

THE IMPACT OF THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF RACE AND GENDER
ON SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

A DISSERTATION IN
Education

Presented to the Faculty of the University
of Missouri-Kansas City in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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Kansas City, Missouri
2025

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to determine if and to what extent the race and gender of the students correlate with the length of disciplinary suspension of the students in the sixth through 12th grades in a midwestern school district. A Quantitative Critical Race Theory lens serves as the framework for the study. The study was conducted in a Midwest urban school district. Suspension data was collected from four consecutive school years: 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023. Descriptive statistics were examined at both the suspension incident level and student level to identify patterns in suspension frequencies and mean suspension days across racial and gender groups. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to answer the three research questions regarding length of days removed and gender, race, and intersectionality of race and gender. The findings indicated that gender appears to associate with number of suspension incidents received as well as the number of days removed from school, with boys accounting for a higher percentages of suspension incidents and having longer suspension days. Black students in general have received more days of suspensions. The findings also support the importance of intersectional perspective of examining both race/ethnicity and gender in relation to suspension incidents received. Although White female students tend to receive fewer suspension days than White male students, Black girls seem to receive more

suspension days than girls of other races/ethnicities, as well as black male students. As schools work to improve equalities in school discipline, school leaders and policy makers should take note of other practices that can be both preventive, such as integrating social emotional learning for students, and providing trainings for teachers in the area of culturally responsive teaching.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education, Social Work and Psychological Sciences, have examined a dissertation titled “The Impact of the Intersectionality of Race and Gender on School Discipline,” presented by Anika D. Williams, candidate for the Doctor of Education degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Black: For the purposes of this study this term refers to people who identify as African American or African heritage living in the United States.

Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit): A framework to examine the experiences of Black people with anti-Black racism as well as their experiences with White supremacy.

Black Feminist Theory: A framework to examine how Black women have advocated and empowered themselves in spite of the racist history of White women.

Critical Race Theory (CRT): A framework to examine how racism has been institutionalized and legal as well as how people can be liberated from racism.

Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act: This state law prohibits discrimination based on a person's hair texture or hairstyle if that style or texture is commonly associated with a particular race or national origin.

Feminist Theory: A framework that examines the term “woman” being defined through a social constructivist approach to identity formation and the notion that sex and gender are not the same.

Gun Free School Act: A federal law that states any student who brings a weapon on school grounds is required to have a mandatory suspension of not less than 1 year.

Intersectionality: The notion that a person can have more than one identity (i.e. Black, female, and poor) and how the experiences from these overlapping identities often get overlooked.

Natural Hair: The hair a person was born with free of chemical treatment or permanent changes in the curl patterns.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act: A federal law passed to close the achievement gap between groups of students.

Racial Formation Theory: A framework to examine how race and racial subjects are often impacted by what has happened in the past.

White Privilege: The idea that White people benefit from systems in ways that they do not even realize and ways that other ethnicities are not afforded.

Zero Tolerance Policies: Policies that are meant to deter students from exhibiting certain behaviors by providing strict disciplinary infractions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completion of this dissertation was certainly a labor of love and would not have been possible without God and the unwavering support and encouragement from my family, friends, and my entire dissertation committee.

I would like to thank Dr. Loyce Caruthers for her support and critiques that aided in the development of this dissertation. Second, I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Wu, for his patience and support throughout this journey. I would like to thank Dr. Williams for her support and reminding me to finish what I started when I was ready to give up. Additionally, I want to thank Dr. Riggers-Piehl for the feedback and helping me to shift my thinking on quantitative analysis.

I am extremely grateful to my mother, father, son, aunts, uncles, and cousins who have been my prayer warriors and cheerleaders from the very beginning. Lastly, words cannot express the deep appreciation I have for my inner circle. My inner circle is the true epitome of what sisterhood is, and I am so grateful for them and the support they always give me.

PROLOGUE

This study was personal to me as a Black female administrator and my opportunity to influence Black girls. I often see myself in the Black girls I encounter in the service I do within the field of education. It is important that you understand who I am and the lens from which I see education.

When I think of who I am as a cultured individual, I cannot help but think that the essence of who I am is deeply rooted in my heritage. I grew up surrounded by people who valued our heritage as African Americans and who valued the importance of an education. I was constantly surrounded by teachers: my mom, aunts, uncle, and the list goes on. It was important to my mom that I knew exactly whose shoulders I stood on. I needed to understand and appreciate those who went before me. I needed to appreciate the sacrifices made by those who came before me so that I could understand this gift that I had been given. While I attended an elementary school whose students were all Black, the history that I learned was of the dominant White culture. This teaching did not matter to my family because my family made sure that I learned about my heritage from them. My mother, grandmother, aunts, and uncles spent a considerable amount of time teaching my cousins and me about the history that we would never learn in our school history books. People such as Nefertiti and Imhotep were never taught at school, but I learned about them at home. I learned about Christopher Columbus sailing the seas at school, while at home my mother taught me about explorer Matthew Henson. My mother felt that I should learn the history taught at school, but she did not think that was the only history I needed to learn.

I would later go to school at a diverse junior high and high school, where I had friends from various races and cultures. My mom sought to ensure that I knew that there

were other cultures that had equally as rich a heritage and I should get to know individuals from those cultures.

It was this combination that shaped me. I adapted a poem from George Ella Lyon (2021) entitled “Where I’m From” to provide an understanding of who I am as a cultured, schooled, socialized individual.

I am from board games, books, and trivia.

I am from the small two-bedroom apartment and the yellow house on Bellefontaine.
I am from the strawberry plants and the bog tree that was base in our hide-and-go seek game
whose long gone limbs I remember as if they were my own.

I am from family devotions, family reunions, and lots of laughter with family.

I am from being told I have to work twice as hard as my White classmates, a family of
educators

and from being taught my history/ancestry since I can remember.

I am from where respect is given to all adults and you do not ever call adults by their first
name, and “yes ma’am, yes sir, etc...” were the norm.

I am from prayer before every meal.

I am from Kansas City, MO by way of Warrensburg, MO and steeped in African heritage.

I am from Naomi Johnson, who worked hard to raise her own children plus three of her
siblings without a college degree so that her offspring could all become college graduates. I
am from her shoulders on which I stand.

“You have to be twice as good and work twice as hard as your White counterparts to achieve
the same educational goals. Is it fair? No, but it is reality.” These words flowed out of my
mother’s mouth like a river from as early as I can remember. As an elementary student in a
predominately African American private Christian school, I could not quite grasp the

meaning of what she was trying to get across to me. It was not until I got into junior high and high school that I began to understand what she meant. Was she being racist? I do not think so. I believe she believed that she was equipping me for one of many hidden rules in the American educational system.

As a mother of an African American boy, who often was the only African American or one of two African Americans in his classes at a predominately White school I found myself at times saying the exact same comments to him. The statement expresses the idea of “White Privilege”. McIntosh, who describes herself as a White female, defines White privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious” (1990, p.1). White privilege can be seen as one of the hidden rules or norms in our society. As an African American I may miss out on opportunities if I cannot clearly show that I am more than qualified or capable of being in certain positions or taking on certain tasks. This is a barrier that I do not want for students of color, specifically girls because in our society girls/women are still paid quite a bit less than men for the same or similar job. Recently, there have been several incidents involving Black girls and school-based law enforcement officers that provoke a need to look at how Black girls experience school discipline and how they are continually being pushed out of educational spaces (Morris, 2022).

I believe that education is the tool that can open doors. It is not simply enough to just allow our students to walk through our doors and walk out of them 13 years later unprepared for the world they are walking into. We must ensure that we are equipping students with what they need to impact their futures not to just be twice as good.

As a Black female, I was fortunate to grow up in schools where the color of my skin did not equate to school discipline disproportionality. However, as a Black female school

administrator, I am alarmed by the vast inequities in school discipline by race or ethnicity and gender that seem to run rampant in our schools. I often find myself reflecting on my own practices when I receive office referrals for students. I am consciously asking myself if the decision I am making will aid in the school to prison pipeline. What restorative practices has our school implemented? What restorative practices were personally implemented by me with the students who received office referrals?

Examining studies by several researchers on racial disproportionality in school discipline (e.g., Gordon et al., 2000; Lightfoot, 2021; Morris & Perry, 2016; Ngyuen et al., 2019; Skiba et al., 2002) helped me understand that White privilege does not just apply to differences in academic opportunities, but it applies to how school discipline issues are handled as well.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over 10 years ago Ofer (2011) stated that more and more schools are criminalizing students with their exclusionary practices and by calling law enforcement for non-violent or non-threatening behaviors. Unfortunately, according to Wolf et al. (2016), there has not been much in the way of improvement as there are several schools where students have become accustomed to seeing armed police officers, cameras, metal detectors, and other tools that one might see in a detention center for criminals. Makia Hutchings faced expulsion and criminal charges for writing the word “Hi” on the wall in a locker room (Strochlic, 2017). Another student fell asleep in class and was awakened by a book hitting her in the head at the hands of her teacher and had to be taken to the hospital because of the injuries she suffered (Sealy-Ruiz, 2016). There are similar instances where Black girls are being disciplined in ways that other students are not, such as Atiya Hayes who was expelled her senior year after they found a pocketknife in her purse (Kelin, 2014). Black girls are five times as likely to receive out of school suspensions compared to White girls (Onyeka-Crawford et al., 2017). During the 2020-2021 school year, Black girls received almost two times more suspensions and expulsions than White girls (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights [OCR], 2023).

Gibson et al. (2019) examined disproportionality of out-of-school suspensions for Black girls when compared to White girls, as well as the experiences of Black girls who received out-of-school suspensions. The researchers obtained data from the statewide database for Minnesota and from interviews conducted with Black girls ages 11 to 15, their parents, and a team of educators (Gibson et al., 2019). The researchers found that Black girls

were overrepresented in the out-of-school suspension data. These results are similar to findings from other researchers who have studied this phenomenon (Losen et al., 2015; Skiba et al., 1997; Slate et al., 2016). Research has typically revealed that boys receive a higher rate of suspension than girls, and that held true with respect to Black boys in the Gibson et al. (2019) study. However, Gibson et al. (2019) also found that Black girls received an average number of out-of-school suspension days higher than White, Hispanic, and Asian boys.

The disproportionality in disciplinary practices among Black girls has negative impacts on academic achievement. When administrators, teachers, and other school staff do not give attention to the discipline gap, they miss opportunities to close the achievement gap (Losen et al., 2015). High exclusionary practices, such as in-school suspensions (ISS), out-of-school suspensions (OSS), and expulsions from school can greatly impact the academic success of those who are being excluded or suspended. During the 2020-2021 school year there were so many out-of-school suspensions that students missed more than two million school days (OCR, 2023). In addition, school discipline disparities affect Black girls' sense of identity and voice. Black girls' voices are often silenced in schools since they are not free to express their thoughts (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). They are not given the same nurturing attitude towards them as White girls and women are often given. In their silence, Black girls may even start to mimic behaviors that are not in their true nature but resemble those of their White female counterparts because in the eyes of Black girls those behaviors seem acceptable to teachers and administrators (Jacobs, 2016). In a sense, the excessive discipline Black girls receive causes them to lose their own identity by adjusting to someone else's identity. This thinking also stems from a master-slave narrative steeped in racist and sexist mindsets based on the experiences of Black girls in American schools (Haynes et al., 2016).

Researchers have tried to ascertain why Black girls are being punished more than other girls. Rahimi and Liston (2009) interviewed 11 teachers from a mix of southern urban and rural school districts about their perceptions of Black adolescent girls and found that the teachers' attitudes about Black girls were based on the way they dressed and messages about their level of maturity. For example, teachers even commented that if girls did not want sexual advances, they should not dress the way they do (Rahimi & Liston, 2009). These comments are related to Carter Andrews et al. (2019) findings about how often Black girls and women are portrayed in a manner that conveys them to be over sexualized beings. This way of thinking aligns with what Morris (2016) calls the adultification of Black girls, which will be discussed more in the literature review. Due to the adultification of Black girls, they are often punished when teachers perceive they are going against what society deems they should be doing as young girls. There was a tendency to be stricter on Black girls than other girls their age (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). Likewise, Onyeka-Crawford et al. (2017) concurred that Black girls are viewed as hyper-sexualized or even angry when they speak up against what they view as wrong doings; hence their voices are often silenced and their identities as Black adolescents misunderstood (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Morris, 2016).

The perceptions that some teachers have towards Black girls are likely to be rooted in racism that began with Black women and girls being treated as property related to the roots of slavery and profit (Fleming-Hunter, 2020; Onyeka-Crawford et al., 2017). Haynes et al. (2016) calls this an academic transaction because it is the price Black girls pay for attending American schools. Academic transactions encompass what Black girls are learning in schools as well as the master-slave narratives that are emphasized and taught in their classes (Haynes, 2016). When there is no disruption by the teachers to the microaggressions that Black girls

receive which come from racist stereotypes held by students in the class it further perpetuates academic transactions (Haynes, 2016).

