even less research focuses on Black females' discipline inequity at the elementary level. Using discrete time survival analysis

methodology provides insight into when first exclusions occur and shows differences between groups; in this case ethnic groups. The findings will allow practitioners, local education agencies, even national policymakers to understand the degree to which time of an event increases or decreases the risk of a suspension and to create interventions to mitigate the event. With the intent of creating greater equity for all students, discrete time survival analysis reveals important information and thus is justified as a methodology for analyzing discipline data.

Risk Ratios (Relative Risk)

Risk ratios represent a method of analysis to compare the likelihood of an event in one group relative to the likelihood of the event to happen in a comparison group and has been used in educational research previously by researchers such as Bollmer, Bethel, Garrison-Mogren, and Brauen (2007). Their analysis of risk compared the likelihood of ethnic groups to have a mental retardation designation relative to the full student population. I determined to compare risk across ethnicities rather than to the full cohort of students. My comparison group was White students when comparing ethnicities as question two focused on the comparison of White females to Black females.

Risk ratios can be any number greater than 0. If a risk ratio equals one (1) then risk is determined to be equal in the two comparison groups. If the risk ratio is greater than one (1) then risk is greater in the group of interest relative to the comparison group. If risk is less than one (1) risk is less in the group of interest relative to the comparison group. Risk ratios are expressed as Group A is X amount of times at risk than Group B. Thus, if a group of Black students have a risk ratio of 2.3 to White students to receive an ISS or OSS they would be described as having 2.3 times the risk of Whites students to receive an ISS or OSS.

In order to determine risk for each year, I use the following equation:

$$RR = \frac{IE/(IE + IN)}{CE/(CE + CN)}$$

RR = Risk Ratio
IE = Incident Event
IN = Incident non-event
CE = Comparison event
CN = Comparison non-event

After each year's ISS or OSS infractions, I subtracted the previous year's incident events from the incident non-events and previous year's control events from control non-events. Per my design for risk and survival, the only students at risk in each year were those who had not previously incurred an ISS or OSS in any previous year. Each year, those with no previous infractions became the new remaining non-event group of students at risk for the next year. I then used the next year's infractions (ISS or OSS) as my new incident events and comparison events. In this manner, I figured risk for nine years of the study.

For example: In year one, Black males numbered 100 students who had 10 ISS or OSS infractions. White males numbered 250 with 8 ISS or OSS infractions. In year two, Black males received 6 ISS or OSS infractions whereas White males received 3. The following represents the steps to follow to determine the risk ratio for each year.

$$\text{YEAR 1: } RR = \frac{10/100}{8/250} = \frac{.1}{.032} = \text{Risk Ratio} = 3.125$$

$$\text{YEAR 2: } RR = \frac{6/90 \text{ (remaining Black males at risk)}}{3/242 \text{ (remaining White males at risk)}} = \frac{.067}{.012} = \text{Risk Ratio} = 5.58$$

Risk ratios would be reported as: Black males were 3.125 times as likely as White males to receive an ISS or OSS in year one and 5.58 times as likely to receive an ISS or OSS in year two.

Research Analysis

For both research questions I sought to identify survival and risk rates of students by ethnicity and to determine risk of an elementary student to receive a first ISS or OSS across nine years. Risk ratios have been used in educational research to compare the risk of a specific issue of concern across student groups relative to a full population (e.g., Bollmer et al., 2007). However, I chose to determine the risk relative to White students as question two, in part, focuses on ethnicity comparisons. For the current study, I compare risk each year by gender, by ethnicity, by pre-kindergarten indicator and in combination of these variables to determine how risk increases or decreases based upon the variable of interest. Additionally, I identify survival of students over the time facilitates usage of discrete time hazard analyses. First occurrence of the full cohort data allows for an understanding of the risk to students by characteristics of gender (male, female), ethnicity (White, Latin X, Black or African American, and Other) and Pre-Kindergarten status (attended, did not attend).

For research question two, I identified risk to the population of interest which is females. For this question, I identified the influence of the predictor variables of ethnicity and Pre-Kindergarten status on grade level risk of first ISS or OSS.

For each research question, I used binary coding for gender with females coded as 0 and males as 1. Similarly, I code the receipt of an infraction as 0 for did not receive an infraction and 1 for did receive and infraction. Following Petras et al. (2011), I coded nine binary event indicators, corresponding to the nine years of the study, to indicate first incident of ISS or OSS

with a 1 if event occurred and 0 if the first incident did not occur. Upon receipt of the first ISS or OSS (coded with a 1) each subsequent year was censored from the data. Finally, coding for Pre-Kindergarten status was binary with 0 corresponding with non-attendance and 1 with PreK attendance.

Significance Testing

The population of interest for the current study is the cohort of females in the state of Texas who began Kindergarten in 2010-2011. The available data, provided by the Texas Education Agency per an open records request, indicates the cohort consisted of 48.5% females ($n = 174,981$) and 51.5% males ($n = 185,570$). This study considers the full population of students from the 2010-2011 Kindergarten cohort; thus, tests of significance are not necessary. The purpose of significance testing is to determine the possibility of sampling error and to disprove that the sample of the population does not accurately represent the full population (Cowger, 1984). Full population data gives exact means and standard deviation calculations rather than estimates of population samples (Davis, Gooden, & Bowers, 2017) which increases the ability to construct unbiased statistical inferences (Bowers, 2010).

CHAPTER 4

Findings

Through this study, I purposed to identify the extent to which student characteristics impact the risk of a first In-school or Out-of-School suspension at a particular grade level. Researchers have known that nearly 3.5 million American students (K-12) face ISS, Out-of-OSS, or expulsion (Losen, 2014) each year resulting in almost 17 million days of lost instruction (Losen & Whitaker, 2017, 2018). African American children experience more and longer suspensions relative to their White peers (Skiba et al., 2014). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2019) confirms research identifying discrepancies between African Americans and Whites in receiving exclusionary discipline (13.7% vs. 3.4%) regardless of gender. However, few discipline inequity studies focus on Black females (e.g., Annamma et. al, 2019; Slate, Gray, & Jones, 2016) though negative outcomes such as problem behavior in school, socio-emotional struggles, and increased interactions with the criminal justice system appear to mirror those of Black male peers (Alexander et al., 2001; Flanagan, 2007; Milner, 2012; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Smolkowski et al., 2016). Additionally, few studies address the risk of a suspension for females relative to one another and relative to a specific grade level.

Chapter 4 presents findings of the discipline data collected on the cohort of Texas students from 2010-2011 through their eight-grade year in 2018-2019. The main questions guiding the analysis include:

RQ 1: What is the association between grade level and the risk of first In-School or Out-of-School suspension?

RQ 2: What is the association between race and Pre-Kindergarten attendance and the risk of a first In-School or Out-of-School suspension for females?

Data Collection Results

The Texas Education Agency provided the data used for the current study per a public information request. Data consisted of eight years of discipline records ranging from the 2010-2011 to the 2018-2019 school years. Prior to analyzing the data, I addressed issues of censoring by deciding that those students who did not begin as part of the cohort in 2010 could not be considered as eligible members. Additionally, once a student left the group and was not present in any subsequent year, they were considered ineligible to return to the cohort. Controlling for the censored data allows for an equitable comparison of data and takes into consideration enrollment fluctuations which occur due to late registrations, unenrollment due to migrant status, transfer to or from public to private schools, etc. After eliminating students from the original data file who fell into censored categories unrelated to discipline, a final cohort was determined.

Variables were created to indicate “1” if the student received an ISS or OSS in any given year or a “0” if they did not. Upon receiving the first coding for the receipt of an ISS or OSS, the student then received a “1” for every following year. The design of this study focused on time to first ISS or OSS. Thus, once receiving any disciplinary infraction, the student was considered to have failed to survive.

The time variable was coded 0-8 which corresponded with Kindergarten (2010/11) through the eighth-grade year (2018/19). The data were copied into SPSS 26 for initial analysis purposes. Final analyses were completed in SPSS 27 due to updates to the software which increased functionality and system speed. The initial data analysis provided an overall calculation of the total number of discipline infractions by year, gender, ethnicity, and pre-Kindergarten attendance. An analysis of the descriptive statistics ensues, illustrating key aspects of data provided by the TEA.

