

DIFFERENCES IN DISCIPLINE: ANALYSIS OF TEXAS SCHOOL DISCIPLINE ACTIONS
FOR BLACK FEMALES

by

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to examine disproportionate disciplinary rates among Black girls and whether the disproportionality impacts reading achievement in comparison to White girls in Texas urban and suburban public schools, Grades 3–9, in the 2015-2018 academic years. To determine the extent to which inequities were present in the assignment of disciplinary actions for Black girls, the author used data from the Texas Education Agency’s (TEA) Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). The data included all female students enrolled in Texas public schools who received some form of disciplinary action in the 2015–2018 academic school years. Specifically, the author examined the impact of disciplinary actions for all girls in Texas urban and suburban districts Grades 3–9.

This researcher addressed the inequities in disciplinary actions and suggested a framework to assist teachers and administrators in bridging the gap in educational programming and policies. Moreover, research was synthesized on racial and ethnic patterns in school sanctions and how disproportionate disciplinary actions contributed to achievement gaps for Black girls in comparison to White girls.

For this research, a quantitative approach was developed using chi-square and logistic regression methods for data analysis. This researcher found the independent variable, race/ethnicity, to be statistically significant when predicting the odds a school will discipline above the average rate within the sample. At every grade level, higher percentages of discipline assignments were received by Black girls than by White girls for all three academic years 2015-2018 throughout Texas urban and suburban school districts. Further results showed disciplinary actions are associated with not meeting reading achievement standards even after controlling for economically disadvantaged status differences between students. This researcher also suggests intersectionality theory to assist teachers and administrators in bridging the gap in education programming and policies.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to
My parents, Robert L. and Narcise Williams
My daughter, Jasmine D. Moore
My niece, Jordyn D. Mattison

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Researchers have well documented prominent Black women such as Sojourner Truth and Ida B. Wells as integral forces in advancing the literacy campaign in educating enslaved and freed people (Crenshaw & Bonis, 2005; Crenshaw & Dill, 2009). Their robust attempt to make people informed focused on how the power of literacy could positively affect those who are most marginalized in society (Crenshaw & Dill, 2009). However, despite their historical prominence, many researchers argue Black girls continue to experience marginalization in education (Bennett, 2003; Camp, 2004; Franklin & Moss, 2011; Gaspar & Hine, 1996; Giddings, 1984; R. K. Harrison, 2009; Kolchin, 1993; Lerner, 1973; J. L. Morgan, 2004; Sterling, 1984; Takaki, 1993). Furthermore, literature reveals researchers fail to examine and conceptualize the dichotomous challenges of race and gender Black girls face daily within educational institutions (Boston & Baxley, 2007; Mirza, 2009; Pinder, 2014). For instance, Lorde argues Black girls often are made to choose between their race or gender uniqueness—rather than embracing both—thus denying them the opportunity to embrace their “multiplicities of self” (as cited in Ricks, 2014, p. 14). When researchers examine marginalized groups in education, the feminist focus is almost exclusively on White girls, with very little attention given to the unique experiences and challenges of Black girls (Boston & Baxley, 2007; Mirza, 2009; Pinder, 2008). In the book, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, Hull and Smith (1982) assert *Black* is regularly equated with Black men and *woman* is commonly equated with White women. Such commonalities perpetuate the inability of Black men and White women to recognize and concede their oppression of Black women and girls and

their unique needs. Because of this, Black women and girls were and still are an invisible group whose existence and uniqueness are overlooked and disregarded by much of society (Hull & Smith, 1982). According to Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010),

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

Reducing Black girls to the margins raises the question of whether Black girls' unique needs are ignored, specifically at the intersection of their race and gender?

Moreover, in establish an understanding of the educational struggles of Black women and girls, one must begin with history. Like other facets of history, education has not been free from racism and sexism (Collier-Thomas, 1982). Black girls and women have had to share discrimination and deprivation with Black boys and men that delineate their sojourn from slavery to freedom (Collier-Thomas, 1982). As previously noted, Black women and girls were often juxtaposed with White women and girls' legal rights to accessing educational institutions within the United States. Although many of the marginalized struggles relating to Black and White girls and women, and Black boys and men are similar, historical and modern battles of Black women and girls have their own unique struggles, particularly in educational inequities.

Historically, challenges and struggles for education began when antebellum slaves risked their lives to learn to read and write (Collier-Thomas, 1982). Under slave laws, if it was discovered slaves were being taught how to read and write, they were fined, lynched, hung, raped (both women and men), whipped, and brutalized for defiance or perceived transgressions (Cornelius, 1983). According to Cornelius (1983), slave illiteracy was considered necessary for

the security and benefit of the slave owner to ensure authority over their slaves. Nonetheless, slaves discovered ways to teach themselves and others how to read. Slaves often went as far as establishing hidden schools in pits they dug into the ground to ensure safety from their slave owners. For example, Mathilda Taylor, an enslaved woman, formed a secret school from approximately 1850 to 1860, teaching slave and freed Black children in her Savannah, Georgia home at a time when it was forbidden to do so (S. R. Wright, 2008).

After the abolishment of slavery in 1865, in order to further oppress Black education, Andrew Judson, a local politician and judge assisted in passing a resolution stating the education of Black girls would damage “the persons, property, and reputations of our citizens” (Ferris, 1913, p. 723). This resolution was one example of the views of many Whites, which held that the colored people can never rise from their common condition in our country; they ought not to be permitted to rise here. They are an inferior race of beings, and never can or ought to be recognized as the equals of the Whites. (Irons, 2002, p. 6)

Even after abolishing slavery in 1865 (National Archive, 2016), racism remained rampant by law in the United States. To combat racism, the U.S. government enacted the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and founded organizations such as the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2020) in 1965. In addition, there was the *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) ruling overturning the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Plessy vs. Ferguson*’s (1896) separate but equal doctrine in American education, housing, and other public institutions. Indeed, this was considered by many to be a significant victory for Blacks seeking equity and justice in the educational system (Ricks, 2014). Unfortunately, decades following these provisions and laws, Black girls remain underrepresented and most affected by the oppression of institutionalized

prejudice and discrimination and continue to fight the same battle of demanding educational equity (N. Wolf, 2016).

Contemporarily, in absence of slave owners, policymakers maintain power and control setting zero-tolerance discipline policies—a harsh predefined mandatory practice irrespective of offense or behavior (Wun, 2016). Liburd (2017) proposed the correlation of established power and control and use of zero-tolerance methods within public schools is very similar to how White America oppressed people of color, which resulted in long-term cycles of inequality. Today, established control (i.e., policy, laws, statutes) encourages a cunning fear—much like the fears of slave owners—that Blacks will overtake America. This fear persuades society to support laws which *fight crime* through zero-tolerance policies (Wun, 2016). To illustrate, Delpit (1988) argued there is an established control of power within the United States educational system where—what type of behavior is acceptable. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault (1975/1977) argued modern society is a disciplinary society, that is, power in today’s society is primarily exercised through discipline in a variety of institutions (i.e., prisons, jails, schools). He further asserted the archetypal power and practices of punishment depend on the knowledge that often forms and classifies marginalized individuals within society (Foucault, 1975/1977). This author argues these *disciplinary means*, geared increasingly toward Black girls, are disproportionate compared to White girls in public schools. Furthermore, those excessive disciplinary practices are a form of modern-day control, enforced by White teachers and policymakers, to ensure established power is sustained.

Research Problem

The experiences of Black girls in public schools and society have received inadequate attention, specifically, how disproportionate disciplinary sanctions might adversely impact their

daily lives (J. F. Gregory, 1997; Raffaele Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2002). Moreover, existing research and public policy debates fail to report the degree to which Black girls' experiences are both similar to and different from those experienced by Black boys and non-Black girls within their peer group (Crenshaw et al., 2015). However, in recent years research has increased focus on Black females. To illustrate, "at the 2012 UCLA School of Law Symposium, *Overpoliced and Underprotected: Women, Race, and Criminalization*, formerly incarcerated women, researchers, lawyers," and activists came together to discuss the disturbing "patterns of surveillance," increased criminalization, and incarceration Black women and girls experience daily (Crenshaw et al., 2015, p. 5). The symposium was a discussion about the specific concerns of race and gender in connection "to zero-tolerance policies, social marginalization," achievement gaps, "and criminalization" of Black girls in public schools across the United States (p. 5). A salient problem revealed during the symposium was that zero-tolerance policy has created disproportionate disciplinary practices by administration and educators toward Black girls. For example, it was revealed that as early as preschool, Black girls represent only 20% of enrollment; however, 54% of these girls receive an out-of-school suspension, expulsion, or juvenile detention due to unintended consequences of ad absurdum zero-tolerance policies (McEachin, 2018). Despite this revelation, administrators and educators in favor of zero-tolerance policies continue to support the notion that by removing "disruptive" students, teaching and learning become more productive (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008).

By examining the discipline experiences of Black girls in comparison to White girls, the author hopes to expand the conversation of racial inequality in U.S. public educational institutions. The author also hopes to highlight how race and gender biases along with

disproportionate discipline affect the inequality of academic achievement for Black girls. Inevitably, this study will reveal the fallacy of equity toward Black girls in Texas public schools.

Significance of the Study

During the 2015 Congressional Black Caucus's annual legislative conference, President Barack Obama criticized the high rate of school suspensions for Black girls (Rao, 2015). He acknowledged several studies showing Black girls are suspended six times more often than White girls (White House, 2015b). President Obama said, "Black women have been a part of every great movement in American history, even if they were not always given a voice" (White House, 2015a, para. 1). He added, "although in these discussions, a lot of my focus has been on Black boys and men and the work we are doing with *My Brother's Keeper*, we cannot forget the impact that the system has on women and girls, as well" (V. Williams, 2015, para. 11). It is a fact that zero-tolerance policies have been a primary impetus for reasons the disparate discipline and incarceration rate for Black women and girls are twice as high as the rate for White women and girls (White House, 2015b).

Although President Obama's speech described the persistent challenges Black girls face daily, he presented no detailed effort to address those challenges as he and his administration did with *My Brother's Keeper* for at-risk boys of color (White House, 2014). Instead, the President pointed to policies, programs, and legislation his administration was already pursuing that promised to work with Black lawmakers to pass criminal justice reforms. For instance, he continued his ongoing agenda encouraging Black girls to study STEM fields. Although encouraging, his agenda was a one-size-fits-all solution, disregarding other unique challenges and experiences Black girls endure that are different from Black boys.

Therefore, this study's significance was to explore the experiences of Black girls in the classroom that are lost within the existing literature on Black boys or Black students. The researcher aimed to relate the use of intersectionality theory in the hope it could contribute to eradicating those challenges imposed by policies such as zero-tolerance discipline and be referenced for future policy. Intersectionality theory was developed to address race and gender identity and the potential for discrimination toward Black girls in public schools. Moreover, the results of this study will contribute nationally to the improvement of equality in education in public schools by encouraging policymakers, law enforcement, and administrators to be mindful of intersectional awareness, the perception of threat, and stereotypical myths. The results of this study could ensure those individuals understand that race, simultaneously intersecting with gender, makes Black girls more vulnerable than any other race of girls in their peer group. Finally, this study aims to encourage White teachers in the public education system to adopt a more effective teaching strategy. This awareness will benefit all students—especially Black girls—by acknowledging there is no one-size-fits-all approach to Black women and girls' unique challenges within the U.S. educational system.

Purpose Statement

Texas's benchmark model of zero-tolerance discipline practices has dramatically impacted the U.S. educational system. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002) was based primarily on House Bill 22, which was created to hold schools and districts accountable for student performance on standardized assessment tests and student dropout rates (TEA, 2019a). Based on Fitzhugh's (2011) claim regarding Texas's tough on crime and overzealous zero-tolerance discipline reputation, the author feels it is appropriate to research disproportionate disciplinary rates of public schools in the State of Texas. This author believes pressure on

schools to raise standardized test scores under No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002) is similar to zero-tolerance policies for student misbehavior. That is, they both motivate schools to push marginalized or at-risk children out of school entirely (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Black girls adversely affected by these policies are more likely to engage in behaviors that bring them in contact with the juvenile—and later, adult criminal—justice systems (Klehr, 2009). Moreover, zero-tolerance policies have levied a disproportionate percentage of school infractions against Black girls in public school Grades 3–9. It is this discrepancy of disparate disciplinary assignments between Black and White girls that sparked the researcher’s curiosity.