There is a set of studies exploring how disproportionality results from racism and teachers' biases. In an earlier study, involving 33 Black and 31 White teachers of first and fourth grade students from southeastern United States, Washington (1982) examined the perceptions teachers had towards their Black and White students, and found that both Black and White teachers perceived Black students 26% more negatively than White students. A more recent study by Butler-Barnes and Inniss-Thomson (2020) examined the impact of teacher perceived discrimination of school suspension or expulsion of 603 Black adolescent girls ages 13-17. Based on data obtained from surveys administered by the National Survey of American Life Adolescent Supplement and interviews by the researchers, Butler-Barnes and Inniss-Thomson (2020), their study indicated that when Black girls think they are being discriminated against by their teachers they were more likely to have school discipline issues that resulting in suspension or expulsion. Perhaps if educators can understand why Black girls are being punished more than other girls then recommendations can be made on how to change what is happening with the discipline of Black girls.

Problem Statement

While researchers (Gregory, et. al, 2010; Shaw and Braden, 1990; Skiba et al., 2002) did some initial research on the disproportionately of school discipline when it comes to gender and race, they primarily focused on boys, but the same cannot be said for girls. Central to the field of education should be the desire to improve school experiences for all students, and this can start with examining the impact of intersectionality of race and gender on school discipline with a focus on girls. Determining the impact of school discipline on the

intersectionality of gender and race is important in determining whether or not Black girls are being pushed out of educational spaces.

Annamma et. al. (2016) examined office referrals and the exclusionary discipline practices for Black girls in a large urban Colorado school district. Findings showed that Black girls were more likely to be referred to the office for being defiant or disobedient, and Black girls were most likely of all girls in that district to have their behavior deemed detrimental (Annamma et. al., 2016). Additionally, Annamma et al. (2016) found that Black girls had a suspension rate significantly higher than the district's average suspension rate for all students.

The study was designed to investigate the disproportionality in the length of suspension days Black girls receive through a paradigmatic lens including Critical Race Theory with attention to BlackCrit and Black Feminism which are significant to the school experiences of Black girls. Simply desegregating schools and mixing Black children with White children does not get to the core of equality in educational opportunity when one considers the numerous opportunities that Black children have been denied (Bell, 1995). There lies an intersectional identity with being a woman/girl and being Black and the responses received to this intersectional identity often marginalizes Black women and girls in both individual identities (Crenshaw, 1991).

Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study is to determine if and to what extent does the race and gender of the students correlate with the length of disciplinary suspension of the students in the sixth through 12th grades in a midwestern school district. A study of the disciplinary practices enacted on Black girls is critical in identifying what school districts can do to make changes that more positively impact Black girls. This is

done by not only examining the suspension data but also giving recommendations for change.

Research Questions

This study will attempt to answer the three research questions listed below.

1. If and to what extent, is there a difference between the length of disciplinary suspension and gender of the students in grades six through 12?
2. If and to what extent, is there a difference between the length of disciplinary suspension and a student's race/ethnicity in grades six through 12?
3. How is the intersectionality of race or ethnicity and gender associated with the length of disciplinary suspension?

Paradigmatic Lens

Critical Race Theory (including Black Critical Theory), Black Feminist Theory, and Intersectionality will be used as a paradigmatic lens for which the datum will be analyzed.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) examines how racism has been legalized in this country. The impact that racism has had on our educational system is important when examining school discipline for Black girls. CRT focuses on six main tenets, which are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

CRT Tenets

CRT Tenet	Definition
Racism as Ordinary	Racism is so entrenched in American society that people hardly recognize it. In a sense racism has become institutionalized and systemic.
Whiteness as Property	Whiteness has value because it can give advantages and privileges to those who possess it.
Interest Convergence	The advancement of racial equality for Blacks only moves forward when it is beneficial to Whites who are in power.
Counter-storytelling	A process for telling a story to reduce validity of other accounts.
Challenges to Claims of Neutrality and Colorblindness	White privilege is often hidden behind claims of neutrality and color blindness.
Intersectionality	Overlap of gender, race, and class.

Note. Adapted from: Bell (1987 & 1991), Harris (1993), Matsuda (1995), Sleeter (2017), & Solorzano & Delgado Bernal (2001)

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how Black girls are disproportionately disciplined than other girls it is necessary to do this through a lens of Black Critical Race Theory (Black Crit). Black Crit aids in understanding of how Black girls have been marginalized and demeaned in schools. Black Crit is a framework to examine the experiences of Black people with anti-Black racism as well as their experiences with White supremacy (Dumas & Ross, 2016). The 2016 study by Annamma et al. that was mentioned earlier connects to BlackCrit since the results show how Black girls continue to be marginalized in schools based on their race. Unfortunately, history has shown that Black children have been dehumanized through policies that have been enacted at the local, state, and federal levels

which were meant to improve the experiences of Black children (Dumas & Ross, 2016). BlackCrit opens the door to examining the unique experiences of Black children.

Koonce (2012) examined the lived experiences of Black adolescent girls when they used the African American women's speech practice, "Talking with an Attitude" (TWA), with their teachers. The researcher collected data through interviews with the participants. Four themes emerged from the results of the study: living in a hostile school ecology, confusion as a result of unmet expectations, living in an environment of disrespect, and TWA as a defense mechanism (Koonce, 2012). This adds to earlier research done by Crenshaw (1991) and builds a foundation for later research done by Carter Andrews et al. (2019), both of which focus on how silencing the voices of Black girls impacts them.

Black Feminist Theory is a response to the uniqueness of gender for Black women. When feminism came on the scene during the second half of the twentieth century one might think that early feminists were fighting for the liberation of all women. According to bell hooks (2000) Betty Friedan, widely known for her work in the feminist movement, is often praised because she brought to light the plight of White college-educated women, but her work on behalf of women did not include Black women. The attitudes directed by White women towards Black women when Black women would speak up at various feminist group meetings were of the nature that the feminist movement was theirs, meaning it belonged to White women only (hooks, 2000). So, not only have Black women and girls' voices been silenced, but their identities have been blocked as well since Black women and girls were not included in the Feminist movement.

Black women and girls have experiences that are unique to them, but those experiences are not leaving them defeated. More and more Black women are showing up in

spaces, like the judicial system and universities that had previously been dominated by White males (Mirza, 2014). Black women are also realizing that being in these spaces also means more scrutiny in their actions and decisions by others within those spaces. The examination on the disproportionality of suspensions Black girls receive also calls for a need to combat practices which further marginalize students.

Finally, people are more than just one thing. I am Black, female, mother, and a college graduate. Those unique identities often overlap and produce new experiences. Black girls have more than one unique identity and the overlapping of those identities impacts them in ways that others cannot understand. Since Black women have the intersectionality of race and gender, their lived experiences give a different view of the feminist movement, which is not from a view of privilege (hooks, 2000). These intersecting oppressive forces shape the collective and individual worldviews, behaviors, and outcomes of African American girls (Taylor, 1998).

Design and Methods Overview

This study used a quantitative correlational method to examine the intersectionality of race and gender associated with school discipline of students in grades six through 12. A request for data was made to a Midwestern school district regarding suspension data. Additional variables included in the data were the students' gender and race. Four years of data was collected: 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023.

Variables and Levels of Measurement

The independent variables in this study were race/ethnicity and gender of each student. The dependent variable was the length of disciplinary suspension (days removed from school). The length of disciplinary suspension is a ratio level of measurement. Races

that were included in the study were Black, Hispanic, White, Asian, Multiracial, American Indian, and Pacific Islander. Asian, Multiracial, American Indian, and Pacific Islander were all coded as “Other”. The race/ethnicity are nominal levels of measurement. The study focused on students in grades six through 12. The grade-level of the student would be ordinal levels of measurement.

Multiple Linear Regression analyses were conducted. Multiple Linear Regression analysis is appropriate since there are multiple independent variables, and the researcher examined their effect simultaneously on a single dependent variable.

The data came from the school district’s database system which collects raw data from their schools; biases were controlled due to no personal identifiable data on the students being used. However, a unique identifier number was assigned to each student by the school district. This helped to increase the validity of the results.

Ethical Considerations

The study did not pose any ethical issues as no direct or indirect contact was made with any students or staff members to obtain data. Additionally, no identifying markers for individual schools within the district were collected with the data. According to the Social Science Institutional Review Board guidelines this study did not require review since the data that was analyzed came from existing data published by the school district.

Significance of Study

The goals of this study were to analyze the length of days removed from school, review the history of schooling for Black children, provide research around the discipline gap, and examine the impact of the intersectionality of race and gender on school discipline. Therefore, policymakers will benefit from understanding how current policies have aided the problem of the study. Some school districts have cited they have no choice to suspend

students due to the zero tolerance laws which came out of the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994. Students have experienced these zero tolerances differently, and for Black girls such policies have exacerbated their school experiences. The experiences of Black girls in schools are unlike any other demographic. Black girls find themselves being penalized in schools for one of three reasons: zero tolerance policies, their “bad” attitude, or the policing of their bodies as criminals (Morris, 2016). According to Morris (2016), Black girls often find themselves receiving suspensions due to the way they wear their hair (natural), speaking out against something, wearing clothing that someone may view as being too revealing, being disruptive, and even falling asleep in class. Hoffman (2014) studied whether an expansion of the school’s zero tolerance policies increased the racial differences with regards to the percent of students that were recommended for expulsion. Analyzing data from a mid-size urban school district the researchers found similar results to Curan (2016) and Slate et al.’s (2016) studies, but Hoffman’s findings showed an even greater disparity. The number of Black students recommended for expulsion went from being at 2.2% before the policy change to 4.5% after the policy change, which resulted in students losing about 700 days of instruction (Hoffman, 2014). In essence a significance for policymakers would be to review and amend the current mandated zero tolerance policies in place in states across the country because of the impact they have on Black girls.

Recently, researchers have shown interest in the discipline of Black girls so this study aids further research in this topic because there is not nearly as much research out there for discipline of Black girls as it is for Black boys (Bryan, 2020; Hines, 2018; Ricks, 2014).

Finally, practitioners will find that this study provides an opportunity to reflect on their role in maintaining inequalities by aiding in the push out of Black girls in academic

spaces because the prevalence of school suspensions of Black girls is increasing at alarming rates. Therefore, it may be prudent to analyze and assess discipline policies and practices within the schools. The alternative to not doing this means schools will continue pushing Black girls out of learning spaces.

Organization of Subsequent Chapters

This study is organized into five chapters. The next chapter takes an extensive review of literature that is pertinent to the aforementioned study. Chapter three focuses on the design of the study, the methods used to test the hypotheses, and a detailed description of variables. Chapter four explains the results of the data analysis. The final chapter includes a discussion of the findings, implications for school districts, and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (2022) during the 2017-2018 school year, more than 50,000,000 students attended public schools in America. There were more than 11,000,000 days of school missed due to out-of-school suspensions, and just over 100,000 students were expelled from public schools. The report also brings to light that while girls still receive less suspension days than boys, Black girls were the only race whose out-of-school suspension and expulsion percentages were significantly higher than other ethnicities/races.

The study sought to examine if and to what extent the intersectionality of a student's race and gender correlates with the length of disciplinary suspension, specifically among middle and high school girls. This chapter is organized to give a clear understanding of the literature pertaining to school suspensions, expulsions, and the impact on girls of Color. There are three topics that will be reviewed: Being a Black girl in American schools, the Discipline Gap between different groups of students, and intersectionality.

A search of the literature on these topics was conducted. JSTOR, EBSCO, Google Scholar, ERIC, along with a few books and government reports served as my databases. The first topic: Black girls in American schools had 2,620,000 articles in Google Scholar, 2,249,232 articles in EBSCO, and 123,170 articles in JSTOR. When searching for the discipline gap, Google Scholar had 2,700,000 articles, EBSCO had 2,639,597 articles, and JSTOR had 115,678 articles. The decision was made to slightly narrow the focus of the discipline gap and search for the discipline gap in schools. EBSCO had 2,021,337 articles, Google Scholar had 1,980,000 articles, and JSTOR had 53,409 articles. A search for

intersectionality yielded 361,000 articles in Google Scholar, 11,500 articles in JSTOR, and EBSCO had 314,257 articles.

The first topic examines what it is like being a Black girl in American schools. There are two subtopics for this first topic: Early education for Black girls and Being a Black Girl in America Post Civil Rights. The second topic of this chapter is the discipline gap between different groups of students. There are three subtopics under the discipline gap that will be discussed: discipline gap by gender, discipline gap by race, and school suspensions for girls of Color. The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights' (OCR) (2016) study had the following findings from the 2015-2016 school year.