Demographic Data

The following descriptive analysis, as seen in Table 1, references data from the full student cohort beginning in 2010-11. All data included scrambled identification numbers for students from The Texas Education Agency (TEA). TEA releases information with de-identified information for public information requests. The scrambled IDs remained consistent to a student throughout the nine years of discipline data. Following, I describe the descriptive analysis relative to the key variables of the study.

Race/Ethnicity. Data for race/ethnicity consisted of four categories: White, Hispanic/Latino, Black or African American, and Asian and Native American students categorized as Other. As seen in Table 1, the beginning cohort consisted of 29.5 % Whites ($n = 100,886$), 54.6% Hispanic/Latin X ($n = 186,790$), 11.3% Black or African American ($n = 38,651$), and 4.7% Other ($n = 16,062$), which included those students identifying as Asian or Native American.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of 2010/11 Cohort

Ethnicity	White		Hispanic/ Latin X		Black or African American		Other		Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
	48,210	52,676	90,965	95,825	19,169	19,482	7,855	8,207	342,389
Percentage*	48	52	49	51	50	50	49	51	

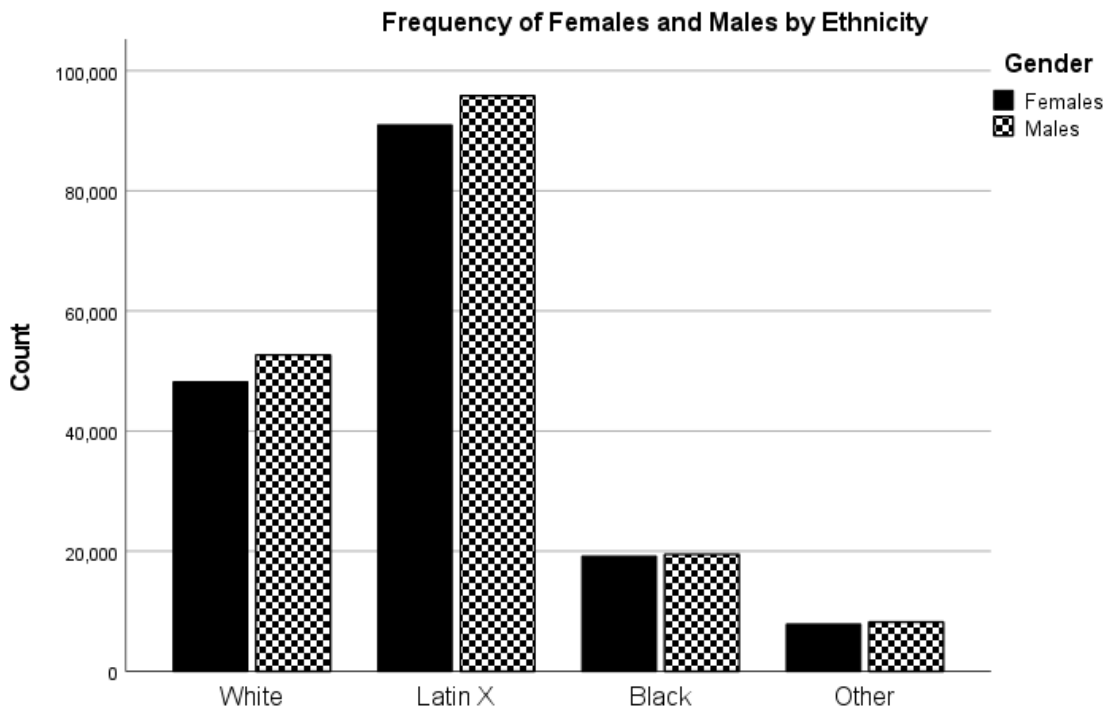
*Numbers have been rounded up to the nearest tenth.

TEA designated the four student ethnicity categories and grouped Native American and Asian together as they make up a small percentage of the population. No category was available for multi-ethnic students.

Gender. Student gender data only considered two categories: male or female. Total number of males and females within the initial cohort were 342,389. Within the sample, 48.5% ($n = 166,199$) females and 51.4% ($n = 176,190$) began in 2010-2011. Figure 1 illustrates the number of females to males. Ethnicity comparisons are shown within the gender groups to illustrate the difference in numbers in relation to each other. As shown in Figure 1, males to females in each ethnic group is nearly equal.

Figure 1

Frequency of Females and Male by Ethnicity



Females by ethnicity. Here, I include a section regarding female descriptives by ethnicity as question two is designed to tease out discipline within the group by ethnicity. Table 2 describes first time ISS or OSS discipline infractions of females by ethnicity. Hispanic/Latin X females received more than 12 times the number of ISS or OSS than Whites and almost 3.5 times as many as Black females. By the end of the nine years 1.9% of White females ($n = 956$) 13.2% of Latin X females ($n = 12,012$), 18.2% of Black females ($n = 3,499$) and 0.24% ($n = 19$) of females in the Other group received a first ISS or OSS infraction. Total number of first-time infractions for females was 16,486. Latin X females represent the largest number of first-time infractions and account for 73% of all female first-time ISS or OSS consequences.

Table 2*First Time ISS or OSS Infractions for Females by Ethnicity*

Grade Level	White	% of Total	Hispanic/Latin X	% of Total	Black or African American	% of Total	Other	% of Total	Totals
Kindergarten	64	15.8	113	28	227	68.6	0	0	404
1st Grade	61	15	106	26	241	59.1	0	0	408
2nd Grade	31	11.1	71	25.6	175	63.2	0	0	277
3rd Grade	11	3.2	91	26.8	238	70	0	0	340
4th Grade	32	9	122	34.4	201	56.6	0	0	355
5th Grade	35	4.1	486	56.8	334	39	0	0	855
6th Grade	186	3.6	4,043	79.1	872	17	5	0.01	5,106
7th Grade	231	4.8	3,857	80.6	699	14.6	0	0	4,787
8th Grade	305	7.7	3,123	78.9	512	12.9	14	0.3	3,954
Totals	956		12,012		3,499		19		16,486

Pre-Kindergarten Attendance. Pre-Kindergarten attendance rates are self-reported data collected by TEA. These data indicate a student attended some form of Pre-Kindergarten schooling though the data do not specify what type of Pre-K students attended. Nearly half (48.7%) of all students of the 2010-11 cohort did not attend Pre-Kindergarten while just over half 51.3% attended.

Findings

The data underscore well known research that discipline impacts all ethnicities to varying degrees and are represented in Table 2. Student discipline data reveal stable incidents of ISS or OSS after Kindergarten but show more than a 300% increase in incidents between 5th and 6th grade. By the end of the study, approximately 17% ($n = 55,840$) of students experienced exclusionary discipline in the form of a first-time ISS or OSS between Kindergarten and 8th grade.

While White students make up nearly 30% of the population ($n = 100,886$) they are underrepresented in discipline at just over 14.5% of those receiving ISS or OSS. Black students however, experience overrepresentation, accounting for just over 11% of the overall population while making up almost 19% of the ISS or OSS discipline population. Likewise, females are underrepresented in discipline and are at less risk than males at each grade level. Though females represent 48.5% of the sample, they only account for 29.5% of the ISS or OSS infractions. These analyses, while not a part of the overall study, give credence to the well-researched phenomenon of discipline inequity for males. Further analysis of the cohort identifies that first-time infractions and total infractions for the cohort differ dramatically. The total number of ISS or OSS infractions for the cohort ($n = 164,414$), which includes students who receive one or more infractions during the full study nearly triples that of the first-time infractions ($n = 164,414$).

The ensuing section addresses analysis relative to the research questions of the study.

RQ 1. Grade Level and Risk Ratio of First ISS or OSS To what extent does grade level influence risk of first ISS or OSS and survival rates of students?

What is the association between grade level and the risk of first ISS or OSS?

Risk ratio in general describes the probability of an event occurring at a certain time relative to a comparison group at the same time. Risk ratio may best be described as:

$$RR = \frac{IE/(IE + IN)}{CE/(CE + CN)}$$

RR = Risk Ratio
IE = Incident Event
IN = Incident non-event
CE = Comparison event
CN = Comparison non-event

Risk ratios may be figured by dividing the cumulative incidence in *exposed* group by the cumulative incidence in the *unexposed* group. Ratios can be any positive number greater than 0. A value of 1 indicates that the risk is the same in both groups. Thus, when discussing risk ratio, I compare, for example, ISS or OSS (event) of females to males (comparison groups) in third grade (time). Grade level risk ratios by year, seen in Table 3, indicate that females have a small risk for receiving exclusionary discipline in comparison to males though it increases over time.