The purpose of this study was to examine disproportionate disciplinary rates among Black girls and whether the disproportionality impacts reading achievement in comparison to White girls in Texas urban and suburban public schools, Grades 3–9, in the 2015-2018 academic years. More specifically, the intent is to address the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between Black girls’ disproportionate discipline rates in Texas public schools, Grades 3–9, in comparison to White girls in their peer group?
2. What effects do disproportionate discipline rates have on academic achievement levels for Black girls in 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 academic years?

Theoretical Framework

Legislation geared towards reforming youth violence, specifically zero-tolerance policies, mandated automatic expulsion of students from public schools for possessing weapons and drugs (Sughrue, 2003). However, many schools have since broadened the scope of the legislation, including automatic suspension or expulsion for comparatively minor infractions such as violations of dress code or cursing. This legislation has resulted in the disproportionate

disciplinary rates, increased school-to-prison pipeline track, and disparate reading achievement gaps in public schools—especially for marginalized students such as Black girls (A. Gregory et al., 2010; McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; Nichols, 1999; Raffaele Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2002; Townsend, 2000).

Although intersectionality theory continues to make this marginalized agenda relevant today, it omits other facets of what might cause this phenomenon. The author suggests that by broadening intersectionality theory's aspect of marginalization to include cultural patterns of threats as sources of prejudice, this researcher will shed new light on current predicaments of injustices Black girls experience in public schools across the United States. Reviewing the literature will briefly revisit some of the deep-rooted issues within intersectionality theory, which was developed to address race and gender identity and the potential for discrimination toward Black girls in public schools. Unfortunately, instances of intersectionality linking two or more identities—race and gender—continue to be understudied. In this study, the author discusses the intersectionality theory of race and gender by including another caveat—the social perception of power threat and reaction to that perceived threat. Next, in the literature review, the researcher will discuss threats that conceptualize *causes* of prejudice, the notion that threats cause individual or group prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Additionally, the author reviewed recent literature to stimulate future research. Finally, this researcher intends to build upon the historical insights of intersectionality theory to understand the phenomenon better of inequality in education for Black girls in the U.S. public school system.

To explain a review of the literature, the author chose to analyze these issues utilizing a framework within two types of perceived societal threats: (a) individual/group symbolic threats and (b) individual/group realistic threats. The author asserts that conjoined with intersectionality

theory, the two threats might ensue causes of intersectional race and gender prejudices. These perceived threats are the impetus of overzealous laws such as zero-tolerance policies in schools, which often lead to disproportionate disciplinary rates for Black girls compared to White girls.

Framing intersectionality theory and perceived threats, the study results will complement the commitment to social justice by offering a sophisticated and well-established framework for simultaneously theorizing the relationship between race, gender, and biases. This complement and commitment can more accurately capture the social justice picture within the U.S. public school system (Bowleg, 2008; Grace, 2014).

Organization of the Dissertation

Four more chapters follow the Introduction. Chapter 2 is a comprehensive review of the literature on Black girls' experiences and how disproportionate disciplinary assignments might adversely impact achievement levels for Black girls in public schools and society. In Chapter II, the topic discussed is the gap in the literature related to the correlation between zero-tolerance policy and Black girls' disproportionate disciplinary rates in Grades 3–9, and how does this correlation facilitate the schoolhouse-to-jailhouse pipeline? Moreover, what effects do excessive disciplinary rates have on achievement gaps for Black girls? In Chapter 3, the research design and specific details of how the study was conducted are discussed. The remaining chapters focus on the tangible research undertaken for this study. The research findings and results are provided in Chapter 4, followed by an interpretation of the findings in Chapter 5.

Glossary of Terms

Cradle/Schoolhouse-to-Jailhouse Track, aka School-to-Prison Pipeline—this track/pipeline denotes the linkage between suspension and expulsion rates and the national trend

of criminalizing rather than educating our nation's children (American Civil Liberties Union, 2020).

In-group—a social category or group with which one identifies strongly (Giles & Giles, 2013).

Out-group—a social category or group with which one does not identify (Giles & Giles, 2013).

Racialization—the process through which groups are labeled as being of a particular race and subjected to different and unequal treatment (Dalal, 2002).

White—L. Foster (2003) argues the word white and the idea of whiteness are the reference points by which all other racially defined groups in this society are measured, named, described, and understood. Therefore, to capitalize white would be, in effect, to say the obvious and affirm the norm (L. Foster, 2003). On the other hand, others contend the reverse is true—to fail to capitalize White is to accept to a dialectal code of the dominant culture (L. Foster, 2003). In short, the vagueness of Whiteness as the generic standard in the social construction is precisely why it should be capitalized. In this interpretation, capitalizing White undermines the existing linguistic code by disrupting the societal norm that attribute to the ethno-racial magnitudes of power that are embedded in language and frame traditional discourse (L. Foster, 2003). For example, Eve L. Ewing, a poet, and sociologist at the University of Chicago, started a linguistic revolution by capitalizing White to emphasize the presence of Whiteness as a racial identity (Painter, 2020). She argues the capital W highlights White as a powerful racial group whose privileges should be rooted in its meaning (Painter, 2020).

Importantly, this movement—although not new—toward a linguistic revolution is transforming ethno-racial and anti-racism thinking by capitalizing both Black and White as racial

and ethnic labels (L. Foster, 2003). To illustrate historically, in 1889, W.E.B Dubois pushed back against writing Negro with a lowercase n, saying eight million Americans deserve a capital letter (Nguyen & Pendleton, 2020). Likewise, the Center for the Study of Social Policy also made the decision to capitalize White when referring to people who are racialized as White in the United States, including those who identify with ethnicities and nationalities that can be traced back to Europe (Nguyen & Pendleton, 2020). In DiAngelo's (2018) book, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, she describes how capitalizing White will not allow White people to just exist as people without being identified by race, while people of color are often described by their race. In addition, the style guide of the American Psychological Association (2020) has acknowledged that racial and ethnic groups are selected by proper nouns and are capitalized. Therefore, the guide suggests the use of Black and White as a replacement for black and white in the context of race and ethnicity (American Psychological Association, 2020). Moreover, in English, the established agreement is to capitalize proper nouns and proper names, which are terms that refer to what philosophers call particulars or individuals—a specific person, place, or thing (Appiah, 2020).

Importantly, to embrace the current revolution of capitalizing Black and White, the author has chosen to capitalize the B in Black and the W in White throughout this study. The author argues language is to be determined by the consensus of language users and there is no objectively correct answer to the question of whether to capitalize black and white in advance of such a consensus (Appiah, 2020).

A good reason to capitalize the racial designation is precisely because it is a social category—a united identity—with an actual history. Furthermore, the author asserts if White is not capitalized and Black is, the study might appear to have biases, inconsistencies, and

discriminate against White people. Conversely, the study will appear to imply that White is non-racial. In addition, the argument that capitalizing the term could pull White people more fully into issues and discussions of race and equality. This will result in conveying an essential and shared sense of history, identity, and community.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Black girls are less innocent and more adult-like than White girls at almost every stage of childhood, beginning most significantly at the age of five, increasing between the ages of 10 and 14, and continuing at ages 15 to 19. On all occasions, the survey conducted by Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality (Epstein et al., 2017) showed adults appear to have distinct perceptions of Black girls, viewing them as developmentally older and more mature than White girls within their peer groups. Consequently, the significance of this study proves the potential for adultification—similar to the Jezebel caricature—to be a contributing factor of disproportionate disciplinary assignments toward Black girls. That said, if authorities, including White teachers, perceive Black girls as less innocent, less needing to be protected, and more adult-like, they would also tend to view Black girls as more culpable for their actions, thus, ultimately punishing them more for those actions. Therefore, adultification—a symbolic threat—may in part serve as a contributing source of the disproportionality in school discipline outcomes toward Black girls. Furthermore, these factors may contribute to academic barriers or gaps for Black girls who are six times more likely to be disciplined than White girls starting as early as preschool (Smith-Evans et al., 2014).

In addition to the aforementioned symbolic threat, there arises another term, “Sapphire,” depicted by the angry Black woman stereotype in the television sitcom *Amos ‘n’ Andy* (1951-1953), whose main character was named Sapphire Stevens (Harris-Perry, 2011). Sapphire, a domineering and emasculating woman, was viewed as uniquely unfavorable and the epitome of the angry Black woman stereotype. Contemporarily, television and media recycle some of the same imagery of Black women that Sapphire portrayed as being short-tempered, always angry,

and confrontational. Critics argue these television personas perpetuate stereotypical implicit and explicit biases of historical images, particularly the “angry Black woman” idiom.

Ironically, although not intentional, these historical images align with what is currently happening in media, television, and politics toward Black women. Take for instance Congresswomen Maxine Waters, who earned the nickname “Kerosene Maxine” for her often-incendiary rhetoric, recently renewing her “identity” when she refused to attend Mr. Donald Trump’s presidential inauguration (Alcindor, 2017). She vehemently stated on MSNBC “I don’t honor him. I don’t respect him, and I don’t want to be involved with him” (para. 18). The President responded with a series of tweets labeling “her ignorant, an embarrassment, “Dirty Waters,” and “Crazy Maxie” (para. 5). Maya Wiley, the Senior Vice President for Social Justice at The New School in New York, argued the tweets aligned with White society’s image of the “loud” and uncontrollable Black woman (Alcindor, 2017). Unfortunately, society and policymakers’ repeated mischaracterization of the Black female experience is often framed within negative stereotypes and conservative views (J. Harris et al., 2015), instead of relying on historical fact and modern research.

Similarly, in the U.S. public school setting, assertiveness can often be misidentified as talking back or defiance, which places Black girls at higher risk for inequitable disciplinary assignments (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). In another example, in an interview with former First Lady Michelle Obama discusses the “angry Black woman” stereotype, stating “that was one of those things that you just sort of think, dang, you don’t even know me” (Landsbaum, 2016, para. 2), adding she countered negative stereotypes in her career and personal life by living “out loud” (para. 3).

Another example was demonstrated in an interview for ESPN (2016) with one of the unsurpassed tennis players of the decade, Serena Williams. She spoke about how she dealt with similar stereotypes former First Lady Michelle Obama faced, stating as a powerful Black athlete in a sport that's predominately White she was faced with negative press that focused their comments about her body shape, her style of dress, and misinterpreted her confidence as being promiscuous and hypersexual (ESPN, 2016). Illustrative of this, during the U.S. Open final, Williams received a code violation for coaching, a penalty point for breaking her racquet, and a game penalty for calling the umpire a "thief" (Zaru & Hoyos, 2018, para. 5). Although no different from how many top players, namely John McEnroe, react in the heat of a championship game, she was fined \$17,000 and depicted in articles with overly-exaggerated physical masculine attributes and her irrational angry tone. In the aftermath of Serena Williams's controversial U.S. Open loss, the stereotype of the *angry Black woman* again re-emerged. In a viral cartoon picture, Williams is drawn as a petulant, animal-like, manly figure (BBC News, 2018). This depiction contrasts with how her opponent is depicted in the cartoon. The cartoon caricature insinuated Williams represents a strong physical or masculine physique compared to the meek White women who compete against her.

According to Harris-Perry (2011) and Hill Collins (1999), the *angry Black woman* or Sapphire stereotype can best be described as *ghetto*—the unnaturally strong, loud, and verbally abusive matriarch who is dramatic with out-of-control emotions; this is a quality in many White Americans' eyes as characteristic of all Black women (Hill Collins, 2000). In the classroom amongst teachers, the Sapphire stereotype portrays Black girls' expressiveness as a sign of emotional instability and lack of rationality, as if emotions and intellect cannot co-exist, and assumes Sapphire is guided by her emotions rather than reason.