- Black girls are 8% of enrolled students, but 14% of students who received one or more out-of-school suspensions.
- White girls are 24% of enrolled students, but 8% of students who received one or more out-of-school suspensions.
- Black girls are 8% of all students, but 10% of students expelled without educational services.
- White girls are 24% of all students, but 10% of students expelled without educational services. (p. 13 & 15).

A later report by OCR conducted during the 2020-21 school year when most schools had virtual learning showed that the suspension data was not too different from when schools had in-person learning. A more extensive look at the discipline gap will be done later in this chapter.

The variables of race and gender are significant to this study and will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter. Intersectionality of race and gender is at the heart of

understanding of the impact of school discipline on Black girls. Crenshaw (1991) defines Intersectionality as “the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women” (p. 1244).

Early Schooling for Black Children

It would be difficult to address early education for Black girls without looking at education in colonial America. The purpose of schooling in the 1600s was not solely for teaching academics, but schools were to teach reading so that the children could get an understanding of the morals they were to live by (Laud, 1997). However, this purpose of schooling did not exist for Black girls. It is important to understand early schooling for Black children as a historical perspective to what schooling was like during slavery and post Antebellum. During Colonial America there was no schooling for Black children since they were slaves. Learning to read and write for Blacks was strictly prohibited from the time slaves landed on the shores of the Colonies around 1619 until about 1865 (Span, 2005). Blacks who were caught learning to read or write suffered grave consequences such as beatings or even losing an appendage, such as a finger or hand.

Fordham (1993) stated that both Black and White women have to contort with ignoring the feminine part of who they are so that they may get approval of their male counterparts. However, some women’s lives in America are more valued than others. Over the years White womanhood in America has been followed with a positive connotation, while Black womanhood was just the opposite (Fordham, 1993). Black girls have been made to feel that they need to silence themselves or speak in a voice not common to who they are as a means of survival (Fordham, 1993). However, to be a Black girl in American schools is not

always a time for silence. There are those who push against the grain and are sometimes labeled as “Those loud Black girls” (Fordham, 1993, p. 9).

Schooling during the early years looked vastly different for Black students compared to White students. For the purposes of this section of the literature Black girls and Black women will be used interchangeably since during slavery slave owners viewed Black girls in the same manner as Black women. To get a better understanding of the early educational experiences of Black girls two subtopics are discussed: Historical Context of Black Children and Schooling and being a Black Girl in America.

Life of Black girls in American schools is vastly different than White girls of similar ages due to their own lived experiences and how they are viewed in this country. I cannot discuss the lived experiences of Black girls without an illumination of laws that forbid Black to learn how to read and write (Anderson, 1988; Cunningham 2023; Span, 2005). One slave endured three beatings to keep his slave master from finding out that he was reading, while another slave was killed for teaching a child, who was also a slave, how to read (Anderson, 1988). So those learning how to read and write had to be especially careful not to get caught.

Changes in legislation and the fight for Civil Rights allowed movement from being fearful of being victimized for learning to read. Even though the ruling from the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision on Brown vs Topeka Board of Education struck down separate but equal schooling, years later Black children in this country found themselves still in segregated schools and/or classes because of the refusal to comply with the law by many school districts (Caruthers et al., 2021). Equal education was just one of the things Black women were fighting for during the Civil Rights movement. Black women were at the forefront during the Civil Rights movement, even if they did not get the recognition they

deserved (Blumberg, 1990). Black women mobilized, organized, and often took the lead in the fight for voting rights, laws against lynchings, and Jim Crow laws (Atwater, 1996). This is key in examining the impact Black women's activism during the Civil Rights had on Black girls living in America post-Civil Rights.

The Historical Context of Black Children and Schooling

A 1662 Virginia law stated that any children born from a slave would also be a slave, so then Black women were seen not just as laborers but to bring more property/workers to the plantations (Clark Hine & Thompson, 1998). It was not long before every colony had passed a similar law (Clark Hine & Thompson, 1998). Despite this threat, some organizations pushed to open schools for African American children (Gundaker, 2007). One such group was the New York Manumission Society (Swan, 1992). They opened the first African Free School in New York 1799, and they asked John Teasman, an African American, to serve as the principal (Swan, 1992). The problem with their decision to have Teasman as principal is that they wanted him to enforce their moral and social controls over the Black children, but he refused to enforce the moral and social controls of the New York Manumission Society (Swan, 1992).

By the 1860s many slaves and former slaves were pushing for their children to receive an education at schools being taught by Black teachers (Anderson, 1988). Former slaves were not only teaching themselves to read and write, but they were ensuring that the children were also learning to read and write (Anderson, 1988). These early schools were commonly known as "hidden education" because it went against what was supposed to happen with African American children (Gundaker, 2007). Others called these early schools "native schools" (Anderson, 1988). During the second half of the 19th century, African

Americans were opening schools all over the country for African American children in such places as New York, Virginia, Louisiana, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and other states. When the Freedmen's Bureau took over the schools in New Orleans in 1865 there were more than 9,000 children and 2,000 adults being taught by over 150 African American teachers (Anderson, 1988).

During the late 21st century Fleming-Hunter looked at the role of Black children in history as the country grew near to the celebration of Blacks arriving on the Virginia shores. The researcher studied various accounts left by those who lived during that time period. Fleming-Hunter (2020) focused on four key areas, but two of them really stood out to me. The first was that Black children basically "had a childless childhood during slavery" (Fleming-Hunter, 2020, p. 77) and in some ways this is true today. The other area was the issue between two cultures: African and European cultures and how the impressions made on Black children have lasting effects. While there was a push to end child labor during the early 1900s, that push was only for White children. Society did not have an issue with child labor when it came to Black children during the early 1900s (Fleming-Hunter, 2020; King, 2011). Children who were enslaved were treated like the adults who were also enslaved by being separated, punished, and living in a perpetual state of hostility (King, 2011). The workload that was thrust upon Black children, both in the house and in the field, made it impossible to have a childhood (Fleming-Hunter, 2020). Since Black girls were often separated from their families they were often sexually abused and used for creating more slaves with no means for recourse. The African culture of children being part of a legacy, respected, and being part of the community were left in Africa, when they arrived on the shores of Virginia. This presented a stark change for Black children (Fleming-Hunter, 2020).

Being a Black Girl in America Post Civil Rights

Being a Black girl in America did not come without some times of triumph. Black women were an integral part of this country's fabric as evidenced during and after the Civil Rights movement. Black women had already been fighting for social justice in this country, but the Civil Rights movement gave them an opportunity to continue that fight (Gyant, 1996). Gyant (1996) wanted to shine a light on the characteristics of women, their motivation, and leadership roles during the Civil Rights movement. She conducted several interviews with women who had been deemed as leaders in their communities and found that many of the women got involved with the movement because they wanted something better for their families and the women knew they had something to offer the greater good of society (Gyant, 1996). The women were a representation of working women, mothers, homemakers, college educated women, and so much more who did not want recognition, but they wanted to fight against racism in America (Gyant, 1996).

However, a different view emerged shortly after Civil Rights. As society was changing more focus was given to situations/events that affected neighborhoods. At that time more research was conducted around adolescent boys because the data showed boys outnumbered girls in terms of crimes committed, so there was no focus on girls at the time (Cross, 1974). Cross (1974) asserts the old adage of boys will be boys gives a double standard when it comes to examining negative behaviors of both boys and girls. Excuses are made for boys with the thought that they are learning, but when those same behaviors are exhibited by girls they come with a mark of shame and are sometimes deemed to be immoral (Cross, 1974).

Carter Andrews et al. (2019) conducted a study to get a better understanding of the experiences of both Black girls who attended five high schools in a large midwestern city (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). “The silencing of Black girls in school spaces makes their experiences appear isolated from White supremacist narratives that position their knowledge and ways of being as antithetical to ‘appropriate’ behavior” (Carter Andrews et al., 2019, p. 2536). This silencing is being combated by Critical Conversations Spaces (CCS) for Black girls. Carter Andrews et al. (2019) state “CCSs for Black girls provide discussion opportunities that support storytelling and oral history in the African diasporic cultural tradition” (p. 2536). Taking data from notes, audio recordings, and transcripts from the CCSs, the researchers found that Black girls were open about their experiences with inequities in their education. The researchers also found that interactions with friends, teachers, or other adults have an impact on Black girls’ view of themselves, school, and society in general (Carter Andrews et al., 2019).

Summary

Schooling has changed dramatically for Black girls since those early native schools. The lived experiences of Black girls post-Civil Rights are varied. On the one hand there is triumph, and on the other hand there is despair. There is a myriad of discipline issues in schools, the exclusionary practices being used to combat those are not the answer, as we have seen the impact on Black girls. There are vast differences in what researchers have found with regards to how disciplinary infractions are given. An extensive look at the discipline gap will shed more light on these differences.

Discipline Gap

Office referrals can be seen as a report on the behavior choices that students have been making as well as how the school is doing with managing student behaviors., which is to say that using the typical classroom management with the student is ineffective, and the administrator needs to take additional action (Foster, 2007). “Similar to banishment and incarceration in criminal justice, social control in schools is now primarily achieved by simply removing millions of students from the educational environment” (Perry and Morris, 2014, p.1070). In order to give context to the current discipline gap found in schools it is incumbent to begin with a look at school discipline from a historical perspective by noting the 1975 report of the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF). CDF stated in their report that during the 1972-1973 school year there were more than 1,000,000 children suspended from school; this totaled 4,000,000 school days. CDF (1975) also found that most of the suspensions were for non-dangerous and nonviolent offenses like truancy, pregnancy, tardies, etc...

Exclusionary practices in schools have been one source of the loss of instruction since the early 1970’s (CDF, 1975). These practices eventually led to what is now known as the discipline gap. Gopalan and Nelson (2019) define the discipline gap in schools as when one group of students disproportionately receives more discipline infractions than another group, such as expulsions and suspensions.

Since the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001), educators have become all too familiar with the term achievement gap. Over the years educators have associated the term achievement gap in reference to the differences in state test scores by various demographic groups of students (Anderson et al., 2007). The achievement gap is in fact a result of an opportunity gap in education. The opportunity gap focuses our attention more on the causes of the gap rather than the achievement gap; this

focuses on the symptoms of the gap (Carter and Welner, 2013). Over the years, the opportunity gap seems to get larger as income and wealth inequalities increase (Carter and Welner, 2013). While there has been much discussion on the opportunity gap in education there is another type of gap that is being discussed in educational circles, and that is the discipline gap. Disproportionality in school disciplinary practices among various races is known as the racial discipline gap (Gregory et al., 2010).

A look at what the literature said about the correlation between school discipline and the intersectionality of gender and race was prudent. Therefore, the next section of the literature review is divided into three subtopics: discipline gap by gender, discipline gap by race/ethnicity, and school suspensions for girls of Color. Important to this research is the first subtopic: discipline gap by gender. The research has already been established on school discipline involving male students (Goyer et al, 2019; Howard, 2013; Morris, 2005). However, there has not been much research on school discipline of girls. So, an examination of the literature around the discipline gap involving gender is critical to this study. The second subtopic, discipline gap by race, is necessary to provide a framework around the discipline infractions and consequences of girls since they are not the same based on race/ethnicity (Blake et al., 2010; Office of Civil Rights, 2022; Skiba et. al, 1997). Finally, critical to this study is the third subtopic: school suspensions of girls of Color, allowing for intersectional perspectives on school discipline. When students are suspended from school then they miss instruction. Loss of school days could also lead to a ripple effect of other things such as disengagement from school (Arcia, 2000).

Discipline Gap by Gender

There has been a significant amount of earlier research that showed a discipline gap by gender, where boys are disproportionately disciplined at a higher rate than girls

(McFadden et al., 1992; Shaw and Braden, 1990; Skiba et al. 2002; Taylor and Foster, 1986). One early study conducted by Skiba et al. (1997) showed that the discipline gap by gender starts early in schools. The researchers found that boys received a significant number of more disciplinary referrals and suspensions than the girls. Even though the average number of suspensions was low per student, suspensions still made up 33.3% of the discipline that was assigned. Equally important was the finding that “problems of insubordination and noncompliance are the most frequent reasons for disciplinary referral in middle school” (Skiba et al., 1997, p.309).

Similarly, Foster (2007) studied school discipline referrals in the early grades. Through interviews, surveys, and observations of first grade students, staff, and parents who were in small to medium-sized communities, Foster was able to collect data over a three-year period. The results showed that boys received significantly more school discipline referrals than girls overall. However, it is important to also note that in terms of students that received more than one school discipline referral, 12% of boys had 10 or more school discipline referrals. Not one girl had more than nine school discipline referrals.