In the Kindergarten year, the risk ratio is 0.1105 indicating that for every male, females are 0.1105 times as likely to receive an ISS or OSS. By sixth grade the ratio increased to 0.6242 expressing that the likelihood of a girl receiving an ISS or OSS became closer to that of males. The risk ratio remains relatively consistent through fifth grade, yet more than doubles between fifth and sixth grade. Mean risk ratios for females to males is 0.307 indicating an

underrepresentation for the risk of females receiving an ISS or OSS overall. The incidents for females also remain relatively small until 6th grade where the infractions increase nearly five times. For males, the incidents also remain stable at higher levels and then triple in sixth grade.

Table 3

Infractions and Risk Ratios (Female to Male) for ISS or OSS by Year

Grade Level	Female Infractions <i>n</i>	% of whole	Male Infractions <i>n</i>	% of whole	Risk Ratio for females to Receive ISS or OSS*
Kindergarten	404	9.4	3,872	90.5	.1105
1 st Grade	408	10.6	3,415	89.3	.1241
2 nd Grade	277	10.2	2,438	89.8	.1157
3 rd Grade	340	13.7	2,147	86.3	.1597
4 th Grade	355	13.2	2,330	86.8	.1516
5 th Grade	855	20.4	3,326	79.6	.2562
6 th Grade	5,106	35.5	9,283	64.5	.5336
7 th Grade	4,787	39.9	7,230	60.2	.6242
8 th Grade	3,954	42.6	5,313	57.3	.6882
Total	16,486	29.5	39,354	70.5	

*Comparison group: Males

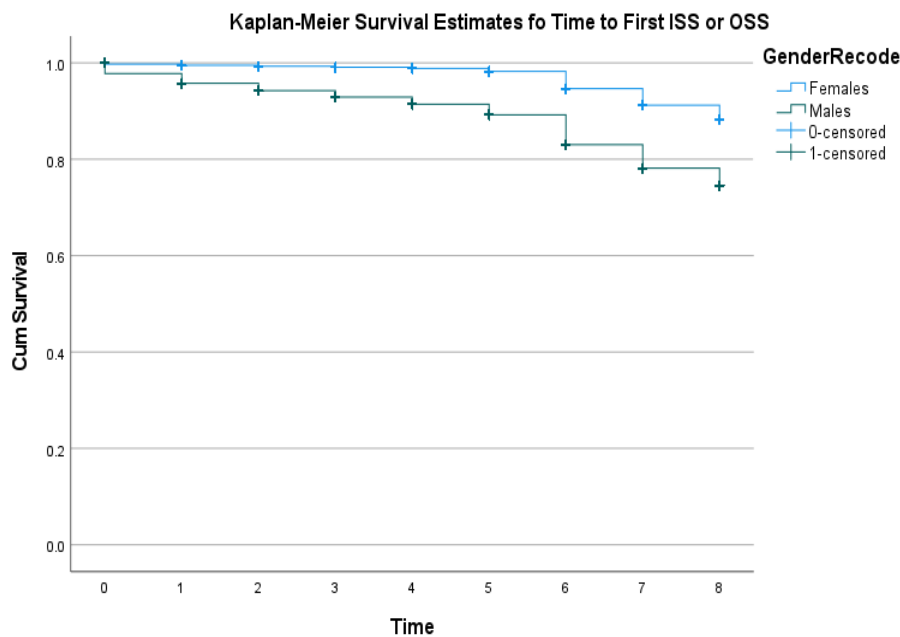
Kaplan-Meier estimate curve. The Kaplan-Meier estimate curve represents the survival probability of students at each grade level. Figure 3 shows the survival estimates for the time to first ISS or OSS comparing females to males. The two lines represent females and males over the nine years of the study (Kindergarten through eighth grades). The two lines show decreasing numbers of surviving members each year. Each step corresponds to a grade level with zero equating to Kindergarten. The curve representing male survival rates decreases at a greater rate

than females which indicates that male survivor rates at each grade level decrease at a faster rate than females. Analysis of discipline over the nine years explains that females have a longer average survival time than males (7.806 to 7.226).

To determine if a statistically significant difference between the risk of ISS or OSS between females and males each year exists, I ran Breslow’s comparison. I chose this test over the Log rank test because the Log rank does not take into consideration the difference in the cases (males and females) at each time. Considering the vast difference in the first five years of discipline between males and females, I determined Breslow’s to be appropriate. Breslow’s comparison estimates the baseline survival function as an exponential function of the cumulative baseline hazard function and weights time based on the number of cases at risk at each time (Xia, Ning, & Huang, 2018). Breslow’s indicated a statistically significant difference exists between males and females to receive an ISS or OSS at each grade level ($p < .001$).

Figure 2

Kaplan-Meier Survival Estimates



Grade level risk by ethnicity. Grade level risk by ethnicity, shown in Table 4, suggests that Black students have the largest risk in comparison to Whites except in 7th grade. Black students also have the greatest year of risk in third grade where for every White student, Black students were 6.19 times as likely to receive an ISS or OSS. The only grade where nearly a 1:1 ratio exists with Whites is in first grade relative to Hispanic/ Latin X students ($n = 1.29$). Students identified as Other have minimal rates of ISS or OSS in general which risk ratio reflects across each year of the study. Though risk doubles between 6th and 7th grade for those in the Other group, it never exceeds 0.36 which indicates that for every White student those in the Other ethnicity are 0.36 times as likely to receive an infraction.

Table 4*Risk Ratio by Ethnicity by Grade Level**

Grade Level	Hispanic/ Latino	Black or African American	Other
Kindergarten	0.096	4.3	0.173
1 st Grade	1.29	4.57	0.2
2 nd Grade	1.54	4.98	0.18
3 rd Grade	3.9	6.19	0.15
4 th Grade	1.42	4.14	0.146
5 th Grade	2.25	4.17	0.173
6 th Grade	3.57	3.82	0.153
7 th Grade	3.85	3.16	0.36
8 th Grade	3.05	2.37	0.33