This stereotype aides the vicious cycle of disproportionate disciplinary rates for Black girls (Hill Collins, 2000). Black girls like Miasia shared her experience of how she was pushed out of school after approaching her school Dean about feeling disrespected by teachers; she was removed for “talking back” (Loubriel, 2016, 2. Attitude Policing, para. 1). In another instance, Kaya, stopped by a teacher in the hallway, was told her “loud demeanor is inappropriate . . . and her pretentious attitude gives her false belief that she is better than everyone” (para. 1). In a study by E. W. Morris (2007), Black girls are interpreted by educators as “too assertive” (p. 21). A teacher described them as “The Proper Loudies,” continuing to describe their behavior as “loud” and the “most abrasive group of girls” (p. 21). Examples like this show how the Sapphire stereotype allows educators across America full permission to discipline Black girls based solely on a subjective opinion of the girls’ attitudes (Girls for Gender Equity NYC, 2015). These societal biases or stereotypes culminate the most controversial reasons why Black girls are disciplined or pushed out from school and accused of subjective references to behaviors. In essence, Black girls are perceived as being in direct opposition to the institution’s social norms, standards, and expectations (George, 2015). Furthermore, for Black girls, such implicit biases in schools have been instilled into society norms in the context of school discipline. Simson (2014) writes:

Schools have always played a crucial role in preparing children for proper and successful participation in civic life and inculcating in its youth the values society considers most important. But the very civic life for which students are being prepared is one that has always been dominated by White interests, preferences, values, and norms. (p. 551)

To add, for Black girls who are going against the criteria of White middle-class femininity, the actions are disproportionately punitive as demonstrated by unequal disciplinary rates and

increased incarceration of Black girls as compared to their White peers. Not only are Black girls characterized as hypersexual and aggressive but according to James, Black girls have also been historically characterized as deviant (as cited in Wun, 2014). James suggests,

In racialized societies such as the United States, the plague of criminality, deviance, immorality, and corruption is embodied in the Black woman because both sexual and social pathology is branded by skin color (as well as by gender and sexual orientation). Where the plague and the leper are codified in the Black woman, for instance, the dreams and desires of society and state will be centered on the Black body.

Thus, the punishment of Black women—the spectacle of punishing Black bodies is ingrained in the ‘dreams and desires’ of the U.S. racial society and its citizens. Black bodies are society’s quintessential phobogenic objects, embodying that which is feared and loathed. (as cited in Wun, 2014, p. 740)

To expound, Black girls’ disproportionate disciplinary rates from primary schools within the United States can be said to be in response to society’s labeling Black girls as prostitutes and criminals (M. W. Morris, 2016b). As a matter of fact, Black girls were often subsumed as the “submerged tenth,” coined by W. E. B. DuBois, referring to those Black girls in the criminal class of society who were considered incorrigible and neurotic, and thus, marginalized as worthless (M. W. Morris, 2016b). Epstein et al. (2017) further argued this labeling of a phobogenic object creates fear in others that may serve as a contributing cause not only in disproportionate school discipline outcomes, but also in the school-to-prison pipeline track.

School-to-Prison Pipeline

In addition to issues related to stereotyping and perception, a variety of other factors systematically and disproportionately operate to push Black girls out of school. According to the

Wilson (2014), zero-tolerance discipline policy is key to the school-to-prison pipeline crisis. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Education (2014) suggests minor infractions often result in even more abhorrent policy consequences. Children's Defense Fund (CDF, 2007) suggested the United States will spend more than three times as much money per prisoner as per public school student. In her book review of *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*, Wabuke (2016) explained M. W. Morris' encounter with Black girls during their interviews. M. W. Morris (2016b) asserted that in their progress through the juvenile justice system, Black girls are pushed out of school systems and into a cycle of prison, unemployment, and homelessness due to a lack of interest by the systems and authority figures that have failed them. M. W. Morris wrote,

One of the most persistent and salient traits among girls who have been labeled 'delinquent' is that they have failed to establish a meaningful and sustainable connection with schools. This missing link is exacerbated by the increased reliance of public schools on exclusionary discipline, at present one of the most widely used measures to deal with problematic student behaviors. (pp. 10-11)

She further explains that as far back as the 18th century, Black girls were "in trouble" with the law as part of the enslaved population where they were confined in jails, asylums, and other forms of penal institutions (M. W. Morris, 2016b).

Importantly, the criminalization of Black girls has percolated into schools nationwide, depriving Black girls of one of the most protective factors in her life—an education (M. W. Morris, 2016b). Consequently, such research consistently shows zero-tolerance policies closely correlate with the increased risk of students entering the juvenile justice system. More significantly, the increased use of zero-tolerance policies has exponentially increased arrest and

referral rates for Black girls in the past decade, profoundly impacting their disproportionate incarceration rate within the justice systems (Mallett, 2017). To illustrate, according to a study by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014) in the 2011-2012 collection, 17% of Black female students comprised approximately 31% of girls referred to law enforcement, including 43% of those who experienced school-related arrest. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights affirms 54% of women in prison in the United States are Black or Latina. Even more disheartening, in the last decade, Black girls have had the fastest growing juvenile justice referral rate of all students despite economically disadvantaged status, which has been linked to the likelihood of increased disciplinary assignments by school administrators (Losen & Skiba, 2010). In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights reported nationally, Black girls experience discipline at rates six times higher than White girls for minor infractions, such as violating dress code, profane language, being loud, and physical aggression toward another student (Blake et al., 2011). In response to the report, in January 2014, Attorney General Eric Holder condemned zero-tolerance policies that abruptly and hastily send students through the criminal justice system for minor offenses or infractions such as truancy and late homework (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). He stated, “a routine school disciplinary infraction should land a student in the principal’s office, not in a police precinct” (para. 4).

Moreover, according to the CDF (2007), racial disparities, unequal educational opportunities, and ineffective juvenile justice systems vastly drive the school-to-prison pipeline. These disparities increase the probability of children, especially Black girls, entering the pipeline. For example, based on studies conducted by CDF, the nation’s school-to-prison pipeline phenomena predicts a Black girl born in 2001 has a one-in-three chance of being

confronted by police brutality and going to prison in her lifetime, five times more than a White girl born that same year (CDF, 2007). Sexton (2007) argued Black people symbolize and are often the targets of police brutality and excessive policing. He further contended within the context of anti-Black racism, excessive punishment is precedent to Black oppression, with discipline as a “popular theater of cruelty” (Sexton, 2010, p. 38). Excessive policing could explain the correlation of school resource officers’ (SRO) disparate discipline punishments toward Black girls in public schools across the United States.

Public school systems across the United States have come under increased scrutiny due to the harsh treatment of students by SROs. SROs were initially used to maintain safe, orderly, and secure school environments. However, critics argue giving both public law enforcement and SROs discretion to enforce the law has become particularly problematic because of racial, ethnic, and explicit and implicit biases. Importantly, Harcourt and Ludwig (2007) argued discretion of enforcement does not look the same on everyone, and often can be racially, culturally, and politically loaded. Likewise, and notably, visceral reports of racially biased SROs reinforce a consistent narrative (Harcourt & Ludwig, 2007); the simple presence of these officers inside schools leads to harsher discipline practices and increased student arrests for behaviors that can arguably be dealt with by the school administration (Pigott et al., 2018). The apparent lack of school discretion, strict zero-tolerance policies, and culturally ignorant SROs and police officers are said to be the root of the school-to-prison pipeline for Black girls in public schools across the United States (Gottfredson, 2013).

Illustrative of the most egregious of punitive policies that have criminalized Black girls is the story of 6-year-old Desiree Watson, who after 20 minutes of “uncontrollable” behavior, was arrested and placed in the back of a police car, hauled away, and booked for having a tantrum

while in her kindergarten classroom (Lloyd & Prevot, 2017). Without consideration of her age, Desiree was charged with battery felony and two misdemeanors. Another example is when, in 2012, a teacher called police to report a disobedient student assaulting the principal and damaging school property; Milledgeville, Georgia police arrived and handcuffed the 6-year-old kindergarten Black girl (Campbell, 2012). According to the police report, Salecia Johnson was lying on the floor crying and throwing a tantrum when he arrived; she appeared *unruly*. Salecia was charged as a juvenile with a simple battery to a teacher (Campbell, 2012). Indeed, such egregious examples of the application of zero-tolerance policies demonstrate the excessive punitive discipline practices toward Black girls and criminalizing a child for simple “childlike” behavior. School-to-prison pipeline research, specifically regarding Black girls, is unable to address disparities in the punitive discipline negatively impacting Black girls. Dumas and Nelson (2016) stated in a Harvard Educational Review article,

If children, in general, are materially vulnerable, and their perspectives and social worlds seldom acknowledged in public and policy discourse, it is no surprise that Black children are among the most invisible, the most underrepresented and misrepresented, of all.

Beginning in slavery, Black boys and girls were imagined as chattel and were often put to work as young as two and three years old. Subjected to much of the same dehumanization suffered by Black adults, Black children were rarely perceived as being worthy of playtime and were severely punished for exhibiting healthy childlike behaviors. (p. 33)

It is important to note while the above encounters unfolded throughout a short period and culminated in a fairly dramatic fashion, Black women and girls are experiencing situations similar to these at an increasingly alarming rate across the United States (Jones & Norwood, 2017). Black girls’ educational experiences are impacted by overly harsh and unequal punitive

disciplinary practices, explicit and implicit biases, and the underlying racial and gender stereotypes which fuel them. As a result, the phenomena known as “school pushout” and the “school-to-prison pipeline” are both currently operating to make Black girls the fastest-growing segment of the juvenile justice system (George, 2015, p. 104).

More recently in May 2018, a White female Yale University graduate student called the police on a Black female graduate who had fallen asleep in a common area room of the dormitory (Pettit, 2018). After 15 minutes of questioning, police determined the Black female was indeed a Yale student, making her feel she had to justify her existence at Yale. In another incident, a White female professor at Smith College called campus police on an Black female student, who incidentally was also a teaching assistant, for eating lunch in a campus common room. Someone reported her to the police for being “out of place” (Pettit, 2018, para 19). These reactions of White women interfering in the lives of innocent Black people show reliance upon the desire to effectively control people who are different from them (Hunt, 2006).

Consequently, White feminine fear does not yield overt behavior, but instead a kind of harassment which often leads to racial trauma for many Black girls (Perry et al., 2013). To truly address racial injustice in public schools toward Black girls across the United States, injustice must be unpacked (Hunt, 2006). It is important to understand how injustices are inextricably linked to disparities in discipline practices, societal biases, police brutality, and achievement gaps in education.

Achievement Levels

Achievement gaps are one way of monitoring the equality of educational outcomes (De Brey et al., 2019). Achievement gaps are defined when one group of students (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender) outperforms another group. The gap occurs when the difference in average scores for the

two groups is statistically significant (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). In academic history, achievement gaps have been well documented and discussed at great length. In recent years, scholars and authors have begun collaborative efforts addressing how policy should tackle the achievement gap phenomenon (Losen, Hodson et al., 2014). Their studies and concerns discuss how the achievement gap impacts students of color within federal, state, and local education law. The articles include “Out of School and Off Track: The Overuse of Suspensions in American Middle and High Schools” (Losen & Martinez, 2013), “Eliminating Excessive and Unfair Exclusionary Discipline in Schools Policy Recommendations for Reducing Disparities” (Losen, Hewitt et al., 2014), and “Are We Closing the School Achievement Gap” (Losen et al., 2015). Although commendable, their studies typically describe Black students as lacking in social skills. Additionally, they overemphasize Black students’ rejection of learning. As a result of the misinterpretation of their explanations, the gap remains consistent.