Data collection from the 2017-2018 school year by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) through their mandatory collection survey for public schools in all 50 states of the United States, Washington D.C., and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico aids in a look at the discipline gap by gender. The research suggests that nationally, in all areas of exclusionary practices, boys received more days of suspension and expulsions than girls. During the 2017-2018 school year, 69.5% of the in-school suspensions were given to boys compared to 30.5% that were given to girls. Similarly, boys accounted for a higher percentage (70.5%) in the out-of-school suspensions than girls (29.5%). Additionally, of the students that were expelled that year, 72.7% of them were boys compared to 27.3% which

were girls (OCR, 2022). Even though boys received a significantly larger number of suspensions and expulsions, it should be noted that out of the 50.9 million students who were enrolled in public schools, 51.4% were boys and 48.6% were girls.

Cooper et al. (2022) studied how school discipline inequities between boys and girls affected their adjustment into adolescence. The researchers studied 126 children, ages 10-14, from the Southeastern United States. One of the findings was similar to earlier studies: a larger proportion of boys received disciplinary infractions compared to girls (Cooper et al., 2022).

Additionally, during the data collection year for 2020-2021 (OCR, 2023), 26% of the out-of-school suspensions and expulsions were given to boys compared to 11% that were given to girls. Research showed that there is a discipline gap based on gender. Important to this study is the focus on both gender and race. Therefore, an examination of the discipline gap based on race is prudent.

Discipline Gap by Race

Racial Formation Theory (Omi & Winant, 2012) states that race and racial subjects are often impacted by what has happened in the past. “To treat race as a matter of ethnicity is to understand it in terms of culture” (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 22). This study not only aimed to look at suspensions based on gender, but it also focuses on race, so it is necessary to look at the discipline gap by race.

A report previously mentioned in this chapter was the early research done by Children’s Defense Fund (CDF, 1975). Along with reporting the number of instructional days lost to suspension, CDF published initial findings on racial discipline gaps. Obtaining data from surveys sent to school districts by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare’s Office for Civil Rights in the 1972-1973 school year, the report noted that there

was an overrepresentation of suspensions being assigned to Black students. “Twenty school districts reported suspending one-third to one-half of their Black students; one district suspended 64% of its Black students. Another district suspended 53 percent” (CDF, 1975, p.22). An assumption can be made from the report that if Black students had been suspended at the same rate as their White peers, over 150,000 Black students would have been able to stay in schools during the 1972-1973 school year (CDF, 1975). Additionally, their findings showed that during the 1972-1973 school year, school districts that only had just over half of the country’s population suspended more than 1,000,000 students (CDF, 2075). Most of the suspensions were assigned for nonviolent and non-dangerous behaviors (CDF, 1975).

Researchers found similar statistics when looking at nationwide data for the 2015-2016 school year obtained from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights.

The data suggested:

- Black students received 38% of the out-of-school suspensions, and they only made up 16% of the student enrollment.
- Hispanic or Latino students received 21% of the suspensions, and they comprised 26% of the enrollment.
- American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander students received 6% of the suspensions, and they made up 6% of the enrollment.
- White students received 32% of the suspensions, and they were 49% of the student enrollment.

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights has only been collecting statistical school discipline data around race since the 2013-2014 school year. Research since then has shown that there is a discipline gap by race as well, which was basically a racial bias in student discipline. “A racial bias in student discipline refers to differential punishment for

otherwise identical Black and White students who commit the same offense” (Kinsler, 2011, p.1370). Brown and Beckett (2006) asserted that student discipline disproportionately affects students of Color in urban school districts. Students of Color are among the groups of students who seem to be at a more significant risk of receiving harsher disciplinary actions, such as suspensions and expulsions (Skiba et al., 1997).

In an earlier study conducted by Welch and Payne (2010), the researchers studied whether schools that have higher percentages of Black students also have a higher usage of punitive discipline practices, such as expulsion and law enforcement involvement along with a higher implementation of zero tolerance policies. Data collection over a period of 10 years came from a national database and questionnaires given to principals, staff, and students from both private and public schools. The findings showed that the percentage of Black students in a school is significantly and positively related to punitive disciplinary actions, including exclusionary practices such as expulsion and involving law enforcement.

Another more recent study by Nguyen et al. (2019) studied racial discipline gaps with a specific focus on Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) within the racial discipline gap that led to an ethnic discipline gap. The researchers collected data from more than 1,000,000 students in Washington public schools during the 2013-2014 school year. The researchers were initially focused on patterns involving AAPI students, but they found patterns related to other ethnicities as well. After an in-depth analysis of the data, the researchers found that “Black, Latino, and Native American students are disproportionately more likely to be recipients of school discipline compared to White students” (Nguyen et al., 2019, p. 1988).

Studies have also examined the factors that may contribute to the discipline gap. One of the factors is teachers’ perception. For example, Zimmerman (2018) conducted a study

that focused on whether teacher perceptions of a student influenced the discipline of the student based on race. Zimmerman's data came from students representing 968 schools. Zimmerman notes that how a teacher viewed previous behaviors of the student affected the teachers' perceptions of current behaviors.

Examining the discipline gap based on gender and race sets the background for the basis of the study where intersectionality of both discipline gaps: gender and race come into play.

Suspensions in Schools for Black Girls

There has been extensive research on the discipline gap showing disproportionalities against Black boys, but very little research has focused on what is happening with the discipline of Black girls (Blake et al., 2010). Monique Morris (2016) noted "The absences of culturally competent and gender-responsive methods of teaching- approaches that respond to girls who stand at the crossroads of racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, and poverty- set up a criminalizing pathway for girls" (p. 177). This lack of cultural competency is a gateway to opening the door for office referrals for the students whose culture is not understood.

An earlier study conducted by Gordon et al. (1999) with Allied Research Center in 12 cities spanning the United States. In eight of the 12 cities Black students' suspension percentage was more than any other ethnicity. Even in a city where Black students only made up 1% of the student population their suspension percentage was still 4%. There was only one city where the Black students were not suspended more than other students, and that was because there were no Black students in the school system of that city. One of the key findings from the study was that Black students, followed by Latinx and Native American students, were suspended or expelled in greater numbers than their White counterparts,

creating a significant disproportionality (Gordon et al., 1999). Relatedly, the findings from a survey conducted on the 2017-2018 school year by the Office of Civil Rights showed that Black girls made up 7.4% of the students enrolled in public schools; however, Black girls had the highest percentage of in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspension than any other race of girls. This includes races such as White girls who made up 22.9% of the enrollment (Office of Civil Rights, 2022).

Morris and Perry (2017) deviated from their earlier study to focus on the types of rule violations that had been disproportionately assigned to Black girls. The researchers studied data from more than 30,000 students who attended 22 middle and high schools in Kentucky over a four-year period. The researchers found that Black girls were three times as likely to receive an office referral for breaking school rules than White girls, and Black girls were significantly likely to be referred to the office more than any other race of girls.

Another important study was conducted by Blake et al. (2011) where researchers examined the varied discipline experiences of Black girls in a Midwestern school district who were both elementary and secondary students. The researchers focused on the disciplinary infractions and the sanctions that ensued because of the infractions. The researchers received the data set from the cooperating school district's research department that listed the discipline referral and the sanction that was assigned for one school year. Although data was analyzed for various sanctions, the main focus of the researchers' study was on exclusionary practices, which made the focus of their study different from other researchers such as Curan (2016) who studied the impact that a state's zero tolerance laws had on suspension rates or Slate et al. (2016) who simply studied the inequities by race in Texas public schools with regards to the suspensions and disciplinary alternative education program placements. Blake et al. (2011) focused on exclusionary practices and found that

Black girls were two times as likely as their peers of other races and same gender to receive in-school or out-of-school suspensions. The researchers also noted that even though the population of Hispanic girls enrolled in the district is more than twice the percentage of Black girls enrolled in the district, Black girls were still 2.25 times as likely to receive in-school suspension and 1.75 times as likely to receive out-of-school suspension than Hispanic girls. The researchers also found that Black girls were cited more than White girls for all infractions, except for truancy. The top two reasons Black girls received a referral were defiance and improper dress. Finally, the researchers reported that Black girls from their study were disproportionately represented in receiving exclusionary discipline sanctions.

Prior to the studies conducted by Blake et al. (2011) and Slate et al. (2016), Arcia (2006) went in a different direction focusing her study on the impact that suspension has on the academic achievement of students. Pre and post reading achievement scores from a three-year period of elementary students in an urban school district were collected. The data was obtained from the school district's database. The results showed that scores from students who had been suspended were excessively lower than students who had not been suspended. The researcher also found that the suspended students had higher dropout rates. Comparing this data from Arcia (2006) to data from later studies and research reports (Brown & Beckett, 2006; Curan, 2016; OCR, 2019, 2022; Morris, 2016; Slate et al., 2016) an assumption can be made that Black girls who receive significantly more suspensions than their White counterparts will have significantly lower academic achievement.

Rather than focus solely on the disproportionality of suspension days between White girls and Black girls as other researchers have done (Blake et al., 2010; Office of Civil Rights, 2022; Skiba et. al, 1997), Wun (2015) studied the layering and lasting effects of disciplinary policies that resemble prison conditions. The researcher gathered data from the

experiences that were shared by Black girls about the school's discipline policies and how those policies make them feel, as well as data from observations (Wun, 2015). The students reported an increase of surveillance on them through the school's cameras, sometimes for chewing gum or for appearing to be talking (Wun, 2015). The findings from the researcher support the experiences that the girls shared. One student was even arrested and taken to jail because someone accused her of stealing an iPhone. She was later released and not charged, but there were additional consequences even though she was not charged. The student had to attend a required restorative justice program if she did not want to be charged for burglary (Wun, 2015).

Intersectionality

It has been mentioned previously in this paper that Black girls carry with them more than just one identity. They are both Black and female, and collectively Black girls are not represented in feminism or antiracism discourses (Crenshaw, 1991). Their intersectional identity as both being Black and a girl show up in discourses that are set to respond to one or the other. Black girls are then marginalized within both (Crenshaw, 1991).

Intersectionality Theory requires an examination of those identities in combination which have been marginalized or left out due to those in power pushing forth oppressive tactics and behaviors (Harris & Leonardo, 2018).

The intersectionality of Black girls may also cause them to experience microaggressions. Microaggressions are the "everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership" (Sue, 2010, p. 2). In a study conducted by Edwards (2020), the

researcher found that Black girls faced multiple levels of microaggressions in school from other students, teachers, and administrators due to their intersectional identity. Therefore, microaggressions are another challenge that is unique to Black girls. Black girls' responses to microaggressions are often taken for disrespect or defiance, which in turn leads to office referrals.

The impact of microaggressions due to the uniqueness of intersectionality continues as Black girls become Black women (Lewis et al., 2016). Collecting data over a two-year period from 17 African American women who were in undergraduate or graduate school at a predominately White public university in the Midwest, Lewis et al. (2016) investigated the types of racial and gender microaggressions Black women experience. One of the key findings from the research was that Black women often have projected stereotypes about them such as the Jezebel and angry Black women. A second key finding was that Black women are marginalized and isolated in professional, school or social spaces. Finally, the researchers found that others made assumptions in both verbal and non-verbal ways about Black women degrading their communication styles, physical appearance and body type (Lewis et al., 2016). Earlier research conducted by Fordham (1993) found similar results with regards the impact of microaggressions towards Black women.

There is a thought in academia that since Black girls seem to succeed academically in school there is no need to focus specifically on them as with Black boys, but the problem with this thought is that there is no acknowledgement of the challenges that Black girls face in schools (Edwards, 2020). The impact of this intersectionality in school shows up differently for Black girls. Black girls' peer relationships are impacted, whether they feel safe at school and around school, along with the messages they receive at home about the

value of education (Crenshaw et al., 2015). According to Crenshaw et al. (2015) responsibilities at home are also different for Black girls than other girls due to the intersectionality they have. The impact of intersectionality on Black girls is felt at home and at school. Harris and Kruger's (2020) study on Black girls' experiences with sexual harassment while in middle school extends the work of earlier researchers (Epstein et al., 2017; Morris, 2016; Onyeka-Crawford et al., 2017) who focused on the perception that Black girls are hyper-sexualized beings. Harris and Kruger gathered data from interviews and observations of lessons that nine Black girls, ages 11-13, participated in through Project P.R.E.V.E.N.T. Findings indicate that middle school Black girls have been victims of both physical and verbal sexual harassment in school with little or no support from teachers or administrators (Harris & Kruger, 2020). Since very few studies have focused on Black girls being viewed as hyper-sexualized beings, this study aids in the literature of understanding the adultification of Black girls and explains why some teachers and administrators treat Black girls the way they do, holding them to the expectations they would hold adults (Morris, 2016).