x
*Comparison group: White students

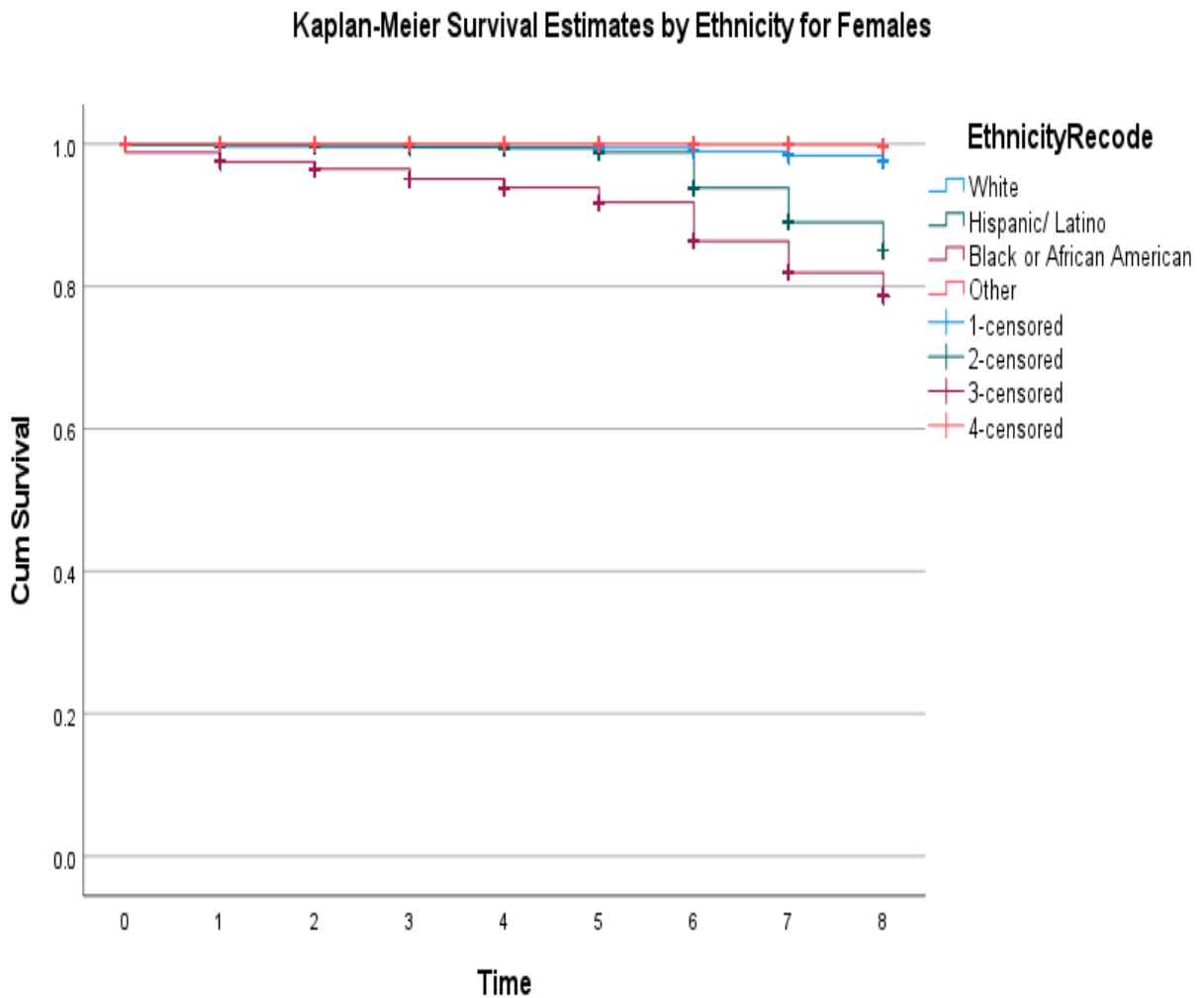
Kaplan-Meier estimate curve. Figure 3 illustrates the Kaplan-Meier estimates between ethnicities each ethnic group's survival from receiving an ISS or OSS. Black or African Americans have the steepest curve at each grade which indicates lower survival rates. By the end

of the study, 19% of the Black or African American group received an ISS or OSS. The next lowest surviving group is Hispanic/ Latin X, followed by Whites and Other, respectively.

Estimates of mean survival of each ethnicity (Table 5) indicate that all ethnicities except Black or African American group ($\bar{x} = 6.819$) exceed the overall mean survival rate ($\bar{x} = 7.508$).

Figure 3

Kaplan-Meier Survival Curve for Ethnic Groups



Breslow’s comparison suggests a statistically significant difference between all ethnic groups for Black or African American students ($p < 0.001$). Pairwise comparison function within

the Kaplan-Meier analysis for SPSS allows for an understanding of significance between more than two groups. This post hoc test showed that Black and male (see previous section for gender) to be statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) over all other combinations of gender and ethnicity.

Table 5

Mean Estimates of Survival by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Estimate	Std. Error	95 % Confidence Level	
			Upper Bound	Lower Bound
White	7.71	0.004	7.702	7.718
Hispanic/ Latin X	7.511	0.003	7.505	7.517
Black or African American	6.819	0.012	6.795	6.843
Other	7.938	0.005	7.929	7.947
Totals	7.508	0.003	7.503	7.513

RQ 2. Student Characteristics and First ISS or OSS What is the association between race and Pre-Kindergarten attendance for females and the risk of an ISS or OSS relative to grade level survival?

Findings for question two suggest the extent to which ethnicity influences exclusionary experiences for females. Question two differs from question one in that the focus is within group (Females) analysis rather than across gender groups. White females represent the comparison group. As such their data does not appear in the risk ratio analyses. I begin this section by presenting findings for risk ratio of females by ethnicity. Then, I describe risk ratio of those attending Pre-Kindergarten and those not attending Pre-Kindergarten. Afterwards, I share survival analysis results for females by ethnicity.

Risk ratio by ethnicity. Table 6 lists ethnic group risk ratios relative to White females. The risk ratios inform how one ethnic group compares to White females but not to one another.

The Black or African American female group has the largest risk ratio to White females for the first seven years. Then for the last two years the Hispanic/ Latin X females have the largest risk ratio to White females. In the 3rd grade the Black or African American group seems to make an overly large increase in risk ratio, however when compared by percentage to the Hispanic/ Latin X group, which nearly quadruples, the increase is not as pronounced. Of note is the highest levels of risk for Blacks occurs in the middle of the study (grades 2-5) then decreases in seventh and eighth grades. Hispanic/ Latin X females, however, catch up to the risk of African American girls by sixth grade and exceed them through eighth grade. Black female risk on average is higher than other ethnicities in the study at 17.5 which indicates that Black females are on average 17.5 times at risk for an ISS or OSS relative to White Females while Hispanic/ Latin X females average 4.85 and the Other group averages .049 risk ratio. Females identifying as Other are listed but represent 19 total infractions during the entire span of the study which accounts for such a small risk ratio relative to White females.

Table 6

*Risk Ratio for females by ethnicity**

Grade Level	Hispanic/ Latin X	Black or African American	Other
Kindergarten	0.939	8.97	0
1 st Grade	0.921	10	0
2 nd Grade	1.22	14.6	0
3 rd Grade	4.35	55.9	0
4 th Grade	2.01	16.4	0
5 th Grade	7.36	25.3	0
6 th Grade	11.6	12.7	0.165
7 th Grade	9.29	8.75	0
8 th Grade	5.94	4.94	0.278
\bar{x}	4.85	17.5	0.049

*Comparison Group: White females

Did not attend Pre-Kindergarten. Risk ratios for females who did not attend Pre-Kindergarten relative to White females, illustrate that Black females risk exceeds other groups most years (Table 7). In grade six, however, Hispanic/ Latin X females have an equal risk at 6.9. In subsequent years, they have a slightly higher risk than Black females at 6.23 to 4.98 in seventh grade and 3.8 to 2.66 in eighth grade. Overall, Black females average 10.9 times the risk of White females though Hispanic/ Latin X females were nearly three times the risk of White females. Of note, during the study, no female in the Other category received an ISS or OSS, therefore there was 0 risk to them relative to White females.

Kindergarten, third grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade were the greatest risk years for Black females who did not attend PreK. Unlike Hispanic/ Latin X females, the lowest year of risk for Black females was the last year of the study at 2.66.

Table 7

*Risk Ratios for Females Who Did Not Attend Pre-Kindergarten***

Grade Level	Hispanic/ Latin X	Black or African American	Other*
Kindergarten	1.01	12.7	0
1 st Grade	0.8	6.69	0
2 nd Grade	1.21	9.88	0
3 rd Grade	3.3	19.4	0
4 th Grade	0.775	18.9	0
5 th Grade	0.452	16.4	0
6 th Grade	6.9	6.9	0
7 th Grade	6.23	4.98	0
8 th Grade	3.8	2.66	0
\bar{x}	2.72	10.9	0

*No females in the other group by no Pre-Kindergarten attendance received an ISS or OSS during the study.

**Comparison Group: White females

Attended Pre-Kindergarten. Risk ratios for those who did attend Pre-Kindergarten demonstrated that Hispanic/ Latin X females had a risk ratio much lower than Black females (Table 8). This holds true in each year except seventh and eighth where the ratios are much closer. Actual numbers of infractions differ immensely at these grades. For instance, in seventh grade Hispanic/ Latin X females experience 3039 infractions to 542 for African American females. Yet, due to risk expressing a ratio relative to enrollment and relative to White females, the ratios appear as nearly the same. An outlier year in third grade illustrates a risk ratio of 196 for African American girls. During this year, only one White female received an ISS or OSS compared to 200 Black girls and 65 Hispanic/ Latin X girls. As with those who did not attend Pre-Kindergarten, females in the Other group had few infractions, thus each year's risk is zero except sixth and eighth grades. In those years, Other females incurred 5 and 14 infractions respectively, thus risk is nearly zero in those years as well.

Mean risk for those who attended Pre-Kindergarten mirrors those who did not. Black females who attended PreK exceed other groups indicating they are more than 30 ($RR = 32.5$) times the risk of White females to receive an ISS or OSS. Hispanic/ Latin X females are 6.49 times the risk of receiving an ISS or OSS compared to White females and girls in the Other group are 0.167 times the risk of receiving an ISS or OSS. As previously mentioned, females identifying in the Other group represent only 19 infractions during the entire study.