A reason the achievement gap persists might be explanations and statistical data address Black students as a racially homogenous group. Explanations of data do not adequately address within-group differences, specifically as it relates to Black girls and their daily challenges and experiences (Losen, 2014). In addition, achievement disparities often focus on Black boys assuming they fare worse than Black girls academically. This can give the perception that Black girls are doing well, when in fact, a report completed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 2013 showed Black girls consistently had the most significant percentage of students scoring below the basic reading achievement level when compared to all other groups of girls (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007; Smith-Evans et al., 2014). To illustrate, in 2016, the District of Columbia Public Schools launched a \$20 million initiative to address the racial achievement gap in education for underserved students, and specifically Black boys (Cornish, 2016). This

initiative was launched despite statistics showing 2009 national test scores for Black boys were not much different from those for Black girls. Furthermore, although the initiative was well-intended, District of Columbia Public Schools excluded Black girls from these programs. In response to the initiative, in May 2016, the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Civil Liberties Union of the Nation's Capital released a report titled, "Leaving Girls Behind: An Analysis of Washington D.C.'s "Empowering Males of Color" Initiative" (Sherwin et al., 2016). The authors summarized the exclusion of Black women and girls from the program initiative.

Indecently, programs often overlook the dichotomy of Black girls existing as both Black and female (Young, Young, & Capraro, 2018). This oversight might be due to policies that do not address the impact of the intersection of racism and sexism on the educational experiences of Black girls, which ignores the unique reality in which Black girls live and learn (Ricks, 2014). In their study, "Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected," Crenshaw et al. (2015) argued Black girls' experience added stressors in the public school system in comparison to White girls and Black boys. They suggested one stressor is Black girls often receive less attention than Black male and White female peers early in their school experiences. Black girls are perceived to be more adult-like and self-reliant, thus leading to what Crenshaw et al. coined as "benign neglect" (p. 3), which negatively impacts school attachment. To further demonstrate, unlike White girls, Black girls can be dually marginalized by implicit and explicit biases, referring to the "double" marginalization that occurs when a person is negatively affected by being a member of two marginalized populations (Young, Young, & Paufler, 2017). This double marginalization by White school authorities toward Black girls can challenge Black girls' achievement development and educational success (Gibson et al., 2014).

Not surprisingly, there continues to be sparse literature on achievement gaps regarding the intersectionality of Black girls. Even academic scholars of current literature argue grave investigation of race and gender intersections is necessary to eradicate achievement gaps between Black girls and other girls within their peer group (Lubienski & Bowen, 2000; Lubienbski & Gutiérrez, 2008). Importantly, Lubienski (2002) asserted that with the lack of critical analysis of the intersectionality of marginalized groups, opportunities for eradication or intervention might be lost. One of the most consistent findings of modern-day education research is the strong positive correlations between time spent in academic schooling and student achievement levels (Brophy, 2010; Fisher et al., 1981; Greenwood et al., 2002). Further research has found statistically significant correlations between Black girl achievement gaps and disparities in disciplinary practices in school (Boykin & Noguero, 2011; Howard, 2010; Orfield, 2004). Arcia (2006) argued when marginalized groups receive at least one disciplinary action (i.e., suspension), it typically results in missed instructional time and, for some, could exacerbate a vicious cycle of academic failure, disengagement, and spiraling down the school-to-prison pipeline. Furthermore, research shows suspended students are three grade levels behind non-suspended peers in their reading achievement skills, and nearly 5 years behind 2 years later (A. Gregory et al., 2010).

According to the TEA's Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, the achievement gap between Black and White female students is more significant than the difference between their male counterparts (Alford-Stephens & Slate, 2018). To illustrate, a 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress report shows only 14% of Black boys met reading achievement levels, while 42% of White boys met their reading achievement levels (NCES, 2014). In comparison, a 2014 report shows only 18% of Black girls met reading achievement

levels, compared to 65% of White girls (Kunjufu, 2014). Catastrophic indeed! So catastrophic that former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan held several press conferences to address the literacy gap specifically regarding Black women and girls (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). They stated this continued reading achievement gap keeps Black women and girls imprisoned in a vicious cycle of poverty and subjugation, limits their life choices, and makes it more challenging to move forward in society.

Moreover, and perhaps more detrimental to Black girls' educational achievement, is how disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates are, sending girls home for days or weeks at a time prevents Black girls from improving their achievement levels in the classroom (Kunjufu, 2015). As a result of Attorney General Holder's remarks, TEA (2019) began to attempt to close the reading achievement gaps. For example, TEA instituted an overlap with federal reformation laws like No Child Left Behind (2002) and Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) which attempted to close the gap to establish a state literacy plan ensuring every Texas child is deliberately equipped for the literacy demands of high school graduation (TEA, 2015). In addition, Texas Governor Greg Abbott created two new comprehensive reading initiatives for the state: Texas Readers and Raising Texas Readers (Office of the Texas Governor, 2017).

Although these efforts by Texas to continuously monitor the performance of low performing and marginalized groups are notable, very little progress has been made in closing the reading proficiency gaps in Texas and across the nation (Reardon, 2013; L. A. Wright et al., 2016). Importantly, the fact remains that Black students in Texas are performing at significantly lower reading levels than students nationally (NCES, 2015; Office of Texas Governor, 2017). Illustrative of the lack in progress, a 2015 State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) report showed only 18% of Black fourth graders are proficient in reading (J. D.

Harrison, 2015). The eighth-grade numbers were even worse, with only 16% of Black students proficient (Ayala, 2017). By comparison, the report showed the national average for fourth grade reading proficiency was 36%, and 34% for eighth grade. Even more disheartening, the study reported 61% of American College Testing-tested Black students in the 2015 high school graduating class did not meet any of the four American College Testing college readiness benchmarks, nearly twice the 31% rate for all students (Ayala, 2017). Educators and policymakers claim these unequal outcomes are alarming, and yet differences in performance by gender and race remain (Chudowsky & Chudowsky, 2010; Egeland, 2012; Klecker, 2006, Reardon et al., 2012). Acknowledging the dire need to address performance differences could result in decreasing probabilities of high school dropout rates, disproportionality in discipline practices, and school-to-prison pipeline track, especially for Black girls, for years to come (Lee & Slate, 2014).

Literacy has long been a method of social control, power, and oppression. Research consistently confirms subjugation via reading illiteracy amongst Blacks, especially Black girls and women, has been consistent for centuries. In his memoir *Twenty-Eight Years a Slave*, T. L. Johnson (1909) remembered his mother had been his first teacher, often teaching him what she knew, beginning with “the Lord’s Prayer” (para. 4) and instilling in him illiteracy was a slave owner’s weapon of power to keep slaves from freedom (Bly, 2011). Today’s public schools are obligatory and free to attend and reading still is a critical pathway to freedom. Early reading literacy plays a major role in empowering learning experiences and relates to academic achievement, reduced grade retention, higher graduation rates, and enhanced productivity in adult life (Barnett, 2002). However, when it comes to reading literacy and other achievement

levels (i.e., math, science), Black girls are fighting institutionalized racism, gender biases, and disproportionate disciplinary rates (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

In summary, while the racial literacy achievement gap has been consistently documented over several decades, scholars are still working to understand the mechanisms that will close it (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2008). Moreover,

because the growing diversity in schools will eventually lead to a more diverse labor force, the academic achievement of these diverse groups is essential not only for individuals but also for the U.S. economy as a whole (Kao & Thompson, 2003; Roach, 2004). (as cited in Corbitt et al., 2008, p. 69)

Economic Impact

Research suggests economic failure for Black girls is associated with societal biases, disproportionate disciplinary practices, and the school-to-prison pipeline (George, 2015; Khan & Slate, 2016; Slate et al., 2016). According to George (2015) and Slate et al. (2016), evidence shows Black girls are suspended six times more than White girls and, in some instances, more than boys, which compromises their potential future economic success (George, 2015; Slate et al., 2016).

The associated actions mentioned result in an overrepresentation of Black women amongst unskilled labor and demonstrates why the continued struggles of educating Black girls are perilous to their futures (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Mauer and Chesney-Lind (2002) referred to these associated actions as “invisible punishments” or “collateral consequences” that further exacerbate Black girls into a lifetime of disfranchisement, including denial of educational benefits and several employment opportunities, limiting economic stability (p. 3). Moreover, research shows students who are subjected to the associated actions have a much higher risk of

engaging in future criminal and anti-social behavior (i.e., drugs), which increases the probability of unstable and unproductive adult life (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007). In addition, several studies show the economy suffers even more due to the lack of education by Black women (Banks, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Mays et al., 1996; Wardrop, 2003). According to a study conducted by the National Women's Law Center and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense Fund, more than 40% of all households with children under 18 were led by Black women as the sole or primary income provider (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). Another 22% of households are led by Black women who are co-providers, and 53% of all Black wives earn as much or more than their spouses. Additional findings reported that focusing on Black girls' needs ensures better outcomes for Black families. Additionally, when Black girls are not afforded an education, they earn less in wages, pay fewer taxes, and depend on government welfare services (Sorensen, 1994). The not-so-obvious consequences include "occupational segregation," meaning the (lack) of distribution of workers across and within occupations, based upon demographic characteristics. For example, during the 1990s occupational segregation between White and Black women significantly increased (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). As a result, wage inequality between women with high school degrees or equivalent, and women with advanced education began to rise. According to Smith-Evans et al. (2014), by 2004 an apparent gap in the types of jobs occupied and wages earned between Black and White women appeared for the first time. For instance, 39% of White women worked in managerial and professional skill jobs compared to 31% of Black women. Moreover, women with an education equivalent to high school or less, specifically Black women, occupied jobs such as cashier, retail, and housekeeping, and tended to work far more in their lifetime than White women. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, in comparison to White

women, Black women are often left with occupations that lead to meager social status and undoubtedly inhabit an unjust position throughout the history of inequality in education (Hess et al., 2014). Gender is one of the most apparent points of segregation, and negative results include the entrepreneurial ideas that are never heard, or the science projects left undiscovered by the “hidden figures” of Black girls (Blair, 2016).

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of scholarship regarding the educational realities of Black women that can comprehensively explain their different experiences and economic outcomes. The result of these significant lasting economic impediments, including inadequate job opportunities, low-wage earnings, and living in poverty, remain unaddressed and understudied. Therefore, the next section’s goal is to demonstrate the need to address missing information on Black girls’ and women’s achievement processes—their experiences related to academics and schooling and their responses and adaptations to these experiences. To illustrate this point, the author provides a review of intersectionality theory as it relates to factors viewed as influential educational pathways, including gender and race norms and standards in identity constructions. Viewing these factors through intersectional theory, contributors may more accurately understand the educational and societal experiences of Black women and girls and understand how inaccurate policy has negatively influenced academic pursuits, economic opportunities, biases, and school-to-prison pipeline (Patton et al., 2016).

Intersectional Theory—Revisit

Before the prominence of intersectionality theory, researchers attempted to explain race and gender disparities in education using theories such as Black feminism, stand-point, and culture. The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by American civil rights advocate and leading critical race theory scholar Crenshaw to advance Black feminism. Crenshaw’s (1989)

initial use of the term was a critical response to some judicial interpretations of federal employment discrimination law. Since its introduction, the term intersectionality has become the forefront in national conversations about racial injustice, identity politics, and bias policing toward Black girls and women. Amongst many contributions, intersectionality theory has helped shape legal discussions about the oppression of Black girls and women in both society and education (Crenshaw, 1989). The section begins with an orientation to Black girls' race and gender identity within the intersectionality theory framework, and how the theory has progressed feminism. The author then discusses how intersectional theory can further contribute to understanding the unique experiences of Black girls in public schools within the United States.