The perception that Black girls deserve far less supportive treatment than White girls has continued well into the 21st century. In a study conducted by Epstein et al. (2017) the researchers collected data by surveying 325 adults who were from varied racial and ethnic backgrounds as well as different educational levels from all over the United States. More than 60% of the participants were women. Participants responded to nine questions using a scale ranging from not at all to a great deal. The questions were themed around the adultification of Black girls and the stereotypes about Black women and girls. Epstein et al. (2017, p.1) found these results when comparing Black girls to White girls of the same age

- Black girls need less nurturing
- Black girls need less protection
- Black girls need to be supported less
- Black girls need to be comforted less
- Black girls are more independent
- Black girls know more about adult topics
- Black girls know more about sex

This mindset that Black girls need less nurturing, less support has attributed to Black girls receiving harsher disciplinary consequences at school (Epstein et al., 2017).

Summary

From a historical perspective schooling in the United States for Black children has not been without its challenges. Over the years access to education has improved, but other challenges have persisted. One such challenge is school discipline. An examination of the literature surrounding the discipline gap by gender shows that boys still receive more incidents of removal from school than girls. Therefore, the focus of school discipline has been on boys for several years. A review of the literature also supports the premise that Black students receive more suspension incidents than other races. There is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of studying the impact of the intersectionality of gender and race on school discipline. Interestingly, the discipline gap between Black and White girls is more significant than Black and White boys (Wallace, et. al., 2008).

The discussion in this chapter was meant to give a broader understanding of the discipline gap, as well as the impact exclusionary discipline practices have on students. This chapter also shines a light on the disciplinary practices enacted on Black girls, who have often not

been the focus of research on school discipline. The next chapter will explain the design of the study, variables, and the methods used to test the hypotheses.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

High exclusionary practices, such as in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), and expulsion from school can greatly impact the academic success of those who are being excluded or suspended (Hussein Hassan & Brooks Carter, 2021). In a study conducted by Perry and Morris (2014), the researchers found that the higher the number of exclusionary discipline practices over time results in lower student achievement on the end of the year reading and math tests. While suspensions are meant to be a deterrent to certain behaviors the exclusionary practices sometimes have other residual effects.

This chapter provides an overview of the participants in the study, data collection, procedures to analyze the data, and ethical considerations relevant to the study. Additionally, the study used Quantitative Critical Race Theory (QuantCrit) as a method. QuantCrit examines the phenomena which is rooted in positionality and subjectivity while also advocating for justice and dismantling oppression. In the simplest of terms, QuantCrit applies theoretical principles to aid in understanding quantitative data (Castillo & Gillborn, 2023). One of the guiding tenets of QuantCrit is that data cannot speak for themselves and the voices behind the numbers need to be heard (Garcia et al., 2018). For the purposes of the study the voices will be that of Black girls. Therefore, a QuantCrit method was used in study since the researcher is examining whether structural racism and sexism impact school discipline, therefore, possibly creating the pushout of Black girls from academic spaces, and this will be done by shedding light on the need to dismantle oppression that comes with the exclusionary practices enacted on Black girls.

Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this critical quantitative, correlational study is to determine if and to what extent does race and gender correlate with the length of disciplinary suspension a student has received. A quantitative approach is being used because it is suitable for examining correlations between measurable variables (Park & Park, 2016). The independent variables in our study were gender and race. The dependent variable was length of disciplinary suspension in days. The research questions and hypotheses are described below.

- **RQ1:** If and to what extent, is there a difference between the length of disciplinary suspension and gender of the students in grades six through 12?
 - ***H₀*:** There is no statistical relationship between the between the gender of the student and the length of disciplinary suspension.
 - ***H₁*:** There is a statistical relationship between the gender of the student and the length of disciplinary suspension.
- **RQ2:** If and to what extent, is there a difference between the length of disciplinary suspension and a student's race/ethnicity in grades six through 12?
 - ***H₀*:** There is no statistical relationship between the between the race/ethnicity of the student and the length of disciplinary suspension.
 - ***H₁*:** There is a statistical relationship between the race/ethnicity of the student and the length of disciplinary suspension.
- **RQ3:** How is the intersectionality of race or ethnicity and gender associated with the length of disciplinary suspension?
 - ***H₀*:** The intersectionality of race and gender is not associated with the length of disciplinary suspension.

- ***H₁***: There is a statistical relationship between the intersectionality of race and gender of the student and the length of disciplinary suspension.

Setting and Participants

The location of the study was in an urban school district in Midwestern United States. I used district-wide data from one public school district in the Midwest. The school district has 39 schools including two early learning schools serving students in grades pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. At the time of data collection, 13,640 students were enrolled in the school district. The mean enrollment across all years for male students was 51% and female students was 49%. The mean percentage for each race/ethnicity across all for years are as follows: Black (53%), Hispanic (29%), Other (includes American Indian, Asian, Multiracial, and Pacific Islander-8%), and White (10%). Table 2 gives the demographics by gender and race for all students enrolled in the district over the four-year period. Participants in the study were in grades six through twelve. This was a longitudinal data set covering four consecutive school years. The school years were 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023. The data set also covers the years for COVID-19 and patterns in school discipline can be seen before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The students in the data had at least one day of suspension assigned.

Table 2*PK-12 District Enrollment Based on Gender and Race Demographics*

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Gender				
Male	7,298 51.0%	6,935 51%	6,733 50.7%	6,778 50.7%
Female	7,015 49.0%	6,687 49%	6,537 49.3%	6,583 49.3%
Black	7,750 54%	7,326 54%	6,892 52%	6,825 51%
Hispanic	4,059 28%	3,804 28%	3,958 30%	4,025 30%
Other	1,115 8%	1,133 8%	1,039 8%	1,102 8%
White	1,389 10%	1,359 10%	1,381 10%	1,409 11%
Total Enrollment	14,313 100%	13,622 100%	13,270 100%	13,361 100%

Note. Data Provided by School District

Table 3*District Racial Demographics for Students in Grades Six Through 12*

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Race				
Black	3,827 54%	3,689 54%	3,623 53%	3,551 52%
Hispanic	2,009 29%	1,933 28%	2,035 30%	2,063 30%
Other	657 9%	560 8%	510 7%	721 11%
White	555 8%	679 10%	703 10%	522 8%

Note. Data Provided by School District

Measures

A request for discipline data was made to the school district for the following school years: 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023. The discipline data contains all records across these four school years, including the date of the incidents, the length of

disciplinary suspension in days, as well as student background information such as gender and race.

The independent variables were gender and race. Student gender was categorized into two categories: male and female. For statistical analysis, I coded male students as 0 (the reference group) and female students as 1. Students' race was categorized into seven groups in the original dataset: White, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, Multiracial, and Pacific Islander. Due to the small number of students in the American Indian, Asian, Multiracial, and Pacific Islander groups, I re-coded them into a single "Other" category. I then created dummy variables for race with White students as the reference group. The four race variables were coded as shown below.

- White (one if White, zero otherwise)
- Black (one if Black, zero otherwise)
- Hispanic (one if Hispanic, zero otherwise)
- Other (one if Other, zero otherwise)

The dependent variable was length of disciplinary suspension (number of days removed from school). In the original dataset, suspension days longer than 11 were categorized as "11+ days", "36+ days", and "90+ days." I re-coded these records using lower-bound estimates. Specifically, length of disciplinary suspension with 11+ days was re-coded as 11, 46+ days was re-coded 46, and 90+ was re-coded as 90.

Data Analysis

To address the research questions, I first conducted descriptive statistics to investigate the patterns of disciplinary suspension and then performed multiple regression to examine the relationship between the length of suspension and the intersectionality of gender and race.

Because the data consists of disciplinary records, and the clustering nature of the data (i.e., there may be multiple records for a single student), I first conducted descriptive analysis at the incident-level to examine the patterns of suspension incidents by gender, race, grade-level, and month. Then, I aggregated the suspension days to the student level and examined the pattern of the average number of days removed from school for unique students. This was done by creating a specific data set that included unique students along with their race, gender, and average number of days removed from school.

Multiple linear regression analysis was then conducted at student level to address the three research questions. In the multiple linear regression analyses, the dependent variable was the length of disciplinary suspension, and the independent variables were gender and race. Two models were performed. Model 1 examines race and gender variables independently, and Model 2 examines the intersectionality of race and gender by adding to the model the interactions between gender and each race variable.

Ethical Considerations

As stated in Chapter One, this study will not pose any ethical issues. No individual student of the district was contacted to collect data. A unique identifier code was assigned to each student in the discipline data. The identifier code was not the student's actual state identification number but a unique code that was assigned to them by the school district to protect the identity of the student. Only the school district knows which unique identifier code goes with which student. I was not given access to that information. The data that was analyzed came from existing data published by the school district. All data was saved in a university two-step authenticator password-protected account. The University of Missouri

Kansas City's Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that the study qualified for IRB exemption due to the minimal risk level.

Summary

This section provided the methodology of data collection and the types of analysis that were conducted regarding the length of disciplinary suspension by gender, race, and the intersectionality of gender and race. In Chapter four, I report observed trends in the disciplinary data as well as the results of multiple regression analyses.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS

As stated previously in this paper, the purpose of the study was to investigate whether the race and gender of the students correlate with the length of disciplinary suspension students received. There are three research questions mentioned in chapter three that guided the analysis of this study.

- **RQ1.** If and to what extent, is there a difference between the length of disciplinary suspension and gender of the students in grades six through 12?
- **RQ2.** If and to what extent, is there a difference between the length of disciplinary suspension and a student's race/ethnicity in grades six through 12?
- **RQ3.** How is the intersectionality of race or ethnicity and gender associated with the length of disciplinary suspension?

The suspension data used in the analysis was provided by a midwestern school district from a four-year period from 2020-2023. Like many students across the United States, students in this district were learning virtually due Covid-19 and the data from 2021 may have been impacted by that. Table 3 gives racial demographics for students in grades six through 12 because students were in grades six through 12 at the time the data was collected. Additionally, students in the data had at least one day of suspension assigned to them. Throughout this chapter, the term length of disciplinary suspension will refer to the length of days removed from the normal school setting. IBM SPSS was used to calculate the descriptive statistics.

Results

This chapter is divided into two major sections. The first section focuses on the descriptive patterns of suspension incidents by (a) examining the number of suspension incidents by gender, race, grade-level and month, (b) investigating the number of unique children who received days removed from school by gender, race, and year, and (c) examining the average length of days removed from school by gender, race, and year.

The second section of the results focuses on the regression analyses by examining how race, gender, and their interaction are associated with the length of days removed.

The Number and Duration of Suspension Incidents

Similar to the results from previous research studies (Gibson et al., 2019; Skiba et al., 1997; U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights [OCR], 2023), the data from this study indicates that male students had more suspension incidents than female students over a four-year period as indicated by Table 4. In total, male students have 10,027 number of records, and female students have 7,096 number of records. The number of incidents involving male students was approximately 17% higher than that of female students in 2020, 26% in 2021, 15% in 2022, and 18% in 2023.

Table 4

Suspension Incidents by Gender for Students in Grades Six Through 12

	2020	Percent	2021	Percent	2022	Percent	2023	Percent
Male Students	3,861	58.5%	80	63%	3,057	57.9%	3,029	59.2%
Female Students	2,738	41.5%	47	37%	2,227	42.1%	2,084	40.8%
Total Incidents	6,599		127		5,284		5,113	

Note. Data Provided by School District

The findings in Table 5 also show that an analysis based on race/ethnicity when looking at the number of incidents over the four-year period yielded similar results to those found by other researchers (Gregory et al., 2017; Sharp et al., 2014; Vanderharr et al., 2014). One additional finding to note is the decrease in the number of incidents/suspensions when comparing 2020 to 2022 and 2023. This is not surprising considering the decrease in enrollment in the district when comparing the enrollment in 2020 to the enrollment in 2022 and 2023. Table 5 also demonstrates the percentages of incidents involving students based on race/ethnicity. The incidents involving Black students were 70% in 2020, 19% for Hispanic students, 7% for White students, and 4% for students in the Other category. In 2021, Black students accounted for 73% of the suspension incidents, with 16% for Hispanic students, 7% for White students, and 4% for students in the Other category. During the 2022 year, the incidents involving Black students was 70%, 21.5% for Hispanic students, 4% for White students as well as students classified as Other. In 2023, we find that Black students accounted for 68% of the suspension incidents, 20% for Hispanic students, 7% for students in the Other category, and 5% for White students.

Table 5

Suspension Incidents by Race/Ethnicity for Students in Grades Six Through 12

	2020	Percent	2021	Percent	2022	Percent	2023	Percent
Black	4,602	70%	93	73%	3,687	70%	3,462	68%
Hispanic	1,256	19%	20	16%	1,134	21.5%	1,019	20%
Other	293	4%	5	4%	235	4%	364	7%
White	448	7%	9	7%	228	4%	268	5%
Total Incidents	6,599		127		5,284		5,113	

Note. Data provided school district

Over the four-year period incidents that involve Black students accounted for more

than 60% of the total suspensions. It is important to note that even during the 2020-2021 school year when schools were virtual for almost the entire school year, incidents that involve Black students still accounted for more than 70% of the suspensions that year. Table 6 shows that Black female students received more than suspension incidents over the four-year period when compared to female students of other races/ethnicities. Additionally, the data in Table 6 shows that during the 2020-2021 school year when most of the school year was virtual, Black female students received 13% of the suspensions that year.