Table 8

*Risk Ratios for Females Who Attended Pre-Kindergarten**

Grade Level	Hispanic/ Latino	Black or African American	Other
Kindergarten	0.448	4.02	0
1 st Grade	0.768	9.45	0

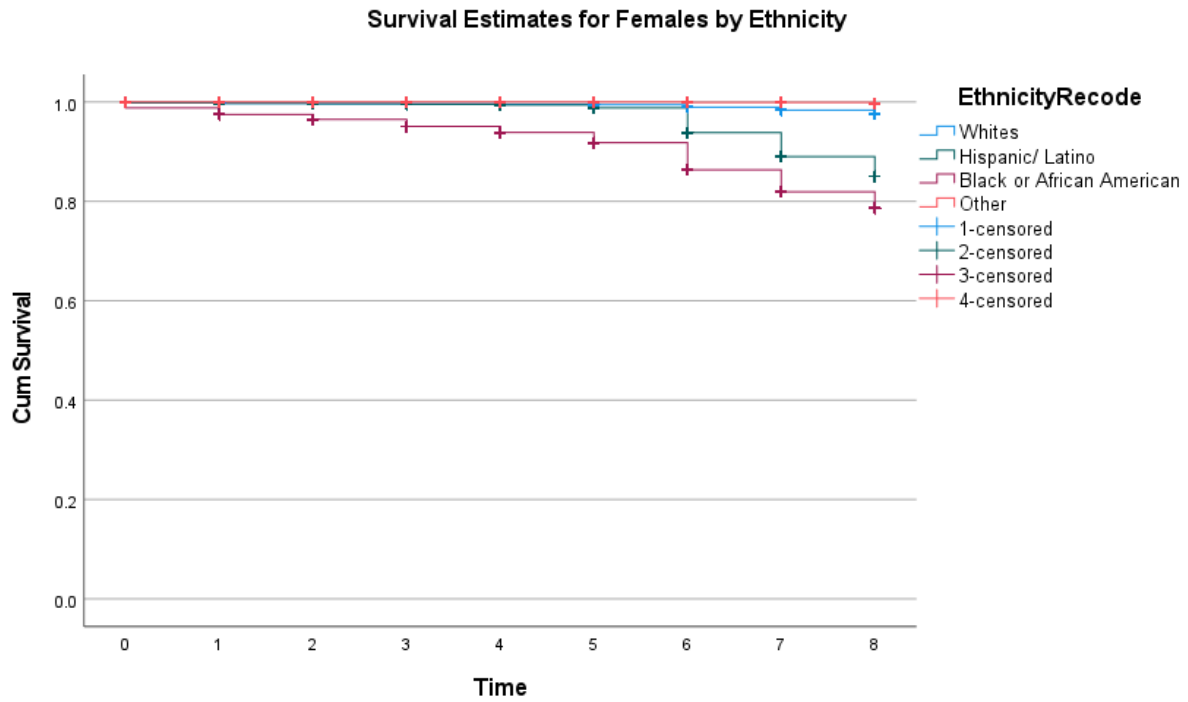
2 nd Grade	0.883	12.5	0
3 rd Grade	11.8	196	0
4 th Grade	1.16	8.3	0
5 th Grade	5.87	21.1	0
6 th Grade	20	23.6	0.65
7 th Grade	9.5	9.7	0
8 th Grade	7.97	7.4	0.857
\bar{x}	6.49	32.5	0.167

Comparison Group: White females

Kaplan-Meier estimates curve. Kaplan-Meier estimates survival curve (Figure 3) illustrates the degree to which female survival rates differ by ethnicity across the nine years of the study. The four lines represent the four ethnic groups' overall survival with censoring represented at each year by a plus symbol (+). Those pupils censored from the data collection due to leaving versus discipline are not considered beyond the time of censoring even if they returned in subsequent years. The steepness of the curve for Black females identifies lower survival rates. Overall, Black females have a lower survival than the other ethnic groups. While risk ratios for the study compare ethnicities to White females, survival rates compare each ethnicity to one another. Thus, Figure 4 is an accurate depiction of the discipline (ISS and OSS) phenomenon occurring at each grade level for females. As with risk ratios a large decrease in females surviving occurs for Hispanic and Black girls in fifth through seventh grades. Conversely, girls in the Other group show very slight decreases in only two years of the study.

Figure 4

Survival Estimates Curve for Females by Ethnicity



Breslow’s comparison determined whether a statistically significant difference exists between Black females and other ethnicities. The pairwise function revealed a statistically significant difference exists between Black females and all other ethnicities at the $p < 0.001$ level. This identifies that the difference between ethnic group survival rates is not due to random chance at the 95% confidence level. Further, mean survival estimates, displayed in Table 9, indicate that Black girls have the lowest mean survival time of 7.419 among the four groups. Hispanic/ Latin X are next at 7.80 with Whites and Other following at 7.953 and 7.998, respectively.

Table 9*Mean Estimates of Survival by Ethnicity for Females*

Ethnicity	Estimate	Std. Error	95% Confidence Level	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
White	7.953	0.002	7.948	7.957
Hispanic/ Latino	7.800	0.002	7.795	7.804
Black or African American	7.419	0.012	7.396	7.442
Other	7.998	0.001	7.997	8.00
Overall	7.806	0.002	7.802	7.810

Summary

In this chapter I gave descriptive data and statistical analysis of nine years of discipline data for the cohort of 2010/11 Kindergarten class of Texas students. Analyses reveal that just over 16% of students incurred a discipline infraction which required them to be absent from learning with their peers. The ISS or OSS designations totaled 55,840 with the largest number occurring in sixth grade ($n = 14,839$). On average, students in the cohort received 11,265 infractions per year. Most discipline infractions were meted out to males, who averaged 86.1 % of the infractions yearly with the highest % of infractions taking place in Kindergarten through fourth grade. Data indicate eighth grade as the one grade where female infractions approach that of males at just over 42% of ISS/OSS.

Risk ratios illustrate greater risk for Black students relative to White students each year. Risk ratios also indicate that females are at less risk than males at each grade with the largest discrepancy during Kindergarten. Hispanic students also exceed White student risk except for in Kindergarten where Whites exceeded risk of Hispanic/ Latin X students. Average risk for Black students was 4.18 which indicates they were over four times the risk of an ISS or OSS to White

students. It is only in seventh and eighth grade where Hispanic students exceed Black student risk ratio. Blacks also have the lowest mean estimate of survival 6.819 whereas all other ethnicities mean estimates are above 7.5 at the 95% confidence level. Further analyses reveal that a statistically significant difference exists between the risk of Black students relative to all ethnic groups ($p < 0.001$).

Female within group data analyses indicate that Black females have higher numbers of infractions for the first five years. From fifth grade through eighth, Hispanic/ Latin X females outpace all other ethnic groups through eighth grade. By eighth grade just over 9% of all females incurred an ISS or OSS with Black females receiving 18.2% ($n = 3499$). Risk ratio relative to White females illustrates that Black females again exceed other ethnicities with an average risk of 17.5 times that of White females which is nearly four times that of Hispanic girls ($RR = 4.86$). The data follows a similar pattern for Black females whether they did or did not attend Pre-Kindergarten. Due to increased risk for ISS or OSS, Black females have the lowest mean survival estimate at 7.419. Within the data, a pattern emerges for females whereby sixth grade appears to be a year where all ethnic groups experienced an extreme increase in first-time ISS or OSS infractions.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the data in conjunction with the breadth of literature on discipline inequity. Though few studies approach the data through the lens of risk towards students in general and Black females specifically, results provide an opportunity for further research as well as pinpointing a need for targeted interventions for those most affected by exclusionary discipline.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

To add to the literature on discipline inequity, I analyzed a cohort of students across nine years and the time to their first In-School and Out-of-School Suspensions. The research design included a comparison of the risk of ISS or OSS by grade level and an investigation of survival rates for the full cohort with particular attention to that of females relative to their ethnicity. I found that ethnicity for males and females impacts survival rates and risk ratios. For students who were male and attended Pre-K, I found they were more at risk than those not attending Pre-K. For females however, attending Pre-K or non-attending Pre-K risk ratios were nearly 1:1, though attenders had a lower survival rate. When factoring in ethnicity and Pre-K attendance, Black females had lower survival and higher risk ratios. Overall, female risk ratios were higher and were statistically significant in difference for Black females.