Although race and gender have become prevalent topics in current women's studies, most studies have examined these topics separately rather than focusing on how they intersect with each other (Patterson et al., 1996). Intersectionality theory takes into consideration the unique positions that exist for the marginalized based on both race and gender (i.e., Black, women) (Crenshaw, 1993; Hurtado, 1989). In other words, using the theory, one recognizes gender and race can only be experienced simultaneously (West & Fenstermaker, 1996). Understanding the intersection of race and gender is especially useful for Black girls and women because of the complexities of the political and social environment in which they live and learn (Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990). The crux of intersectionality theory has long historical, social, and political roots, and Black feminists have produced work revealing the complexities and experiences that uniquely shape their lives (Bunjun, 2010; Collins, 2000; Valdes, 1997; Van Herk et al., 2011).

During the 1970s and 1980s, a critical question regarding the notion of "global sisterhood" was critiqued for its failure to tackle the phenomena of power relations dividing Black and White women's experiences adequately (Davies, 1981; Haraway, 1991; Mama, 1984;

Talpade Mohanty, 1988). Black feminist scholars vehemently critiqued traditional feminist research conducted by White women about the experiences of White women. The problem with such research is the studies were often generalized to speak for all women, thus representing an essentialized or intrinsic particular type of womanhood rather than the distinctive and valuable separation of Black women and girls' blended racial-gender experiences (Collins, 2000; Hooks, 1984; Spelman, 1988).

This debate was also captured by the renowned political question “Ain’t I a Woman?” Delivered in 1851 at the Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio by an enslaved woman, abolitionist, and feminist, Sojourner Truth (1797-1883), who critiqued the term “woman” with her lived experiences (Collins, 2000). This question fundamentally challenges all historical or essentialist notions of women and it precisely captures critical elements of the debate on intersectionality. The concept is re-emphasized by Brah and Phoenix (2004):

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody helps me any best place. And ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm. I have plowed, I have planted, and I have gathered into barns. And no man could head me. And ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as any man—when I could get it—and bear the lash! And ain’t I a woman? I have borne children and seen most of them sold into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me. And ain’t I a woman? (p. 77)

This benchmark speech for intersectionality offers a shocking critique of sociopolitical, economic, and cultural processes of “othering” (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). Even today, Sojourner Truth powerfully and eloquently challenges essentialist ideas for millions of Black girls and women who remain marginalized, are often construed as the center of moral panic,

disproportionately criminalized and disciplined, racialized, and regulated through a myriad of social and educational injustice (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016).

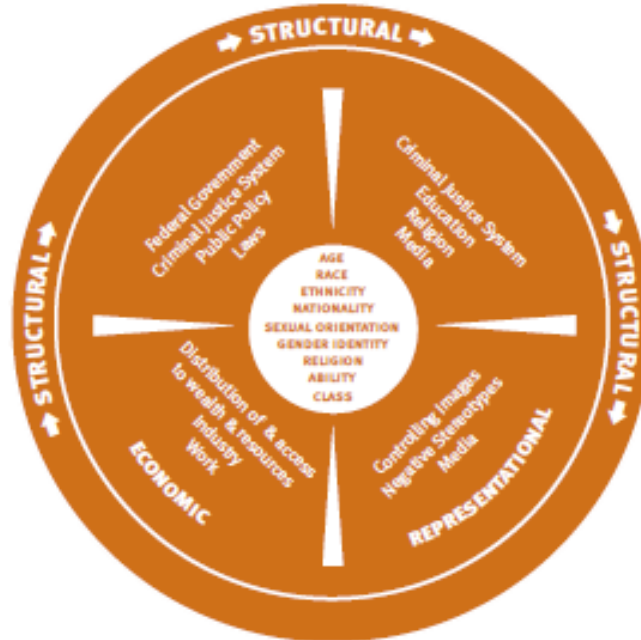
Contemporarily, the essentialist notion constitutes a field in history praxis that has proven to be highly receptive to intersectionality, especially when it comes to education and social justice for Black girls in the United States public school system (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). For example, school experiences of Black girls are affected by many factors, including race and gender-specific discrimination. This discrimination fails to be included in the discourse on school achievement gaps and school experiences. This failure is especially damaging for Black girls and women since they are the most at risk and the most exploited for their gendered-racial identity (Collins, 2000).

So then, rather than isolating race and gender into distinct, independent effects, using the intersectionality theory approach, one explores how these factors combine in daily life (E. W. Morris, 2007). The lens of intersectionality theory helps frame a complex view of social and educational inequality and can address race and gender as intertwined within public policies (E. W. Morris, 2007). Figure 1 is an example of the Intersectional Approach Model for Policy and Social Change (Mason, 2010).

As Black philosopher West (2017) famously wrote the book, *Race Matters*. However, both *gender and race matter* and together they interact to structure opportunities, consciousness, ideology, and the forms of resistance characterizing Black women and girls' lives and experiences. This brief review of intersectionality theory illustrated both the benefits and limitations of this theory (K. Anderson, 1996).

Figure 1

The Intersectional Approach Model for Policy and Social Change



Note. This approach was developed to examine issues of social change, equality, and intersectionality. The model illustrates strategies that are inclusive and get to the root causes of the social problem or issue. The model also challenges policy frameworks and models by encouraging policymakers to look broadly at the root causes of discrimination and inequality. In “Leading at the Intersections: An Introduction to the Intersectional Approach Model for Policy & Social Change,” by C. N. Mason, 2010, p. 6

(<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Intersectionality%20primer%20-%20Women%20of%20Color%20Policy%20Network.pdf>). Copyright 2010 by NYUWagner.

Although most recent academic reflections on intersectionality acknowledge its ubiquity in contemporary scholarship on identity and difference, the term has had many competitors (A. Harris & Leonardo, 2018). For example, within legal learning, competing interpretations consist

of wholism (Cunningham, 1998), interlocking oppressions (Kalsem & Williams, 2010), and multidimensionality (McGinley & Cooper, 2013). However, one point seems indisputable: within the world of social theory, descriptively, “intersectionality” provides a less cynical way to understand the steady emergence of new perspectives and fields of study within academia as well as serving as a powerful reminder to pay attention to the margins of all identity-based organizing and analysis. Intersectionality also has its limitations, which have led some scholars to declare a *post intersectionality* moment and others, as noted above (Cunningham, 1998; Kalsem & Williams, 2010; McGinley & Cooper, 2013), to call for its linguistic death (Levit, 2002)

Levit (2002) asserted intersectionality contains only a partial account of power. He argued scholars who are guided by intersectionality are led to understand systems of subordination, as they are brought to bear on social identities, never travel alone. For instance, race always functions through gender, and gender through sexuality. However, intersectionality does not tell one which of the multiple layers of oppression and/or experience represented by a given intersection is most significant at any given time. This limitation has incited scholars to criticize intersectionality and to offer their own supplementary constructs. For example, Peter Kwan worried

it is impossible to theorize about or study a group when each person in that group is ‘composed of a complex and unique matrix of identities that shift in time, is never fixed, is constantly unstable and forever distinguishable from everyone else in the universe.’ (as cited in Elengold, 2018, p. 477)

Legal scholar Ehrenreich (2002) argued intersectionality scholars have ignored the situation in which actors are simultaneously privileged and oppressed and offers the concept as “hybrid intersectionality” in response (p. 257). Scholars and activists such as Hooks (1984), Hill Collins

(1999), and Angela Davis (1983) who expanded the fundamental basis on the interdependence of systemic inequality of classism, heterosexism, racism, sexism, and other vehicles of oppression toward Black women. These authors emphasized the necessity to dismantle these systems of oppression and their work highlighted the intellectual contributions of Black women activists who have been systemically excluded from academic institutions and others who have been written out of the history of social theory (Collins, 2000; May, 2015).

Another limitation with the term intersectionality is of those who have totally misunderstood its point. McCall (2005) explained the concept can be viewed in three different theoretical ends:

- to criticize and dismantle accepted categories—what McCall calls demonstrating “anticategorical complexity” (p. 1773),
- to hold up for analysis the experiences of dismissed or ignored groups—what McCall calls employing “intracategorical complexity” (p. 1773)—an example is the work of Black feminists from which the term intersectionality emerged, and
- to permit scholars, holding one category or axis of oppression constant, to investigate its interplay with other axes of oppression—what McCall calls the demonstration of “intercategorical complexity” (p. 1773).

As a result, intersectionality can be used to undermine intra/intercategorical complexity that make intersectionality categorization itself impossible.

Nonetheless, despite its limitations, intersectionality theory has been highly influential to Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000). It contributes to understanding why the experiences of Black girls and women are so unique and should be handled differently than both White girls and women and Black boys and men (Crenshaw, 1989). Additionally, intersectionality theory

demonstrates while there has historically been progress for Black girls and women (Brah & Phoenix, 2004), there is still additional research to do before marginalized out-groups, specifically Black girls, can advance in society and education.

The next section of this study adds to the intersectionality theorist dialogue by viewing in-depth how Black girls can simultaneously experience race and gender oppression coupled with perceived threats in varying contexts, at varying times (Collins, 2000). While the previous body of research focused on rendering one particular out-group powerless based on their intersection, the author will now contribute to the existing literature based on how perceived threats, coupled with intersectionality theory disproportionality, impact both discipline practices and achievement gaps for Black girls. The author intends to show the combination of intersectionality theory and power relations as perceived threats might cause implicit and explicit race and gender prejudices toward Black girls. Time and again, these prejudices are the impetus of overzealous laws such as school zero-tolerance policies (Hoffman, 2014; Klehr, 2009), the fallout of lost economic opportunity (Duncan et al., 1994; Sorensen, 1994), and academic achievement gaps (Douglas et al., 2008; Malloy, 2015).

Perceived Threats–Intersectional Race and Gender Prejudices

According to Foucault (1977), power is relational, meaning a person can experience both power and oppression in varying contexts, simultaneously, and at varying times (Collins, 2000). These relations of power include power over others—focusing not just on domination or marginalization of one group over another, but also on the intersecting processes by which power and inequity are produced between groups, reproduced, and actively resisted (Guinier & Torres, 2003). Intersectionality is concerned with these relational inequities and is never the result of single, distinct factors (Collins, 2015). Instead, they are the outcome of intersections of different

social settings, power relations, and experiences (Guinier & Torres, 2003). Intersectionality posits both implicit and explicit bias by the in-group toward the out-group or marginalized group (Collins, 2015).

On the other hand, perceived threats posit explicit bias occurs when threats to in-groups promote negative views toward out-groups, whether true or not (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Threats include realistic threat (i.e., economic welfare), symbolic threat (i.e., morals and values), and negative stereotyping. These threats are uniquely positioned to cross-examine and understand unique experiences as they relate to the marginalization of a particular group (i.e., Blacks).

As previously stated, while intersectionality theory has demonstrated value-added to policy and social change and offers a unique framework for analyzing problems within diversity and inequity, it would be of added value for the theory be coupled with the notion of perceived threats experienced by Black girls and women (Bowleg, 2008; Grace, 2014). Together, intersectionality theory and perceived threats complement the commitment to social justice by offering a sophisticated and well-established framework for simultaneously theorizing the relationship between perceived threats and race and gender. This complement and commitment can more accurately capture the social injustice mindsets within the United States public school system (Bowleg, 2008; Grace, 2014).

Social injustice mindsets often lead to establishing overzealous school zero-tolerance laws, disproportionate discipline practices, achievement gaps, and exacerbated school-to-prison pipeline for Black girls (Hill, 2018). Taken together, they will contribute to the ongoing exploration of how intersectionality and discriminatory behavior can be used to understand and address the complexity of inequities in social justice. To add, when used together, such

conjunctions can help capture the intersectional experiences and the fear of perceived threat phenomena that are omitted by utilizing a single feminist theory such as intersectionality theory (Balsam et al., 2011; J. A. Lewis & Neville, 2015).

Issues of power, privilege, perceived threats, and injustice are not new. From the days of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old Black who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955 after being accused of offending a White woman in her family's grocery store (History.com Editors, 2019), to today's 9-1-1 call by a White woman on a Black family barbecuing in Oakland because she feared for her life (Wood, 2019). Based on this fear, one can argue White women are historically living archetypes, dictating their privilege over Black people (Frankenberg, 1993). Indeed, this proves the historical manifestation of the Jim Crow era is thriving and endlessly robust, even today, and White women's fear of Black people is justifiable in order to ensure Black people's conformity to White social norms.