Table 6

Suspension Incidents by Female Students' Race/Ethnicity in Grades Six Through 12

	2020	Percent	2021	Percent	2022	Percent	2023	Percent
Black Female	1,770	22%	31	13%	1,536	25%	1,459	23%
Hispanic Female	636	8%	10	4%	497	8%	383	6%
Other Female	122	2%	1	.04%	112	2%	155	2%
White Female	210	3%	5	2%	82	1%	87	1%

Note. Data provided by the school district. The percentages are based on the total suspensions assigned for students in grades kindergarten through 12th grade.

When analyzing the number of incidents by grade the data shows that the number of suspension incidents involving grades seven and eight are more than that of other grades for all four years except in 2022 when ninth grade had more suspensions as shown by Table 7. The fact that students begin middle school at grade seven in the school district may contribute to the number of incidents being higher for grades seven and eight. The findings also indicated that the higher the grade-level the lower the number of incidents there were, with incidents dropping under 5% during the senior year. Interestingly it is important to note that the enrollment for 11th and 12th grades is about the same as seventh and eighth grades

across all four years.

Table 7

Suspension Incidents by Grade

	2020	Percent	2021	Percent	2022	Percent	2023	Percent
6 th Grade	304	5%	12	9%	271	5%	280	5%
7 th Grade	2,019	31%	29	23%	1,182	22%	1,237	24%
8 th Grade	1,436	22%	39	31%	1,161	22%	1,124	22%
9 th Grade	1,240	19%	27	21%	1,359	26%	1,054	21%
10 th Grade	824	12%	12	9%	730	14%	805	16%
11 th Grade	505	7%	5	4%	415	8%	423	8%
12 th Grade	271	4%	3	2%	166	3%	180	4%
Total Incidents	6,599		127		5,284		5,113	

Note. Data provided by school district

Table 8 presents the number of suspension incidents by month. It shows an uptick in the number of suspension incidents in October and again in April across all four years, except for April 2020 during the covid-19 pandemic. One key item to note is that several students in the data had more than one incident. An analysis of unique individual students will be given later in this chapter.

Table 8*Suspension Incidents by Month*

	2020	Percent	2021	Percent	2022	Percent	2023	Percent
August	394	6%	0	0%	68	1%	89	1%
September	990	15%	0	0%	508	10%	571	11%
October	1,130	17%	1	.07%	537	10%	660	13%
November	1,046	16%	2	2%	653	12%	594	12%
December	683	10%	0	0%	402	7%	368	7%
January	843	13%	0	0%	535	10%	534	10%
February	968	15%	0	0%	557	11%	597	12%
March	542	8%	3	2%	561	11%	544	11%
April	3	.04%	35	28%	738	14%	547	11%
May	0	0%	62	49%	725	14%	609	12%
June	0	0%	24	19%	0	0%	0	0%
Year Total	6,599		127		5,284		5,113	

Note. Data provided by school district

Another finding shown in Table 8 is the decrease in incidents in April-May of 2020. This is most likely due to students being switched from in-person learning to virtual learning in March 2020. Finally, one possible reason for the increase in suspensions from 2% to 28% during April 2021 as shown in Table 8 is that small groups of students began to return to in-person learning in April 2021.

Table 9 shows the mean number of days removed is higher for male students in every year except 2023 at the incident level. For two of the four years, Black students had the highest mean number of days removed from school as shown in years 2020 and 2022, while

White students had the highest mean number of days removed in 2021 and Hispanic students in 2023.

Table 9

Mean Days Removed by Race, Gender and Year at the Incident Level

	2020 Mean	2020 Std. Dev.	2021 Mean	2021 Std. Dev.	2022 Mean	2022 Std. Dev.	2023 Mean	2023 Std. Dev.	All Years Mean	All Years Std. Dev.
Black	2.05	1.559	1.90	1.399	2.45	2.687	2.28	2.293	2.60	3.007
Hispanic	1.65	1.082	1.55	.686	1.86	2.082	3.65	14.036	2.10	2.896
Other	1.75	1.125	2.40	1.517	1.99	3.334	1.82	1.943	2.32	2.841
White	1.71	.984	3.67	3.674	2.05	1.893	1.33	.707	2.30	3.420
Male	1.98	1.447	2.03	1.835	2.25	2.685	2.07	2.133	2.50	3.108
Female	1.87	1.421	1.94	1.241	2.33	2.440	2.84	8.226	2.43	2.861

Note. Mean calculated using IBM Statistics SPSS and data provided by school district

Table 10 shows the mean days removed from schools by the intersectionality of race and gender at the incident level. Black male students received a mean higher than white male students in three of the four years. Results from this table show that the mean days of suspensions for Black female students (2.56) are higher than White female (2.17), Hispanic Female (2.10), and female students categorized as Other (2.40) for all years.

Table 10

Mean Days Removed from School by the Intersectionality of Race/Ethnicity & Gender at the Incident Level

	2020 Mean	2020 Std. Dev.	2021 Mean	2021 Std. Dev.	2022 Mean	2022 Std. Dev.	2023 Mean	2023 Std. Dev.	All Years Mean	All Years Std. Dev.
Black Male	2.13	1.558	1.82	1.409	2.42	2.856	2.22	2.273	2.64	3.109
Black Female	1.83	1.553	2.06	1.389	2.50	2.431	2.34	2.329	2.56	2.850
Hispanic Male	1.57	1.207	1.70	.823	1.76	1.534	1.48	1.163	2.11	2.771
Hispanic Female	1.80	.789	1.40	.516	1.98	2.619	6.59	21.503	2.10	3.046
Other Male	1.13	.354	2.00	1.414	2.12	4.313	2.25	2.563	2.25	2.768
Other Female	2.38	1.302	4.00	---	1.84	1.717	1.30	.483	2.40	2.934
White Male	1.73	1.008	6.00	4.690	2.14	1.878	1.14	.378	2.38	4.150
White Female	1.60	.894	1.80	.837	1.90	1.922	2.00	1.414	2.17	1.872

Note. Mean calculated using IBM Statistics SPSS and data provided by school district

The Number of Unique Students Receiving Suspensions

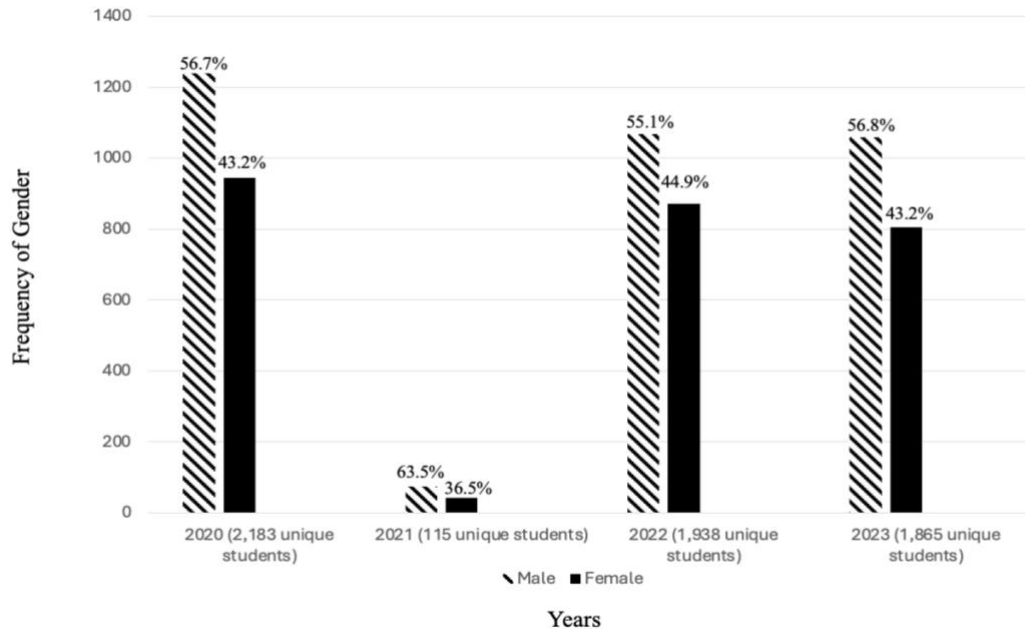
The first section of analysis analyzes all suspension incidents; however, a single student contributes to multiple records and there may be a relationship between the frequency of disciplinary action a student has received and lengths of removal. Within a student group, if certain individuals frequently receive suspension, their cases may inflate the group's overall suspension frequency and average suspension lengths, which brings challenges to the validity of the results. To address this concern, I combined the number of incidents for students who had more than one incident by taking the mean of the length of removals and created student level datasets that include background information and their average suspension days of each unique student. This was possible since each participant in the data set was given a unique identification code. Then, I conducted descriptive analysis on the

student level dataset to examine patterns of suspensions among students of different racial and gender groups.

Analyzing how often the various student demographics were receiving suspension days was important when looking at each unique student. Analyzing suspension data at student level, the findings indicated that the proportion of male students who had been suspended was 10% higher than that of their female counterparts across all four years as shown in Figure 1. The largest gap between the genders in Figure 1 was observed in the 2021 school year, where the proportion of male students who had been suspended was 26% higher than that of female students. This is the same year where most of the school year was virtual. This finding is consistent with findings from incident-level analyses.

Figure 1

Frequency of Gender Receiving Suspension Days Based on Unique ID for Students in Grades Six Through 12



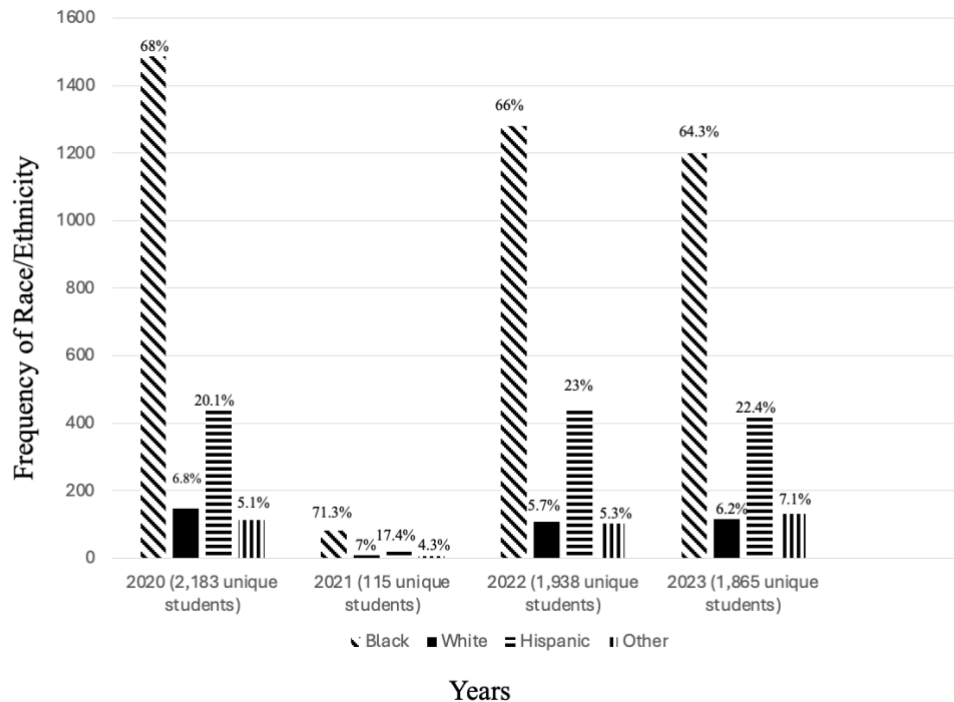
Note. Frequency calculated using IBM Statistics SPSS.

Figure 2 shows frequencies of each race group among students who have received

suspensions. The figure shows that Black students account for 68% among all students who had been suspended in 2020, 71.3% in 2021, 66% in 2022, and 64.3% in 2023. White students account for 6.8% among all students who have been suspended in 2020, 7% in 2021, 5.7% in 2022, and 6.2% in 2023. Black students are being suspended at a rate of .66/ .55 or 1:1 compared to White students' rate of .06/ .10, which makes it disproportionate.

Figure 2

Frequency of Race Receiving Suspension Days Based on Unique ID for Students in Grades Six Through 12



Note. Frequency calculated using IBM Statistics SPSS.

Up to this point I have focused on the patterns in terms of the number of incidents. However, another analysis allows for a look at the mean days removed from school by race and gender at the student level. Table 11 gives these findings, which indicate that Black students received a higher mean of days removed from school across all four years, except in

2021 during Covid-19 pandemic. Across all years, the mean suspension days for incidents involving Black students was 2.62 days, which was higher than that of White students (2.25 days) and Hispanic students (2.21 days). As with the other analyses, Table 11 shows male students had a higher mean in days removed from school (2.57 days) than female students (2.40 days) as they did with the number of incidents.