The following includes a discussion regarding the picture of risk and survival corresponding to gender, ethnicity, and Pre-K status. Afterwards, I reflect on the findings through the lens of Racial Threat Theory (Blalock, 1967) and Black Female Adultification Theory (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017), before ending with implications for practice and potential areas of future study.

Gender

The dissimilarity of discipline is most pronounced between females and males. Comparison by number of incidents show that males receive nearly two and a half times more incidents than females. The discrepancy between the reported data on male and female discipline typify what educational researchers regularly describe and know: males receive a greater number of discipline infractions than females. Further, the data for the current study underscore that at

each grade females are underrepresented in infractions while males are overrepresented. The breadth of literature (e.g., Forsyth, Biggar, Forsyth, & Howat, 2015; George, 2015, Skiba et al., 2014) supports these findings as well as the statistical significance of males to receive an infraction versus females. In all, nearly 40,000 males (22.3%), from the cohort, received at least one ISS or OSS. While female instances are less nearly 17,000 girls also received an infraction. Researchers suggest that even one suspension is predictive of negative life outcomes (Losen & Whitaker, 2018; Perry & Morris, 2014). These high numbers of ISS and OSS occurrences are potential predictors of high incidents of future academic difficulty attributable to inequitable discipline practices.

Pre-K Status

ISS and OSS incidents for those who attended Pre-K ($n = 36,794$) were nearly twice that of those who did not attend Pre-K ($n = 19,046$). Attending Pre-K significantly increased the risk of a first ISS or OSS for males as they received much higher rates in ISS or OSS at each grade level. This did not hold true for females who experienced nearly a 1:1 risk ratio at each grade level for those who did and those who did not attend Pre-K. This may be indicative of what Yang and colleagues (2018) as well as Owens (2016) noted regarding teachers' perception of males' lack of self-regulation skills and lower attention span than girls.

Data is lacking to compare discipline occurrences prior to Kindergarten. However, the data do reveal the expected transition pattern. All groups experience an extreme increase in incidents of ISS and OSS between fifth and sixth grade before decreasing in eighth grade. Literature on transition years such as Theriot and Dupper's (2010) study suggest that students have increased instances of subjective disciplinary consequences due to a lack of knowledge regarding norms of the new environment and a lessening of boundaries at each transition. If true

then, rates of discipline would rise at transition years and then decrease in the years following transitions as students become more familiar with their new school environments. The findings for this study indicate this is not occurring. Rather, rates increase at transition years and remain at the same level or increase until the next transition (middle school) and then increase again. For Black females, a slight decrease in risk is observed in seventh and eighth grade, but overall, no true discipline pattern emerges beyond an upward trend of the number of infractions in nearly each year.

The trend of greater ISS or OSS occurrences for those attending Pre-K imply that early attendance, for some students, may begin the exclusion pattern which is repeated throughout the next few years of education. The early instances of exclusion, especially for students of color, may signal that school and schooling are only for specific children with specific physical characteristics and behaviors. To that end, a need for interventions and classroom management techniques which support teacher understanding and valuing students' culture and differences (Fallon et al., 2018) should begin as early as Pre-K.

Ethnicity

A student's ethnicity significantly influenced receiving an ISS or OSS. This matches previous research (Anyon, Zhang, & Hazel, 2016; Cook et al., 2018) which identified race as the main factor influencing inequity. While Blacks make up just above 11% of the cohort, they account for nearly 30% of the Kindergarten infractions. Hispanic / Latin X students, however, experience disproportional rates in the last four years of the study. Rocque (2010) found no behavioral reason inherent to race suggesting a reason for overrepresentation. As with other studies (e.g., Gilliam, et al., 2016) that strongly suggest teacher bias, disparate rates of discipline cannot be explained by race. Most ISS or OSS incidents given to Black or Hispanic students

occur due to subjective behaviors such as attitude, loud talking, or rolling one's eyes (Skiba et al., 2014). White student suspension was found to result from objective behaviors such as drug and weapon possession. The difference between the two is potential for event. The likelihood of drug and weapons charges in the earlier years was minimal which may account for some of the underrepresentation for Whites during elementary schooling.

The 2018 Census indicated that more than 45% of the population in Texas is either Hispanic/ Latin X or African American. As the population of states such as Texas continue to become more ethnically diverse, educators may benefit from an analysis of how discipline inequity occurs and to what extent. Proactive analysis of discipline impact could provide data to decrease negative outcomes resulting from differential treatment based on race/ethnicity. Additionally, educators should seek to uncover discipline inequity across race and gender with an eye for how the two converge to influence rates of discipline. In the following section, I discuss how femaleness and ethnicity combine to influence risk rates for ISS or OSS.

Femaleness

The current study represents a unique approach to understanding how discipline infractions and risk over time inform the field about females in elementary school. The differential rates of ISS or OSS intimate a problem within the application of discipline at all grades. Skiba and Williams (2014) indicate that race influences risk for suspension. Levels of risk seen in the cohort describe, at the very least inconsistent discipline, and at most suggest racially biased discipline. For example, the risk ratio for Black females to White Females jumps each year without pattern. In Kindergarten the risk is just under 9 times that of Whites, but by third grade it is 55 times that of Whites, but then back to 16 times in fourth grade. These infractions result from teacher and administrator choices to assign an ISS or OSS to students.

Yet, there seems to be little to no consistency in the number or risk of infractions each year. Even in years where discipline decreases, Black females are still overrepresented. Epstein, Blake, and Gonzalez (2017) identify that this is not simply teacher or administrator bias but an expectation of behavior for Black females that is developmentally inappropriate and inconsistent with expectations of White females. The belief that Black females will behave as adults or older than their age eliminates the opportunity for them to mature in age-appropriate ways. Thus, Black females are doubly at risk. First, they are at risk simply due to skin color, with darkness increasing risk. As females enter a class, teacher sorting of Whiteness as more appropriate (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016) occurs prior to any behavior. Then as students “act their age”, behavior perceptions add an additional layer of risk. In each instance, differential behavior may not actually be occurring. Rather, differential application of discipline occurs due to teacher or administrator response to behavior based on personal bias for lighter skinned and middle-class girls.

To be clear, the risk of an infraction is highest for Black females for every year except seventh and eighth grade relative to White females. These rates of suspension could be indicative of a variety of influences, yet ethnicity is the factor which is statistically significant for Black females at each grade. Data indicate that in the last two years of the study, Hispanic/ Latin X females risk increases to similar levels of Black females. This could be further evidence of what Blaisdell (2016) argues when suggesting that school as an institution devalues students’ culture to the point where failure becomes inherent. This devaluing of culture may exhibit itself for Hispanic/ Latin X girls more at the middle school level (seventh and eighth grades) rather than the lower elementary grades for Black girls. This may also explain some of the increases in risk as girls of color matriculate through elementary school.

A deeper examination of the data presents a disturbing notion. If one is White, she is statistically more likely to experience acceptance by teachers and staff. If one is Black, she is more likely considered a threat worthy of separation from other pupils. Blalock (1967) framed this as threat responses to the growing ethnic population. In short, Black females represent a threat where White females do not. The data of this study do not explain the exact mechanisms triggering rates of discipline. However, researchers note that Black females who are assertive and participatory have been deemed disruptive where their non-Black classmates are considered engaged in learning (Boo, 2001; Burton, 2007). The conundrum faced by females of color occurs when teaching staff request students to be expressive and independent. Where girls of color may simply express themselves in ways that are different than middle class norms, they unknowingly put themselves at odds with teachers even if their intent is positive. Teachers could be perceiving expressions of confidence as disrespect due to the interpretation of non-verbal cues (Feldman, 1985; Skiba, Peterson & Williams, 1997). The subjective nature of most ISS or OSS infractions coupled with discipline resulting from abstractly defined instances of disrespect and perceived negative attitudes, may account for the inconsistent nature of risk during the nine years of the current study.