Perhaps to consider why fear of nonconformity occurs even today, it is important to examine the historical mindset of perceived threats, specifically in the classroom. E. W. Morris (2007) asserts White teachers tend to view Black girls as aggressive compared to the more "ladylike" (p. 12) character of White girls. This aggressiveness, whether implicitly or explicitly, is seen as a perceived threat to their power and authority. E. W. Morris (2007) further argued White teachers' overwhelmingly make officials feel as if they need protection from Black girls and boys. For example, SROs are regularly positioned in schools characterized as underprivileged and socially disorganized (I. M. Johnson, 1999). Positioned not necessarily because Black students are disrupting class but only due to the perceived threat of fear White teachers express when their authority and social norms and standards come into question (Douglas et al., 2008).

To further demonstrate, in response to society's fear that juveniles were becoming more dangerous, Texas passed legislation in 2015 requiring Texas school districts with at least 30,000 students (mostly in urban districts) to educate and train law enforcement to ensure teachers and students feel safe (Na & Gottfredson, 2013). However, more studies are showing some students feel less safe with the presence of SROs (Bridenball & Jesilow, 2005; Dukes & Hughes, 2004; Hinkle & Weisburd, 2008).

Unfortunately, with the heightened presence of SROs, public schools are among the first places Black girls experience challenges and discrimination attributed to characteristics of race and gender (Orfield, 2013; Watson, 2016). There is evidence these characteristics become far more than physical descriptors and emerge as bases of social differentiation (Orfield, 2013; Watson, 2016). As a possible resolution to these challenges, President Barack Obama launched The White House Council on Women and Girls to ensure federal programs and policy would address the distinct concerns of Black girls (White House, 2009). Nevertheless, in many cases, such social differences in treatment continue to arise from cultural misunderstandings or biases by White teachers. For example, in her article "Oh, those loud Black girls!": A phenomenological study of Black girls talking with an attitude", Koonce (2012) cited Grace Evans, a former secondary teacher, recalling hearing her White colleagues exclaim, "oh, those loud Black girls!" (p. 32). Evans continued, "the words were usually expressed in response to a confrontation in which the teacher's sense of authority had been perceived to be threatened and undermined by an attitude of defiance on the part of a group of Black girls" (as cited in Koonce, 2012, p. 32).

Although sometimes subtle, racial bias does not just influence how teachers teach; it also affects why and how they discipline students, specifically Black girls (Quereshi & Okonofua,

2017). M. W. Morris's (2016b) article outlined White teachers' implicit and explicit biases are cause for concern, as the biases may cause disparate discipline practices toward Black girls who are perceived to challenge authority, including such innocuous events as "talking with an attitude" (p. 506). This often leads to girls being "pushed out" (p. 4) for disrupting White teacher authority in classrooms.

Furthermore, existing research suggested explicit and implicit racial bias may influence a teacher's expectations for Black girls' academic success (M. W. Morris, 2016b). For example, a 2007 study found evidence White teachers hold lower expectations for Black girls (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). According to Kim et al. (2010), lowered expectations in the classroom often result in differential treatment for Black girls, including disproportionate disciplinary assignments. Kim et al. asserted the perception of Black girls as being disruptive in class, oftentimes give teachers and administrators (i.e., SROs) freedom to apply excessive punishment under zero-tolerance policies. Intentional or not, these perceptions might be reflective of implicit and explicit racial biases and as a reprisal for the perceived threat of cultural deficiency.

Moreover, as schools in Texas and across the United States take an overzealous approach to zero-tolerance policies, Black girls as early as pre-kindergarten are pushed away from school and fall behind academically (Caldera, 2018). Additionally, based on the length of time away from school, these girls often enter the juvenile justice system through the school-to-prison pipeline. Consequently, they either do not have the desire or find it nearly impossible to return to school, thus further impacting their ability to achieve academic success. To illustrate, two extensive studies conducted (on nearly one million students) on Texas public schools found there are definitive parallels between school discipline practices, zero-tolerance policies, dropout rates,

and involvement in the justice system (Flango et al., 2012). The two studies were a) “Texas’ School-to-Prison Pipeline” by Texas Appleseed and b) “Breaking Schools’ Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students’ Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement” by the Council of State Governments Justice Center and Public Policy Research Institute (Flango et al., 2012). Additionally, a report sponsored by the Council of State Governments Justice Center and the Public Policy Research Institute, Texas A&M University (Fabelo et al., 2011) concluded a history of subjective disciplinary referrals at school is one of the most significant predictors for at-risk students’ (i.e., Black girls’) probability of future involvement in the juvenile justice system. The report indicated this phenomenon is more evident in Texas public schools, where one-third of all minority students are in District Alternative Education Placement (DAEP) and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Placement (JJAEP) or have already dropped out of school. Data analysis of the findings also showed more than 80% of Texas adult prison inmates are school dropouts. In 2008, the New York Civil Liberties Union said this about school suspensions:

Suspensions, often the first stop along the pipeline, play a crucial role in pushing students from the school system and into the criminal justice system. Research shows a clear correlation between suspensions and both low achievement and dropping out of school altogether. Such research also demonstrates a link between dropping out of school and incarceration later in life. (para. 2)

Indeed, it is perplexing to think that when it comes to teaching the required curriculum in school, a teacher’s skill, not a student’s race or gender, should be of concern. Instead, a plethora of research shows teachers often bring their racial prejudice into the classroom (Weir, 2016).

Historically, state and federal policy and practice are how the social exclusion of Black girls and women has been institutionalized and maintained (Crenshaw, 2019). Today, more than 6 decades after the *Brown vs. The Board of Education* (1954) decision, educators continue to seek understanding and solutions to the persistent achievement gap, disproportionate disciplinary rates, and school-to-prison pipeline between White and Black students, especially Black girls (Pringle et al., 2010). Unanticipated challenges will more than likely continue to rise as White women become the primary teachers of children of color in public education. This should lead stakeholders to further examine the teacher's role and the impact that teachers', administrators', and policymakers' expectations and biases have on the academic success of Black girls (Atkinson, 2010).

Although many theories have been identified by feminist scholars and to some extent used in developing policy and change, intersectionality theory automatically engenders an intersectional approach to understanding inequalities for Black girls and women (Crenshaw, 1989). By linking perceived threats and intersectionality theory while focusing on structural and systemic dynamics (i.e., Black studies, feminist/women, and gender studies), one can enhance the understanding of complex inequalities and unique experiences of Black girls in public schools (Clough & Fine, 2007; Weber & Parra-Medina, 2003). It is to be remembered; however, the most critical aspect of this continued research will be how teachers apply this cultural understanding in their classrooms.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the researcher introduces the research methodology for this quantitative study. Specifically, the research results showed trends in data related to the phenomena of disproportionality in disciplinary assignments for Black girls in Grades 3–9. In this study, Texas-wide urban and suburban public-school district discipline data were disaggregated by student-related characteristics, including race, gender, and economically disadvantaged. This quantitative approach allowed for a deeper understanding of Black girls' experiences while providing a way to contribute to current theory from the data that could enable an analysis of the educational struggles of Black girls. The researcher used secondary data from the existing literature and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in Austin, Texas, to support or refute the hypotheses. The information in this chapter includes the following:

- Research question,
- Methodology selection,
- Design of the study,
- Data collection,
- Participants,
- Variable selection process, and
- e) Summary of the chapter.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Building on current literature and theory, this study answered the following research questions and related hypotheses:

What is the relationship between Black girls' disproportionate discipline rates in Texas public schools, Grades 3–9, in comparison to White girls in their peer group?

H1: A relationship exists between race/ethnicity in the disproportion of disciplinary assignments.

H₀: All factors being equal, no relationship exists between race/ethnicity in the disproportion of disciplinary assignments.

H₁: All factors being equal, a student's race leads to disproportionate disciplinary assignments.

1. What effects do disproportionate discipline rates have on academic achievement levels for Black girls in 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 academic years?

H₀: No relationship exists between the proportion of disciplinary assignments and academic achievement levels.

H₁: A relationship exists between the proportion of disciplinary assignments and academic achievement levels.

Methodology Selected

For several decades, scholars have vehemently argued quantitative techniques can make valuable contributions to feminist movements and gender studies (Harding, 1997; Maynard, 1994; Mazur & Goertz, 2008; McCall, 2005). In many social sciences, the dominant discourse includes statistical methods, quantitative methods, and gender studies that are increasingly integrated. For example, journals such as *Feminist Economics*, *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, and *Women's Health Issues* often publish articles in which quantitative techniques are used (Spierings, 2012).

According to Creswell et al. (2003), a quantitative approach is appropriate when a researcher seeks to understand relationships between variables. Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) describe quantitative research methods as an inquiry into a social problem done by gathering and analyzing numerical data using mathematically based purposes—particularly statistics. Bryman and Bell (2015) argued that a quantitative research method is utilized because the researcher can get actualities as opposed to intangible information regarding the aim of the research.

Furthermore, according to Creswell et al. (2003), quantitative research is primarily selected for a post-positivist approach in developing knowledge. Researchers often employ strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys and collect data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data (i.e., cause and effect thinking and use of measurement). Post-positivists believe the researcher and the subject of study are independent. Post-positivists recognize the theories, hypotheses, and background knowledge held by the investigator, often having a strong influence on what is observed, how it is observed, and the outcome of what is observed (Creswell et al., 2003). In a post-positivism paradigm, the purpose of quantitative research is to predict results, test a theory, or find the strength of relationships between variables, namely, searching for cause-and-effect relationships (Creswell, 1994; Gall et al., 1996; G. W. Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The researcher begins with ideas, theories, or concepts defined in the study to identify variables of interest (Bryman, 2008; Hibberd, 2010). Similarly, the objective of quantitative research is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories, and hypotheses about the social phenomena. The process of numerical measurement is central to quantitative research because it provides the fundamental connection between empirical observation and mathematical expression of quantitative relationships (Creswell et al., 2003).

Chi-Square Analysis

For this study, a quantitative mathematical approach, such as chi-square and logistic regression analysis, required techniques for producing the knowledge needed to understand complex inequities and the differential effects of policies among different groups or individuals (Bauer, 2014; Bowleg, 2008; Grace, 2014; Scott & Siltanen, 2017). For that reason, the researcher chose chi-square because it is consistent with the literature this study is based on. Moreover, the author used a chi-square statistics method for testing relationships between categorical variables characterized as intersectionality (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender). Franke et al. (2012) argued a chi-square analysis is appropriate to use since the independent or predictor (race/ethnicity, gender) and dependent or outcome (disciplinary assignments) variables analyzed were not mutually exclusive categorical data. They also argued for the use of chi-square analysis when examining independence across two categorical variables or to assess how well a sample fits the distribution of a known population (Franke et al., 2012). The null hypothesis of the chi-square test is that no relationship exists on the categorical variables in the population; they are independent of each other (G. A. Morgan et al., 2013). A quantitative analysis that is intersectionality-informed might inspire policymakers to categorize social problems and policy issues in a context-informed manner that creates socially relevant, inclusive, and useful policy resolutions, thus increasing equality (Bauer, 2014; Scott & Siltanen, 2017).

Moreover, growth in intersectionality-informed quantitative research offers insight into the array of inequity that may not be apparent from qualitative research (Bauer, 2014; Grace, 2014; Scott & Siltanen, 2017). It is important to note that chi-square does not describe the effect (G. A. Morgan et al., 2013). It does provide information about relationships among variables, thus, revealing if the relationship is statistically significant. Another one of the most common

quantitative statistical methods used in social sciences falls under the umbrella of the general linear model (Trochim, 2006), specifically regression analysis.