Table 11

Mean Days Removed by Gender, Race, and Year at the Student Level

	2020 Mean	2020 SD	2021 Mean	2021 SD	2022 Mean	2023 SD	2023 Mean	2023 SD	All Years Mean	All Years SD
Black	2.46	1.95	1.95	1.43	2.54	2.27	3.20	4.295	2.62	2.76
Hispanic	2.04	1.51	1.55	.68	1.82	1.51	2.86	6.37	2.21	4.16
Other	2.07	1.23	2.40	1.51	2.19	4.56	3.15	4.30	2.46	3.20
White	1.89	.908	4.00	3.77	2.05	1.76	2.89	4.47	2.25	2.90
Male	2.42	2.04	2.06	1.88	2.38	2.57	3.11	4.84	2.57	3.46
Female	2.19	1.39	2.01	1.27	2.27	1.907	3.09	4.85	2.40	2.75

Note. Mean calculated using IBM Statistics SPSS and data provided by school district

Table 12 shows the mean days removed from schools by the intersectionality of race and gender at the student level. Results from this table show that the mean days of suspension involving Black female students (2.52 days) are higher than those for White female (1.96 days), Hispanic female students (2.16 days), and even White male (2.45 days) and Hispanic male students (2.26 days). It is also noted that in some years the mean suspension days of Black female is comparable or higher than that of Black Male.

Table 12

Mean Days Removed from School by the Intersectionality of Race/Ethnicity & Gender at the Student Level

	2020 Mean	2020 SD.	2021 Mean	2021 SD	2022 Mean	2022 SD	2023 Mean	2023 SD	All Years Mean	All Years SD
Black Male	2.59	2.25	1.85	1.43	2.61	2.52	3.22	4.51	2.70	3.18
Black Female	2.28	1.40	2.17	1.44	2.46	1.91	3.18	4.01	2.52	2.12
Hispanic Male	2.06	1.58	1.70	.823	1.74	.970	2.93	6.03	2.26	4.03
Hispanic Female	2.02	1.435	1.40	.516	1.91	1.973	2.77	6.843	2.16	4.324
Other Male	1.91	.951	2.00	1.41	2.55	6.126	2.71	1.964	2.49	3.875
Other Female	2.26	1.51	4.00	—	1.79	1.367	3.69	6.037	2.42	2.123
White Male	1.98	.986	6.00	4.690	2.11	1.806	3.09	5.357	2.45	3.628
White Female	1.76	.778	2.00	.816	1.94	1.713	2.49	1.618	1.96	1.975

Note. Data provided by the school district. During the 2021 school year there was only one female and one male student in the Other category.

Results of Multiple Linear Regression

Descriptive analyses on both incident-level and student-level data provide a comprehensive understanding of the patterns of school suspension. I then conducted multiple linear regression analysis to address the three research questions. The associations between the independent variables (IVs) and the dependent variable (DV) were examined. Multiple regression was chosen for the hypothesis testing since it analyzes the relationship of a numerical dependent variable with a set of independent variables. The level of significance was set at .05. Two sets of multiple regression models were conducted as indicated by Model 1 and Model 2. Model 1 represents the analysis of average suspension duration by a student's gender and race independently. Model 2 represents the analysis of average length of being removed from school by the intersectionality of a student's gender and race. I performed the

analysis for all years combined as well as for each individual year. Results are summarized in Tables 13-16 for each individual year and Table 17 for all years combined.

Results from Table 13 show that in 2020, Black students have 0.611 more days removed than the referenced group (White male students), a statistically significant effect, $p = .003$. Being both black and female was associated with -0.092 additional days removed. In other words, Black female students have received 0.092 days less than Black male students, 2.284 more days ($1.987 - 0.222 + 0.611 - 0.092$) than White male students, and 2.506 more days than White female students. Results from Table 14 show that in 2021 (the year was impacted by Covid-19), Black students have 2.055 less days removed than White students, but when you factor in the intersectionality of gender and race, Black female students have 4.318 more days removed than Black male students. Table 15, which shows the results from 2022 indicate that Black male students have .500 more days removed than White male students, and when you include the intersectionality of gender and race, Black female students have .027 more days removed than the Black male students, an effect that is larger than the effects of female on Other category. The results from 2023, as shown in Table 16, are similar in that Black students have more days removed than the constant variable, Hispanic students, or students categorized as Other with .315. The intersectionality of race and gender shows Black female students having .559 more days removed than Black boys, 0.609 more days than White boys, and 1,215 more days than White female students.

Table 13

The relationship between gender, race and average length of being removed for 2,183 unique students in 2020

	<i>Model 1</i>				<i>Model 2</i>		
	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err</i>	<i>P> z </i>		<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>	<i>P> z </i>
<i>Intercept</i>	<i>1.986</i>	<i>.152</i>	<i><.001</i>	<i>Intercept</i>	<i>1.987</i>	<i>.194</i>	<i><.001</i>
<i>Female</i>	<i>-.218</i>	<i>.077</i>	<i>.005</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>-.222</i>	<i>.300</i>	<i>.460</i>
<i>Black</i>	<i>.573</i>	<i>.155</i>	<i><.001</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>.611</i>	<i>.204</i>	<i>.003</i>
<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>.162</i>	<i>.171</i>	<i>.343</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>.078</i>	<i>.227</i>	<i>.733</i>
<i>Other</i>	<i>.180</i>	<i>.224</i>	<i>.423</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>-.070</i>	<i>.297</i>	<i>.814</i>
				<i>Female*Black</i>	<i>-.092</i>	<i>.314</i>	<i>.771</i>
				<i>Female*Hispanic</i>	<i>.178</i>	<i>.345</i>	<i>.606</i>
				<i>Female*Other</i>	<i>.571</i>	<i>.453</i>	<i>.207</i>

Note. Analysis calculated using IBM Statistics SPSS

Table 14

The relationship between gender, race and Average Length of Being Removed for 115 Unique Students in 2021

	<i>Model 1</i>			<i>Model 2</i>			
	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err</i>	<i>P> z </i>		<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>	<i>P> z </i>
<i>Intercept</i>	4.041	.590	<.001	<i>Intercept</i>	6.000	.760	<.001
<i>Female</i>	-.082	.316	.795	<i>Female</i>	-4.000	1.075	<.001
<i>Black</i>	-2.055	.598	<.001	<i>Black</i>	-4.145	.787	<.001
<i>Hispanic</i>	-2.450	.673	<.001	<i>Hispanic</i>	-4.300	.900	<.001
<i>Other</i>	-1.625	.922	.081	<i>Other</i>	-4.000	1.075	<.001
				<i>Female*Black</i>	4.318	1.133	<.001
				<i>Female*Hispanic</i>	3.700	1.272	.004
				<i>Female*Other</i>	6.000	2.012	.004

Note. Analysis calculated using IBM Statistics SPSS

Table 15

The relationship between gender, race and Average Length of Being Removed for 1,938

Unique Students in 2022

	<i>Model 1</i>				<i>Model 2</i>		
	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err</i>	<i>P> z </i>		<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>	<i>P> z </i>
<i>Intercept</i>	2.094	.222	<.001	<i>Intercept</i>	2.118	.277	<.001
<i>Female</i>	-.106	.104	.308	<i>Female</i>	-.172	.451	.703
<i>Black</i>	.500	.228	.028	<i>Black</i>	.492	.290	.090
<i>Hispanic</i>	-.220	.244	.368	<i>Hispanic</i>	-.370	.313	.237
	<i>Model 1</i>				<i>Model 2</i>		
	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err</i>	<i>P> z </i>		<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>	<i>P> z </i>
<i>Other</i>	.155	.314	.620	<i>Other</i>	.433	.414	.295
				<i>Female*</i>	.027	.469	.954
				<i>Black</i>			
				<i>Female*</i>	.341	.501	.496
				<i>Hispanic</i>			
				<i>Female*</i>	-.584	.638	.360
				<i>Other</i>			

Note. Analysis calculated using IBM Statistics SPSS

Table 16*The relationship between gender, race and Average Length of Being Removed for 1,865**Unique Students in 2023*

	<i>Model 1</i>			<i>Model 2</i>			
	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err</i>	<i>P> z </i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>	<i>P> z </i>	
<i>Intercept</i>	2.095	.455	<.001	<i>Intercept</i>	3.097	.549	<.001
<i>Female</i>	-.031	.227	.893	<i>Female</i>	-.606	.952	.524
		<i>Model 1</i>			<i>Model 2</i>		
	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err</i>	<i>P> z </i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>	<i>P> z </i>	
<i>Black</i>	.315	.471	.503	<i>Black</i>	.131	.581	.822
<i>Hispanic</i>	-.027	.508	.958	<i>Hispanic</i>	-.165	.632	.794
<i>Other</i>	.264	.617	.669	<i>Other</i>	-.379	.790	.631
				<i>Female*</i>	.559	.993	.574
				<i>Black</i>			
				<i>Female*</i>	.449	1.066	.674
				<i>Hispanic</i>			
				<i>Female*</i>	1.585	1.276	.214
				<i>Other</i>			

Note. Analysis calculated using IBM Statistics SPSS

Table 17*The relationship between gender, race and Average Length of Being Removed for 4,608**Unique students across all four years*

	<i>Model 1</i>			<i>Model 2</i>			
	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err</i>	<i>P> z </i>	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>Std. Err.</i>	<i>P> z </i>	
<i>Intercept</i>	2.330	.186	<.001	<i>Intercept</i>	2.458	.237	<.001
<i>Female</i>	-.179	.094	.057	<i>Female</i>	-.493	.372	.185
<i>Black</i>	.373	.191	.051	<i>Black</i>	.249	.249	.317
<i>Hispanic</i>	-.031	.207	.883	<i>Hispanic</i>	-.194	.272	.476
<i>Other</i>	.213	.263	.419	<i>Other</i>	.033	.348	.924
				<i>Female*Black</i>	.307	.389	.430
				<i>Female*Hispanic</i>	.393	.421	.351
				<i>Female*Other</i>	.431	.533	.419

Note. Analysis calculated using IBM Statistics SPSS

The first research question was if and to what extent, is there a difference between gender of student and the length of days removed from school for students in grades six through 12. The results of the multiple linear regression that did not include interaction terms showed that the length of suspension days for female students was on average 0.493 days shorter than male students for students in grades six through 12, a marginally statistically significant effect, $p = .057$. When looking at individual years, female was associated with 0.08-0.22 less suspension days than male students. Among them, the year 2020 also showed a largest effect with 0.22 less days with a $p = .005$.

The second research question was if and to what extent, is there a statistical difference

between the race of the student and the length of days removed from school for students in grades six through 12. The results showed that race was significantly associated with the length of days removed for students in grades six through 12 received. In 2020 Black students received .573 more suspension days than their counterparts, and in 2022 Blacks received .500 suspension days than their counterparts. Additionally, the findings from 2023 showed that Black students received .315 days more than their counterparts.

The final research question examined whether the intersectionality of race and gender predicted the length of days removed for students in grades six through 12. Across all four years, being both Black and female appears to be associated with a 0.307 day more suspension, $p = .430$. Looking at each individual year, Black female students received .092 less days than their Black male counterparts in 2020, while Hispanic female students received .078 days more and Other female students received .070 days less than their counterparts in the same year. The results from 2022 indicate the Black female students received .027 more days than their counterparts. Years 2021 and 2023 showed Other female students receiving more days than their counterparts. While the results show that female students generally receive fewer suspension days than male students, they also indicate that there is value in conducting an intersectional analysis because on average Black female students received more suspension days than Black male students for most of the years in the study.

Summary of Results

The analyses in this study were meant to study the relationship between gender, race, and length of days removed from school. Suspension data came from a midwestern school district in the United States. Descriptive analyses were used to explore the number of

suspension incidents by gender, race, year, and month as well as examining the number of unique children who were removed from school along with the mean number of days they were removed. Inferential statistics were used to examine the intersection of race and gender and the association with the length of days being removed through multiple regression analyses. The final chapter will discuss the findings, how this study adds to the existing research, and implications for school districts.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This final chapter gives an overview of the study, discussion of findings and recommendations for schools. Finally, suggestions for future research are discussed, and a summary of the analyses. It should be noted that discussions and implications for the study are discussed through a lens of QuantCRIT. This section gives recommendations and implications for students, school leaders, and school districts. The chapter wraps up with suggestions for future research.