Pre-K Status for Females

Similar to Pre-K for the full cohort, not attending Pre-K created less risk for females to receive an ISS or OSS. Using data to determine the long-term effects of Pre-K programs presents a number of challenges. Some have pointed to an inability to determine if those who participated in Pre-K and those who did not participate are similar in ways that matter prior to the differential Pre-K experience (Lipse, Furr, & Durkin, 2018). Parents' ability to choose whether their child attends or not creates an inability for researchers to make much more than broad

conclusions about the populations of study. In the current study, females who attended Pre-K were more than two times the risk than girls who did not attend Pre-K. One must be careful to make conjectures about discipline because the overall number of infractions per year was relatively small in most years with nearly 84% ($n = 13,487$) of female infractions occurring in the last three years of the study. However, if the data were disaggregated based upon type of infraction a clearer indication of the phenomenon may emerge. Further, Bakken, Brown, and Downing (2017) highlight the need to identify the type of Pre-K program students attended. Knowing the type of program allows researcher to analyze program quality and determine if a correlation exists between the program and long-term outcomes. Texas data indicates a binary choice (yes, no) for Pre-K schooling rather than specificity of program. Lacking data to identify the type and ultimately quality of schooling females had prior to Kindergarten limits the ability to determine the long-term impact of said schooling.

What emerges from research is inconclusive regarding the role Pre-K has on student discipline for females. As most Pre-K studies focus on males, due to the volume of infractions, further study is warranted to understand the ways Pre-K programs effectively prepare females for elementary school. Finally, as with each level of analysis, fifth grade seems to be the year of significant increase for all variables of the study.

Theoretical Lenses

When viewing the data through the lenses of Racial Treat and Black Female Adulthood, one must identify where the onus of the suspensions lie. Do rates of suspension differ based on students differentially adapting to the school environment or behaving differentially based on their ethnicity? Research does not support differential behavior by children and in numerous studies, rates of ISS or OSS depend upon staff and administrator

decisions to suspend (Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba & Rausch, 2003; Skiba et al., 2011). To that end, one must view discipline based on behavior and biases of adults.

The current data reveal a disturbing pattern of behavior. Black females experience ISS or OSS at higher levels and one may conclude they are targeted for ISS or OSS simply due to ethnicity. The disproportionality relative to White females at each grade suggests a mismatch of students and their academic environment. So much so, that compared to the other ethnicities, staff perceive Black females as needing isolation and separation. The statistically significant difference only emerges when observing data by ethnicity. Therefore, ethnicity is the one determining factor of risk. Duckworth and Seligman (2006) found that girls seem to have an advantage of behavioral control that boys do not have in the early years, thus reducing incidents of discipline. The challenge of studies of this type is the onus of discipline is placed on young children and appropriateness is determined by staff. Therefore, behavioral acceptability is a determination of an individual teacher's perceptions. Based on the current study's data, Black females represent the one group of females who disproportionately cannot control themselves behaviorally as the other females in their schools. This seems to be a ludicrous explanation, yet one could infer from the results that this is true.

The ability to determine why staff perceive Black females as risk warrants additional study, from a qualitative standpoint. The additional studies could reveal specific data points regarding how teacher and administrator responses relate to threat and stereotype of Black females. Further, data may emerge with relation to how said attitudes differ between elementary school staff and middle school staff. In elementary and middle school settings Black female risk emerges, yet the rise in the overall number of incidents in middle school indicate the introduction of an additional factor which influences rates of suspension.

Recommendations

As one of the few studies focused on risk and survival rates of students by student characteristic, I next provide recommendations for practice and further study. I begin with recommendations for macro and micro level approaches to discipline. Then I suggest direction for females as it relates to discipline inequity. Finally, I conclude with recommendations for future study.

Recommendations for Practice

Research in the area of discipline appears to tread repetitive paths with little new information unearthed. However, discipline data remains an intriguing area of study. To begin, districts would benefit from an analysis of the practice of discipline from a researcher's perspective. This includes delving into the structures, language, and consequence in discipline policies. To continue to subjectively frame discipline policies where room interpretation of said policy from teacher to teacher, administrator to administrator, and school to school puts students in a tenable situation at best. Yet, flexibility in application of consequences should be considered less the challenges of zero tolerance (which requires mandatory consequences) exacerbate the problem further. Additional research should include how schools apply the policies as a way to clarify when and how specific discipline practices disproportionately impact certain portions of the student population. The data could allow districts to realize patterns of discipline at the micro level (classroom), the meso level (schools), and the macro level (district, state, and nationally). Absent of this depth of analysis, stakeholders will continue to guess at the degree of impact on students as a whole and the subpopulations within the larger group.

Macro level approaches. Districts should engage in processes which explain why discipline inequity exists and then follow processes which eliminate inequity when they identify

statistically significant differences within and across classrooms. This requires schools to share discipline data with the intent to understand where behavior inequity persists. As with stagnating or declining academic test scores, discipline inequity could indicate deeper problems from a teacher which may necessitate professional development. The OCR (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014) highlighted the academic atmosphere for Black children is dominated by negativity. If the overall atmosphere of a school or classroom reflects negative administrator or teacher attitudes, then data could reveal opportunities to address staff prejudices and bias.

In addition to shared data, districts may benefit from a layer of oversight that is absent within Texas. Presently, campuses are required to define a behavior coordinator who manages whether the school abides with Texas Education Code regarding discipline. Districts, though they are not required, should engage a districtwide discipline administrator. This role would serve as an independent assessor and analyzer of school discipline. Analysis of PEIMS discipline data becomes difficult and correction become nearly impossible to implement due to the time delay in PEIMS discipline data. While the requirement to submit data must be met, corrective action and training cannot occur at opportune times as teachers return to professional development sessions. District discipline administrator could provide guidance as to needs within schools and bring awareness to schools who struggle.

Micro level approaches. Micro level approaches to discipline inequity should be addressed in two ways. First, the literature regarding the role of school leaders relative to discipline equity points to a key area of opportunity. As the key proponent for professional development and training of staff, school leaders should serve as the driving force behind equity in general. To provide culturally relevant practices for discipline, school leader training must include the role of discipline and the implications for those most often at risk for discipline

inequity. Further, school leaders would benefit from data regarding their district and school level discipline to determine if the atmosphere of the district and school increase or decrease ISS or OSS exclusion. The data also serve as an indicator of the training needs of the staff. The response to such information benefits the leader as well as the staff because it brings attention to a topic that may not have the emphasis it deserves. In light of the information one can gather from the current study, support and training for teachers could mitigate the amount of discipline inequity observed. Additionally, since researchers have identified that teacher bias influences rates of exclusion, school leaders can use the data to promote conversations around culture competence as it relates to exclusionary practices occurring in an individual school.

Second, the role of campus behavior administrators should be expanded. Currently, Texas Education Code 37.0012 requires campuses to have a behavior coordinator who attends training once every three years regarding discipline laws and where teacher authority begins and ends. To adequately overcome issues of inequity, the role of the campus behavior administrator should include the requirement to conduct ongoing training of staff as well as analysis of discipline data. Identifying bias and training staff on how discipline differentially impacts students, such as Black females, could produce greater thought and planning around the needs of schools' subpopulations. The data regarding risk for ISS and OSS could produce pertinent conversations about why staff suspend some students more than others while literature indicates no difference in behavior across ethnicities (Skiba & Williams, 2014).

Research indicates that schools with intentional work towards positive school atmospheres benefit academically (Gage et al., 2018). To that end, a third micro level recommendation would be for campus-wide positive behavior programs suggested in TEC 13.0013 to be mandatory. Research supports reductions of ISS and disciplinary infractions when

schools implement such programs (see Childs, Kincaid, & George, 2011; Gage et al. 2018). To suggest that proven interventions, even when implemented without fidelity, are not mandatory is short sighted by policy makers as it relegates some students to greater potential for negative life outcomes when academic success could be achieved.