Logistic Regression Analysis

Many of the studies in current intersectionality literature used regression analysis (Balfanz et al., 2015; Bryan et al., 2012; Hemphill et al., 2014; Mizel et al., 2016; Ramey, 2015; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014; Smolkowski et al., 2016; Vanderhaar et al., 2015; K. Wolf & Kupchik, 2015). While several researchers have chosen to utilize linear regression analysis, such as risk ratios, to demonstrate how much more likely one group is disciplined than another (Brown & Steele, 2015; Shollenberger, 2015), Losen, Hodson et al. (2014) caution researchers that the use of risk ratio can be deceptive when analyzing small populations and continuous variables. Therefore, linear regression is not appropriate for this study because linear regression models depend on a continuous and normally-distributed outcome variable (Sberna, 2005). Instead, a logistic regression model was employed because the purpose of the research was to predict a categorical variable within a group of independent variables (Sberna, 2005). This type of analysis is helpful when some of the predictor variables in the study can be numeric or categorical (Leech et al., 2011). Logistic regression predicts the probability of the occurrence of the dependent variable.

In sum, an intersectional perspective—that is, categories involving race and gender—has significant potential to transform traditional quantitative research methods in ways that capture social inequities more effectively. Because the purpose of this study was to examine disproportionate disciplinary rates among Black girls and whether the disproportionality impacts reading achievement in comparison to White girls in Texas urban and suburban public schools, Grades 3–9, in the 2015-2018 academic years, a quantitative approach was the most appropriate.

Again, it should be noted a statistical relationship is not necessarily a cause, so although a variable is found to be statistically significant, it does not necessarily mean the phenomena is explained by it.

Design of the Study

With the study's multivariate design, the researcher analyzed data sets utilizing a chi-square and logistics regression method. For categorical variables, chi-square tests for independence are used to determine how likely the observed frequencies of the analyzed events are not due to chance. In other words, the null hypothesis is rejected, and there is statistical significance the likelihood of a relationship between two or more variables is caused by something other than chance. The research included three sets of data:

- 2015-2018 Texas public urban/suburban school district number of female students by race/ethnicity, gender, and disciplinary assignments
 - in/out of school suspension (ISS/OSS),
 - DAEP,
 - JJAEP, or
 - other expulsions.
- 2015-2018 Texas public urban/suburban school district number of female students by race/ethnic, gender, and meet or did not meet achievement level rates.
- 2015-2018 Texas public urban/suburban school district number of female students by race/ethnicity and economically disadvantaged levels.

Instrumentation

Existing data were collected from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) conducted by the TEA (2020b) for all female students enrolled in Texas

urban/suburban public-school districts. Data included discipline referral actions that occurred during the school year, academic achievement proficiency rates, and free and reduced lunch eligibility. In addition, the PEIMS data collection system included the student-related characteristics of race/ethnicity and gender regarding disciplinary assignments. For instance, when a formal discipline referral was made to school administrators, the administrators filled out a standard form in the digital data-collection system (TEA, 2020b). The form included information about the date and nature of the incident and the action taken by the administrator.

The data transferred from the PEIMS (TEA, 2020b) data-collection system was based on each disciplinary infraction type as the unit of analysis. For the categorical variables of race and gender, a chi-square test for independence was used to determine how likely the observed frequencies of the events were statistically significant (usually a difference) and thus, not attributed to chance. The data transferred from PIEM collection was based on six categories: Black/Black, Hispanic/Latina, Asian, Two or More Races, White, and Other. Since this study only looked at females, gender was recorded as the total number of females Grades 3–9 enrolled in Texas public urban and suburban school districts in 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 academic school years. Because some of the proportions of races were so small, TEA combined these races and categorized them as “Other” (Cohen, 1988; Murphy & Myors, 1999). An adequate sample size helps ensure the study results will yield reliable information, and that the results accurately measure what they are intended to measure (J. R. Foster, 2001; Di Stefano, 2001; Linnell Nemec, 1991). According to Bewick et al. (2003), the value of the cell *expected* should be 5 or more in at least 80% of the cells, and no cell should have an expected of less than 1. This assumption is most likely to be met if the sample size equals at least the number of cells multiplied by 5.

Dependent or outcome variables included the total number of disciplinary assignments and achievement proficiency rates for each female enrolled in Texas public urban and suburban school districts in the 2015-2018 school years. The TEA (2020a) has defined in-school suspension as all in-school suspensions, whether full day or part day. TEA defines out-of-school suspension as removing students from the regular classroom as a disciplinary assignment. An out-of-school suspension typically occurs after the use of an in-school suspension. When students are assigned an out-of-school suspension, they are removed from the school setting for at least 1 day but not more than 3 consecutive days. DAEP placement is the third method of disciplinary assignment. As such, it is allotted to students only after the assignment of an in-school suspension and an out-of-school suspension. Students are removed from regular classes and placed in a separate class, which can be on or off the students' regular school campus in a disciplinary alternative education program placement. Expulsion pertains to any removals without educational placement for the current year or a continuation from the prior year. This action group does not include any type of expulsion to a DAEP or JJAEP. JJAEP pertains to all actions for students being placed or expelled to a JJAEP facility for the current year or a continuation from the prior year (TEA, 2020a). For this study, the author combined all assignments into one category: disciplinary assignments. The purpose of combining TEAs disciplinary assignments was to make the assignments dichotomous for chi-square and logistics regression analysis models. Next, TEA (2020c) describes reading achievement success based on the following performance level descriptors (PLDs) and policy definitions:

- Masters Grade Level—a student shows a mastery of the course knowledge and skills, and they are on track for college and career readiness.

- Meets Grade Level—a student shows a strong knowledge of course content and is prepared to progress to the next grade.
- Approaches Grade Level—a student shows some knowledge of course content but may be missing critical elements, and
- Did Not Meet Grade Level—a student shows no fundamental understanding of course expectations and will need significant help in this subject.

For this study, the researcher used these performance labels to answer Research Question 2.

Lastly, TEA (2007) categorized economically disadvantaged as students who are “eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program” (para. 5).

Data Collection

After an in-depth explanation of the study, permission to use the PEIMS data was granted from the TEA. The secondary data analysis was directed under the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), 20 USC. Section 1232g, and TEA is required to withhold from public disclosure personally identifiable information in education records. Additionally, in Open Records Decision No. 634, the Texas Attorney General authorized TEA to withhold any information requested under the Public Information Act that TEA determined was confidential under FERPA without the necessity of seeking a determination from the Attorney General under Section §552.301 of the Government Code (Office of the Attorney General State of Texas, 1995).

For this study, the TEA released the students’ PEIMS data without personal identifiers. Note that “-999” indicates counts or percentages are not available (i.e., masked) to comply with the FERPA. Also, all names were replaced with numbers, and no information provided to the

researcher would permit data to be traced back to any specific student. Data supplied by PEIMS did not meet the definition of human subjects research under the University of Texas Arlington's (2020) Institutional Review Board Policy RA-PO4, Statement of Principles, and Policies Regarding Human Subjects in Research. The policy states if a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains: a) data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or b) identifiable private information, even if no intervention or interaction with the researcher occurs, the researcher must obtain official permission from the Institutional Review Board to collect this data. For the current study, official permission was not required; the data were delivered to the researchers' personal computer via electronic mail in four separate spreadsheets. The data were then converted into a simple Excel file table for analysis. The researcher used SPSS V23 and Stata V16 to analyze the data. SPSS is statistical software that is used to solve business and research problems by using ad hoc analysis, hypothesis testing, and predictive analytic. SPSS is designed to provide a simple and effective way to input statistical data, manipulate data, identify trends and patterns, and extrapolate answers. Stata is general-purpose statistical software.

The data were assumed to be a valid representation of school disciplinary procedures and student's characteristics. As the staff members who made the referrals did not know, the data would be analyzed outside of traditional school use of the data. It was also assumed the data were complete and accurate as they were verified at the local level and reported routinely to the state on an annual basis.

Participants

Through this longitudinal study, the researcher only looked at disciplined female students enrolled in Texas public urban and suburban school districts. Enrollment is typically defined as

the number of students registered in a school at a designated time in the school year. In this study, enrollment refers to the number of female students enrolled in Grades 3–9 in the Texas public school system as of the last Friday in October (TEA, 2018).

Variables

Dependent Variables

Disciplinary Assignments and Achievement Levels

As previously stated, teachers and administrators have used in- and out-of-school suspensions and expulsion discipline practices to keep problematic students out of school (Dickinson & Miller, 2006; Raffaele Mendez et al., 2002; T. G. Ryan & Goodram, 2013; Skiba, 2014). This disproportionate disciplinary practice has increased the probability that suspended/expelled students, especially Black girls, experience a higher risk of falling into the school-to-prison pipeline track, achievement gaps, economic consequences, as well as other negative consequences (Fenning et al., 2012; Flannery et al., 2012; Gibson & Haight, 2013; A. Gregory et al., 2011; Hemphill et al., 2014; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009; T. G. Ryan & Goodram, 2013). For this study disciplinary assignments represents: in/out-of-school suspension, expulsion, juvenile justice alternative education program (JJEAP), and disciplinary alternative education program (DEAP) for every instance a student was removed from any part of their regular academic program and achievement gaps refer to whether or not a student (a) meets grade-level performance or (c) did not meet grade-level performance in reading proficiency in the academic school years (TEA, 2020b).

Independent Variables

Race and Gender

The main independent variables in this study were race/ethnicity and gender (only females were used for this study). The breakdown of the independent variables in this dissertation was Black, Hispanic/Latina, Asian, Two or More Races, White, and Other. Since this research only focused on females, it was not necessary to break down the gender category. Because rates for smaller groups can be less stable over time, comparisons of rates across racial/ethnic groups can be misleading when one group is small compared to other groups. Therefore, for this study, the racial/ethnic categories of Asian and Other were removed from the chi-square analysis to prevent skewing data analysis results.

Control Variable

Economically Disadvantaged Strata

The control variable in this study was economically disadvantaged status. According to TEA (2007), economically disadvantaged refers to students who are eligible to participate in the national free or reduced-price lunch program.

According to Skiba et al. (2002), the student-related characteristics commonly associated with disciplinary practices are race/ethnicity, gender, economically disadvantaged, and disability status. Skiba et al. further argued Black girls are more likely to receive more frequent and harsher disciplinary assignments than any other group of students, even when controlling for economically disadvantaged factors. To illustrate, Skiba et al. examined a 1-year sample of discipline data at the middle school level at one mid-western school district. They found being a Black female was the main predictor for in- and out-of-school suspension and expulsion even when controlling for economically disadvantaged status (Skiba et al. 2002). Furthermore,

according to several scholars, economically disadvantaged status has consistently been a risk factor for inequality in school discipline practices, especially for Black girls (Brantlinger, 1991; Skiba et al., 1997; Wu et al., 1982). For example, in their argument to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the National Association of Secondary School Principals stated:

Racial disproportionality in the application of zero-tolerance policies is not an issue of discrimination or bias between ethnic or racial groups, but a socioeconomic issue. . . . A higher incidence of ethnic and racial minority students being affected by zero-tolerance policies should not be seen as disparate treatment or discrimination but in terms of an issue of socioeconomic status. (p. 3; as cited in Skiba et al., 2002, pp. 321-322)

Importantly, they further argued studies of disciplinary disproportionality controlling for economically disadvantaged status suggest race contributes to disciplinary outcomes independent of economically disadvantaged status (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2000; as cited in Skiba et al., 2002).

Limitations of the Study

For this research, some limitations were encountered. Limitations included the way data were reported by the official databases, especially regarding race. It is a category that does not differentiate between all the students that may be considered Black. Many Latina's are often categorized as non-Black; however, disciplined at the same rate as Black girls. To explain, historically, Latinos/as of African descent are encouraged to abandon their Black identity for a more inclusive notion of belonging to or fitting into the national (Luis, 2013). In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, B. Anderson (2006) explores how the national is defined by an elite intellectual community that equates its values with those belonging to the emerging nation, thus, obligating marginal communities to abandon

their sense of individualism. This type of caste system became a fundamental element of the national discourse, which supported White superiority and Black inferiority. The historical concept of racial Whitening appeared to be the only road to social, economic, and political mobility for many Latinos seeking to emerge into the national, thus, abandoning their African heritage (Luis, 2013).