Overview of the Study

Schools continue to see a loss of academic instruction due to the removal of students for disciplinary issues (Slate, 2016). The discipline gap based on gender and the discipline gap based on race continue to widen. Earlier studies (OCR, 2019; OCR 2022) showed that the demographics with the smaller percentage of enrollment received the larger percentages of suspensions resulting in a great loss of academic instruction. Most studies in the field of school discipline have only focused on the impact of race on school discipline or the impact of gender on school discipline. Therefore, the main focus of this study was to examine how the intersectionality of race and gender is associated with student discipline outcome and offer recommendations to schools and/or school systems for equitable student outcomes.

The findings of the study were organized in three parts. The first part of the analysis focused on descriptive patterns of suspension incidents by gender, grade-level, race. The second section offers an in-depth look at unique students who received suspensions as well as an examination of the mean number of suspensions days assigned by race and gender was also conducted. The third part was multiple regression analyses which examined the

intersectionality of race and gender. Discussion of the findings are given through a lens of QuantCrit.

Discussion of Findings

As mentioned in the Review of Literature, several earlier studies focused on the discipline gap by gender (McFadden et al., 1992; Shaw and Braden, 1990; Skiba et al., 2002; Taylor and Foster, 1986). However, it was still important to begin this study by examining gender and school discipline as a means for grounding the study to look at the impact that school discipline has on the intersectionality of gender and race. Unfortunately, this study showed that there is still a significant gender gap when it comes to school discipline. We first analyzed suspension incidents by gender. Across all four years, male students had more suspension incidents than female students. Study after study (Cooper et. al, 2022; Foster, 2007; Goyer et. al, 2019; Morris, 2005) showed that boys disproportionately have more suspension incidents than girls. However, these studies focus on the assignment of the suspension. This study adds to the body of research by going one step further and examining the length of days removed from school by gender and then later by race. When examining a comparison of the length of days removed from school by gender, we find across all four years male students had a mean of 2.57 days removed from school, and female students had a mean of 2.40 days removed from school. The findings also indicated that race is a significant factor in the length of days removed from school. Prior studies, such as the CDF's 1975 study noted that at least 22 school districts suspended one-third or one-half of its Black students. The findings from this study based on unique students indicate that in all years, except 2021 more than 50% of Black students who were enrolled in the district were suspended, and the highest percentage of Black students being suspended was 59% in 2020. The literature

discussed how much instruction time is lost when a student is removed from learning, and Black students have held the largest percentage of removal since the CDF issued their report in 1975 as well as more recent studies by other researchers (Nguyyen, 2019 & Welch and Payne, 2010). The findings from this study are similar to the previously mentioned studies. Three of the four years showed that Black students had a higher average of days removed from school than other races, which leads to a significant loss of instruction as Arcia (2000) stated.

Perhaps, the most striking finding centers around the intersectionality of race and gender with school discipline. Schooling for Black girls has not been easy since the first slaves arrived in what is now known as the United States. Black girls account for a significantly higher percentage among students who have been suspended than other intersectional groups of girls. It is important to remember that some of the studies mentioned in chapter two discuss Black girls being suspended for things like the way they wear their hair or the way they dress. This can be attributed to their unique intersectional identity since studies do not show that other races of girls are suspended for similar infractions.

Additionally, across all four years the intersectionality of race and gender had a significant impact on the length of days removed. Only during one year were the average days removed for Black girls less than two days, and the average that year was 1.97 days. A student's race/ethnicity and their gender should not be a hindrance to ensuring that they not only receive a quality education but that they are also equipped with the tools needed to advocate on behalf of themselves and others. The analysis of the literature on how discipline has changed over the years for Black girls (Anderson, 1988; Clark Hine & Thompson, 1998; King, 2011) as well as an analysis of the literature on the discipline gap for Black girls

(Gordon et al., 1999; Morris, 2016; NAACP, 2005; Richie, 2012; Slate et al., 2016) showing a large disproportionality with Black girls receiving more exclusionary practices than their counterparts confirms that there is still lot of work to do in our schools.

Recommendations for Schools

Originally intended for the criminal justice system, Restorative Justice practices have made their ways to schools. Restorative Justice in schools is meant to counteract the impact that zero tolerance practices have on schools, but they do not have to be used solely to combat zero tolerance policies. Restorative Justice in schools as a non-punitive way to handle various types of conflict (Fronius et al., 2016). Restorative justice practices in schools may serve well in decreasing the pushout of Black girls from academic spaces as noted by Morris (2016). There are a variety of programs that schools are using under the umbrella of restorative justice. The main concepts of restorative justice are to have a fair process, fostering a desire for growth, community support, empathy, and reflection of self.

Restorative community practices have been used school-wide to build culture based on a shared vision of respect, inclusion, tolerance, and they can help to lower the number of incidents of harm being done to students (Sumner et al., 2010). Schools must first establish a culture where norms have been set by both students and staff together, an emphasis on building relationships, and restorative conversations are held. When there is a disruption to that culture, perhaps a fight between students, that is when restorative justice practices can help. Restorative justice is not about punishing students, it is about repairing the harm that was done to those involved and the community since the community was disrupted. When implementing restorative justice practices it is more than just holding those who offended accountable and dishing out a punishment; it is about helping them take responsibility and

understand the impact that their actions had on others and themselves (Schiff, 2018). This is an opportunity to make students feel that they are truly an important part of the community.

By empowering youth to be responsible for their own actions and its resultant impacts, restorative justice offers students a means to build empathy, earn redemption and rebuild their dignity through mature reparation of harm. This distinction between passively accepting punishment and actively assuming responsibility for behavior is at the heart of what distinguishes restorative accountability from retributive punishment. (Schiff, 2018, p. 126)

Evans et al. (2013) outline seven principles that frame restorative justice practices. The first principle centers around the idea that some behaviors students exhibit are due to their needs not being met, so the focus is on meeting the needs of the students, not on giving them what someone thinks they deserve for a particular behavior. Evans et al. (2013) communicate the focus of the second principle which is on helping students be accountable for the harm they have done, while providing them support at the same time. Principles three and four have to do with repairing harm and viewing the incident as a learning opportunity (Evans et al., 2013). It can be an opportunity for the teacher to learn more about their students as well as an opportunity for the students to learn more about themselves and their peers. Principles five and six build on the previous principles that use situations to build healthy learning communities and restore relationships by truly understanding what has happened, the needs of all who were involved (students and/or staff), and how to address the harm that was done (Evans et al., 2013). Finally, Evans et al. (2013), state that restorative justice practices address power imbalances in that it causes us to look deeply at the systems that we (schools) have in place that are continuing to perpetuate harm and injustice.

Restorative community practices could have a positive effect on students in schools that are feeling pushed out.

Limitations

The data was a convenient sample from one school district, which is not a representation of all school districts in the greater metropolitan area. Another limitation is that the data set does not include information on students who did not receive a suspension assigned to them. This prevents us from examining whether and how the intersectionality of student background is associated with the likelihood of receiving a suspension. However, this does not diminish the value of the study. This study examines the inequalities in school disciplinary outcomes from another perspective. It focuses on the frequency and duration of suspensions and how they are associated with the intersectionality of student background. The data was collected from a relatively large sample in an understudied area for a four-year period of time, which offers some unique features that aid in the study. The descriptive analyses at both incident-level and student-level provide a comprehensive analysis of the suspension patterns.

Suggestions for Future Research

One suggestion for future research is investigating all students. Such an investigation would include students who have suspensions and students who do not have suspensions.

Further research should be undertaken to investigate the impact of the intersectionality of gender, race, and socioeconomic status on school discipline. It would be interesting to see if the findings would be similar for Black female students who are on free or reduced lunch. A research question that could be explored is analyzing whether or how the patterns differ across different types of suspension. According to Morris (2016) some

demographics of students are suspended for reasons that other students are not suspended for. An additional suggestion for future research would be to examine the impact of COVID-19 on school discipline. The school suspension numbers were so vastly different the year when school was virtual. It would be interesting to see what, if any, additional impacts that COVID-19 may have had on school discipline. To develop a full picture of intersectionality of gender and race on school discipline additional studies will be needed that examine patterns of suspensions among the students who have the highest number of suspensions and whether race and gender influence the distribution of these high-frequency suspension cases. In further research, the examination of these questions could be a means of providing a more comprehensive understanding of suspension policies and their potential disparities.

Finally, the last suggestion for future research is to examine the social emotional impact of school suspensions on students in grades six through 12. As students are pushed out from school more often a look at the impact on their social emotional well-being is necessary. Over the past decade, the footage on social media from cell phone recordings of Black girls being violently taken out of class or school, and many had suspensions or expulsions that followed shortly thereafter has not gone unnoticed. Reporters from both The New York Times and NBC News (2015) reported on a South Carolina police officer who grabbed a Black girl by the neck, flipped the desk over she was sitting in, and dragged her across the floor. The video shows the student sitting at the desk and not making any gestures towards the officer. The Sheriff's Department reported that they had been called to the school because a student had been disruptive in class and refused to leave class after she had been asked to give up her cell phone (Faussett & Southall 2015; Stelloh & Connor, 2015). The student was charged with disturbing school, but the charges were later dropped. The officer

was fired but was not charged with any criminal action. To thoroughly understand the social emotional impact that the removal from school has on Black girls or other intersectional groups it is essential to contextualize this quagmire through a lens of QuantCrit in future studies.

Conclusion

Several states in the United States are trying to implement more non-exclusionary practices. States have been looking at how social emotional learning can impact student behaviors in schools, and they are finding that with more support in the area of social emotional learning it is a benefit to all students. Equity and inclusion must not only show up in the teaching practices in classrooms, but they should also show up in our disciplinary practices.

There are several guiding principles of trauma-informed educational practices: creating a safe environment, making sure there are peer supports, having culturally responsive practices, positive interactions and supporting individual learners (Cavanugh, 2016). Aguilar (2020) contends that school leaders must be culturally competent in their own identities and others as well as be in tune with the emotions of the students and staff they serve if they are to truly create schools where equity exists.

When you think about the achievement of children it is more than just a set of test scores. One must consider the personal, social, cultural, and ethnic performances as well as the students' academic performance (Gay, 2002). School leaders play a pivotal role in how school discipline is handled. As a school leader you must be able to see how your actions, beliefs, and the systems you have in place affect the students in your school. It is critical that school leaders push against the status quo sometimes. Anyone who has benefitted from the

status quo will find adjusting to change even more challenging because it means taking away some of the privilege you have been afforded (Kumanshiro, 2015). To evoke change we must be willing to leave our comfort zone.

EPILOGUE

The research done with this study caused me to reflect on my own practices as a school administrator. When working with the students at my school as a vice principal and now principal I found that I was asking myself the decisions I was making as a school administrator were continuing the pushout of students from educational spaces, especially Black girls. I found myself looking more into trauma smart training as a way to understand and assist the students I worked with because I thought if I could assist with the root causes of the behaviors then I could possibly impact and support students in building the tools they need to self-regulate. This work has not been easy as both a grad student and as an educator who was trying to put into practice the learnings I accumulated along the way. However, it has been rewarding. I can truly say that I believe that I am now a better school administrator because of the research done in this study.

APPENDIX

IRB APPROVAL



Institutional Review Board
University of Missouri-Kansas City

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June 17, 2024

Principal Investigator: Huang Wu
Department: Educ Ldrshp, Policy & Fndation

Your IRB Application to project entitled "The Impact of the Intersectionality of Race and Gender on School Discipline" was reviewed and determined to qualify for IRB exemption according to the terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	2107666
IRB Review Number	415915
Initial Application Approval Date	June 17, 2024
IRB Expiration Date	N/A
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Exempt
Exempt Categories	45 CFR 46.104(d)(4)ii
Risk Level	Minimal Risk
HIPAA Category	No HIPAA

Approved Documents

- Sample Data Collection Sheet
- Request for Data form from the School District

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the determination:

1. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the determination date.
2. Changes that may affect the exempt determination must be submitted for confirmation prior to implementation utilizing the Exempt Amendment Form.
3. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.
4. When the project is complete the study can be closed by submitting the Exempt Closure Form in eCompliance. In order to close the project all human subjects research procedures must be complete, this is described as all recruitment and data collection has been completed and the project is limited to data analysis on de-identified data.

If you are offering subject payments and would like more information about research participant payments, please click here to view the UM system Policy on Research Subject Payments: https://www.umsystem.edu/oei/sharedservices/apss/nonpo_vouchers/research_subject_payments

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB at 816-235-5927 or umkcirb@umkc.edu.

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VITA

Anika D. Williams graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education in July 1995 from Lincoln University (MO). She returned to her hometown and began her career as a fifth-grade teacher with one of the local school districts. spent most of her career as an elementary and middle school teacher. In 2010 she earned the prestigious Milken Educator Award. In 2020 she accepted a position as an instructional coach with another school. It was during this time that she earned her Master of Arts in Educational Administration from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. At the end of her second year as an instructional coach she became an assistant principal and began her work towards earning her Doctor in Education Degree.

Anika Williams is proud of the work she has done and continues to do in the field of education. She is currently an elementary school principal.