Finally, growing teacher competence in methods of discipline which do not include the exclusion of those most at risk would improve rates of discipline inequity. Teacher bias continues to emerge as an issue influencing rates of discipline thus teacher training must include naming the problem and the facilitation of conversations regarding why some students over others tend to incur ISS or OSS. Similar data shared with school leaders may reveal to staff the patterns of exclusion and sensitize teachers to the reciprocal role of exclusion and school atmosphere. As previously mentioned, rates of exclusion are lower in schools where staff believe in interventions versus exclusion. Thus, training teachers to embrace intervention orientations versus exclusion orientations would also benefit rates of ISS or OSS. In each phase of training, competence regarding the subjectivity of discipline is key. Culturally competent training informs teachers, who often come from White, middle class backgrounds, of the differences between what one group considers behavioral norms versus another. This additionally will support teachers in growing their classroom management and hopefully reduce teacher influenced instances of ISS or OSS.

Further Study

Several pertinent issues arise from the current study which provide impetus for future consideration. First, risk rates for all groups increase significantly during the elementary to middle school transition years. The phenomenon crosses all ethnicities and gender groups and raises several questions. How do schools and Local Education Agencies understand this increase

in terms of who receives ISS or OSS? An ability to analyze schools with greatest numbers of infractions could prove valuable and more importantly the ability to understand where infractions are least could provide information as to what works to mitigate the substantial increase in numbers of exclusion during transition years. Districts would benefit from identifying interventions which show success in reducing the numbers of students receiving exclusionary discipline at the middle school level. If analysis at the school level or classroom level proves certain interventions work, then how can schools replicate the intervention? How do exclusionary policies differ between elementary and middle school and to what degree do said policies influence rates of suspension? While the focus of this study underscored Black female risk of ISS or OSS, a glaring gap in the literature for Hispanic/ Latin X females emerged. Relative to White females, this group also experienced disproportionality, but occurred in the middle school years (fifth through eighth). This begs answers to similar questions. What factors influence high rates of increases in ISS or OSS for Hispanic/ Latin X females during the middle school years? To what extent do school characteristics influence rates of ISS or OSS for Hispanic/ Latin X females? Is there a difference in schools where Hispanic/ Latin X students are thriving versus struggling (as determined by researcher)? Further study could reveal pertinent information regarding the role of school discipline and academic pushout (Cassidy & Bates, 2005) for Hispanic/ Latin X females.

A final study of interest relates to students censored due to first infraction. Do those who receive a first infraction have greater risk of an additional ISS or OSS in the following year? To what degree do ISS or OSS infractions increase over time for those who received an infraction at grade X? By delving into the data in unique ways, the ability to inform the field about discipline increases and moves the conversation beyond the current discussion.

Limitations

This study represented a snapshot of students in one state. Analyzing only one cohort limits the ability to generalize the findings for other groups of students though other research presents similar trends. Further, lacking a comparison cohort reduces the ability to determine whether the data was unique or part of a pattern of differential treatment. To observe the patterns, I would request data for a random number of cohorts and analyze risk at each year across cohorts. Additional limitations relate to the lack of qualitative data. Thus, an answer of why is lacking. For example, I do not have data for why teachers may suspend students who attended Pre-K at higher rates than non-attenders. Adding qualitative data may reveal information which supports better understanding of teacher bias, policy implementation, and administrator influence on rates of ISS or OSS.

This study also does not follow the cohort through the 12th grade. Without the final four years of discipline data, one cannot see if rates remain high for groups such as Hispanic/ Latino or whether White students remain underrepresented. The pattern of discipline appears to start declining by seventh grade and for Black students becomes proportional to enrollment percentages. Lacking the full K-12 school discipline data constrains the ability to make determination as to whether difference occurred in high school or if the phenomenon is confined to elementary and middle school grades.

A third limitation relates to the research design of the study. A decision was made to censor students from the cohort upon their first ISS or OSS. As previously discussed, over 55,000 students received an initial infraction which eliminated them from further analysis. Designing the study in this manner limits the ability to observe students who received multiple ISS or OSS infractions. I chose to censor these students upon initial infraction due to my desire

to see exact risk rates at each grade. However, total ISS or OSS infractions triple first-time infractions which presents an opportunity to study the phenomenon of discipline repetition which few have analyzed.

The overall goal of this study centered on issues which increase or decrease risk of ISS or OSS for Black females. Reducing ISS or OSS infractions represents a challenging but necessary goal. The cumulative impact of the number of students facing exclusion from elementary classes began to emerge early and increased. Wonderings remain as to why Black females face such risk when research indicates engagement in the same behaviors as Whites (Gonzalez, 2018). The uniqueness of the study design further underscores that Black females are the most at risk for ISS or OSS even though Hispanic/ Latin X females significantly increased in risk in the latter years of the study. As a researcher and a parent of a Black female, I have often wondered how to effectively express that schools, as a system, blatantly message lower expectations to students of color. To know that teachers regularly tell Black females they do not measure up to their non-Black peers reminds me of the work still be done.

This study suggests school discipline represents a key turning point for many students and far too often that point opens the door to negative outcomes based on one's skin color. The literature which repeatedly reviews the problem from a numbers standpoint and from an ethnic standpoint does not fully address how to change outcomes for those most affected. We know who and to what extent the issues of inequitable application of discipline impacts. We even can trace the problem to its roots in Pre-Kindergarten, yet persistent exclusion leaves many students of color out of learning before they even seem to get into learning. Perhaps the answer requires individual examination of American attitudes about our Black children. Do we really believe in equity for all? Those pockets of hope where students of all colors thrive, prove the possibility of

academic success and student well-being. It is the possibility which drives my career and will continue to be the *why* behind my efforts in the field of education.

APPENDIX A



September 4, 2020

Oliver Kenneth Patterson, Jr
 Dr. Catherine Robert (Dissertation Chair)
 The University of Texas at Arlington

IRB Submission Inquiry & Project Determination of Non-HSR

Dear Kenneth and Dr. Robert,

Thank you for contacting the UT Arlington Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services regarding your dissertation using data from the Texas Education Agency.

Upon reviewing the information that you provided, it appears your dissertation data would not meet the definition of, "research with human subjects" as defined by the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and would therefore not be subject to review or approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UT Arlington. Per the federal regulations at [45 CFR 46](#):

- *Research* is defined as, "a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge."
- A *human subject* in research is defined as, "a living individual about whom an investigator conducting research: obtains information or biospecimens through intervention or interaction with the individual, and uses, studies, or analyzes the information or biospecimens; or obtains, uses, studies, analyzes, or generates identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens."

From the description of data provided, it appears that it does not meet the definition of human subject research, as the data will not be identifiable. The PI/research team will not have access to identifiers. 45 CFR 46.102 (e)(1) Human subject means a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research:

(ii) Obtains, uses, studies, analyzes, or generates *identifiable* private information or identifiable biospecimens.

Therefore, this project is not subject to review or approval from the UTA IRB, and you do not need to submit a protocol to our office at this time.

Please note that although IRB review is not required for this study, there may be other institutional requirements or agreements such as Data Use Agreements that pertain to this project. Please contact Dan Vincenzo, UT Arlington's Agreements Manager, at vincenzo@uta.edu for assistance in processing study-related legal agreements. In addition, it is your responsibility to abide by the [UT Arlington Standards of Conduct](#) and the ethical standards within your field for all projects and activities, even when IRB review is not required.

REGULATORY SERVICES
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I have included the link for decision charts provided from OHRP from which this determination is made for your reference below. If the procedures that have been outlined and provided to our office change such that IRB approval might be necessary or you have any questions regarding this determination, please do not hesitate to contact us at RegulatoryServices@uta.edu.

Thank You,

 Digitally signed by Lisa Alvarez
Date: 2020.09.04 08:34:52 -05'00'

Lisa Alvarez
IRB Specialist
Office of Research Administration;
Regulatory Services

OHRP reference: <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html>

APPENDIX B**DATABASES AND SEARCH TERMS**

I used various database searches for the research related to school discipline including ERIC, JSTOR, Academic Search Complete as well as the University of Texas at Arlington's library search tools. Additionally, I utilized Google Scholar. The extensive literature in the field of school discipline, dating back to the late 1930s for theories related to Adulthood necessitated limiting topics. The initial searches yielded over 400 articles. With snowball sampling (Sayers, 2007), the list of articles increased to over 500. Search terms used to identify relevant articles included discipline disparity, discipline inequity, discipline difference for Black females, school discipline, elementary school discipline, school discipline and special education, equity and school discipline, adulthood, Black female adulthood, Racial Threat Theory, school leader impact on discipline, and Gun Free Schools Act. From these searches, I identified relevant articles to support the current study.

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