This abandonment of heritage might explain why more Latinas appeared to be disciplined at a higher rate for this study. To present another explanation, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), many Latinos consider it be an aspiration if they select “White” or “some other race” in the census. Moreover, Census Bureau researchers suggest many Latinos/Hispanics were more likely not to answer or give an invalid answer if they do not feel they identify with the current racial categories (Krogstad & Cohn, 2014). As a result, people do not give valid answers, resulting in the bureau filling in their responses using statistical imputation, based on characteristics of their neighbors, thus, skewing valid race variables and data (Krogstad & Cohn, 2014). Unfortunately, this is often an attempt to join a category from which they are often excluded. Latinos of all races carry with them the anti-Black baggage colonialism and slavery imposed (Parker et al., 2015).

Summary of the Chapter

The researcher’s goal in this chapter was to outline the research method used to answer the research questions. The researcher presented the research questions and hypotheses, methodology, design, data source and collection, study participants, and the variables selection process. The study followed a quantitative approach utilizing chi-square to answer Research Question 1 and logistics regression to answer Research Question 2. Secondary data analysis was used to contribute to current theory on how the disproportionate disciplinary infractions impact

achievement gaps for Black girls in comparison to White girls in Texas public urban and suburban school districts. Chapter 4 provides the study results and findings through statistical data analysis described in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Chapter 4 presents the results and findings of the study. Data were collected from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) conducted by the State of Texas Education Agency (TEA). The researcher obtained the Grades 3–9 STAAR scores matched to the female discipline data for the entire State of Texas for 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 school years. The total female population for the 2015-2016 school year was 1,223,623. The total female student population for the 2016-2017 school year was 1,291,874. Similarly, the entire student female population for the 2017-2018 school year was 1,303,717. The researcher randomly sampled 15% of the total female population from each urban and suburban district for each of the years under investigation. Subsequent analyses were performed on 15% of the randomly sampled data. Descriptive and inferential (chi-square) statistics were calculated for 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 school year data sets.

The researcher used chi-square analyses to answer Research Question 1. Additionally, regression analyses were conducted on the same data sets to answer Research Question 2. All data analyses were performed using Stata Version 16. Logistics Regression data analyses were performed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23.

To determine the disproportionate assignment of disciplinary actions by race/ethnicity in Texas public school districts while controlling for economically disadvantaged status, the researcher coded students' characteristics dichotomously. For example, the researcher coded the variables with the following values:

- Disciplined = 1, Not disciplined = 0
- Economically disadvantaged = 1, Non-economically disadvantaged = 0

- Students in urban school districts = 1, Students in suburban school districts = 0

This nonparametric statistical procedure was used because the independent variable of race/ethnicity and the dependent variables of disciplinary actions and economically disadvantaged status were categorical grouping variables. In addition, with the large sample, the Pearson chi-square statistical procedure's underlying assumptions were met.

The researcher identified trends in data related to the phenomena of disproportionality in disciplinary procedures for Black girls in the State of Texas. For chi-square analysis, these data were limited to the student groups with enough students in each cell. Asian and Other race/ethnicity student groups were not excluded from the data, although they did not always have enough students subjected to disciplinary actions. According to Kang (2013), a substantial amount of missing "data reduces statistical power, which refers to the probability that the test will reject the null hypothesis when it is false," which might "cause bias in the estimation of parameters," "reduce the representativeness of the samples," and "complicate the analysis of the study" (p. 402). As a result, the validity of the study "can lead to invalid conclusions" (p. 402). The researcher did not include data from charter schools because they operate on promises made in their charters and with freedom from some of the imposed regulations upon district schools (TEA, 2019).

The findings of this study are presented as follows. First, a brief description of the STAAR testing program is presented to explain the findings. Second, the findings show the sample descriptions for each of the years analyzed. Next, the secondary data analysis results are presented with the chi-square analyses for 2015-2018 discipline actions for Asian, African American/Black, Hispanic/Latina, White, and Two or More Races, and Other girls by the district

type (urban/suburban) while controlling for economically disadvantaged status. Lastly, the logistic regression analysis findings are presented for each academic year 2015-2018.

STAAR Performance Levels

As mentioned in Chapter 3, STAAR is the state of Texas' testing program. It is based on state curriculum standards in core subjects, including reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. The STAAR is a series of tests intended to inform administrators, teachers, policymakers, and parents of how students are doing in school. The goal is to make sure students learn and perform at the grade level; they should be on-track to graduate from high school ready for college or a career (TEA, 2020).

The TEA's (2020) performance level is used to describe how much information a student knew about the subject tested. The student may achieve four different performance levels on the STAAR test. The four levels of performance are:

1. Masters Grade Level—student shows a mastery of the course knowledge and skills and is on track for college and career readiness,
2. Meets Grade Level—student shows a strong knowledge of course content and is prepared to progress to the next grade,
3. Approaches Grade Level—student shows some knowledge of course content but may be missing critical elements, and
4. Did Not Meet Grade Level—student shows no fundamental understanding of course expectations and will need significant help in this subject (TEA, 2020).

Based on TEA's (2020) performance levels, to utilize the logistics regression model, the researcher used dichotomous variables coded: Meets Grade Level = 1 and Did not meet grade-level = 0. This means that students were coded based on whether they passed the STAAR

reading test at the Meets Grade Level or Did Not Meet Grade Level (Oates, 2015). According to Texas’ literacy standards, these performance levels demonstrate a student’s reading, understanding, and how they communicate effectively, all skills needed not only for tests but also for life (TEA, 2020).

Sample Description by Academic Years 2015-2018

Tables 1-2 shows the description for the 2015-2018 school year. The tables show the race/ethnic breakdown of both non-economically and economically disadvantaged status by district type. Table 1 shows the non-economically disadvantaged urban district sample population for 2015–2018 was $N = 83,833$.

Table 1

2015–2018 Race/Ethnicity Breakdown of Non-Economically Disadvantaged by District Type

Descriptive Non-Economically Disadvantaged	Suburban District		Urban District	
	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>
Race/Ethnicity				
Black	10	6,956	10.94	9,171
Hispanic	28.15	19,570	38.00	31,857
Asian	7.33	5,097	12.89	10,808
Two or More Races	3.39	2,354	3.25	2,724
White	51	35,458	34.67	29,068
Other	0.14	95	0.24	205
Total	100	69,530	100	83,833

A breakdown by race/ethnicity of that total is as follows: Asian 12.89% ($n = 10,808$), Black 10.94% ($n = 9,171$), Hispanic/Latina 38% ($n = 31,857$), White 34.67% ($n = 29,068$), Two or More Races 3.25% ($n = 2,724$), and Other 0.24% ($n = 205$). With respect to non-economically

disadvantaged suburban district sample population for 2015–2018 was $N = 69,530$. A breakdown by race/ethnicity of that total is as follows: Asian 7.33% ($n = 5,097$), Black 10% ($n = 6,956$), Hispanic/Latina 28.15% ($n = 19,570$), White 51% ($n = 35,458$), Two or More Races 3.39% ($n = 2,354$), and Other 0.14% ($n = 95$).

Table 2 shows the sample description statistics for the 2015-2018 school years. The table shows the race/ethnic breakdown of the economically disadvantaged status by district type. With respect to economically disadvantaged urban districts, Table 2 shows the sample population for 2015-2018 was $N = 154,343$.

Table 2

2015–2018 Race/Ethnicity Breakdown of Economically Disadvantaged by District Type

Descriptive Economically Disadvantaged	Suburban District		Urban District	
	%	N	%	N
Race/Ethnicity				
Black	18.71	14,552	18.48	28,527
Hispanic	66.07	51,376	72.50	111,897
Asian	2.44	1,896	2.79	4,312
Two or More Races	1.37	1,064	1.00	1,542
White	11.16	8,679	5.07	7,821
Other	0.24	189	0.16	244
Total	100	77,756	100	154,343

A breakdown by race/ethnicity of the sample population is as follows: Asian 2.79% ($n = 4,312$), Black 18.48% ($n = 28,527$), Hispanic/Latina 72.50% ($n = 111,897$), White 5.07% ($n = 7,821$), Two or More Races 1.0% ($n = 1,542$), and Other 0.16% ($n = 244$). With respect to economically disadvantaged suburban districts, the sample population for 2015-2018 was $N =$

77,756. A breakdown by race/ethnicity of that total is as follows: Asian 2.44% ($n = 1,896$), Black 18.71% ($n = 14,552$), Hispanic/Latina 66.07% ($n = 51,376$), White 11.16% ($n = 8,679$), Two or More Races 1.37% ($n = 1,064$), and Other 0.24% ($n = 189$).

Chi-Square Analysis

This section presents and discusses the results for Research Question 1: What is the relationship between Black girls' disproportionate discipline rates in Texas public schools, Grades 3–9, in comparison to White girls in their peer group?

H1: A relationship exists between race/ethnicity in the disproportion of disciplinary assignments.

H₀: All factors being equal, no relationship exists between race/ethnicity in the disproportion of disciplinary assignments.

H₁: All factors being equal, a student's race leads to disproportionate disciplinary assignments.

The variables are defined as follows:

- Dependent Variables
 - Discipline: 1 = Yes, 0 = No
 - Economically Disadvantage: 1 = Yes, 0 = No
- Independent Variables
 - Race/Ethnicity – This is students subjected to discipline placement (Asian, African American/Black, Hispanic/Latina, White, and Two or More Races, and Other)
- Control Variables
 - Economically Disadvantage: 1 = Yes, 0 = No

To ascertain the extent to which differences are present in the assignment of disciplinary actions for girls by race/ethnicity in 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 school years in Texas public suburban and urban school districts, the researcher performed a Pearson chi-square procedure while controlling for economically disadvantaged status. Given that race/ethnicity constituted a categorical independent variable and dependent variables were dichotomously coded (i.e., disciplined or non-disciplined; economically disadvantaged, non-economically disadvantaged), a Pearson chi-square analysis was the statistical model method chosen (Slate & Rojas-LeBouef, 2011). All data were independent of each other. In addition, the available cell size was greater than five; therefore, the assumptions for utilizing a Pearson chi-square were met for the inferential research questions (Field, 2009). According to Bewick et al. (2003), the cell's value should be five or more in at least 80% of the cells, and no cell should have a value of less than one. Bewick et al. (2003) argued that this assumption specifies the sample size needed to use the chi-square for any number of cells in that chi-square.

Chi-Square Analyses for 2015-2018 Data

Regarding the 2015-2018 school year, the research question focus was the association between Black girls' discipline rates in Texas public schools, Grades 3–9, compared to their White peers. Tables present the chi-square findings for the 2015-2018 discipline actions by student groups in both urban and suburban school districts while controlling for the economically disadvantaged status. Based on the *p*-value, the analysis shows strong evidence that a statistically significant relationship was present in the total disciplinary action assignment for both economically and non-economically disadvantaged Black girls in Grades 3–9 by their race/ethnicity. This finding's *p*-value is less than .01, suggesting a statistical significance for Black girls' disproportionate disciplinary assignments in Texas urban and suburban school

districts. The effect size for this finding, Cramer’s V, ranges from moderate to strong for each year, according to Cohen (1988). Cohen’s (1988) statistic expresses the difference between means (effect size) in standard deviation units is not impacted by sample size, as is the *p*-value. Cramer’s V is utilized for tables bigger than 2 × 2 tabulation and varies between 0 and 1 without any negative values (Akoglu, 2018). According to Akoglu (2018), similar to Pearson’s *r*, a value close to 0 means no association. However, a value bigger than 0.25 is considered a very strong relationship for the Cramer’s V. Table 3 shows an interpretation of Cramer’s V.

Table 3

Interpretation of Cramer’s V

Phi and Cramer’s V	Interpretation
> 0.25	Very Strong
> 0.15	Strong
> 0.10	Moderate
> 0.05	Weak
> 0	No or very weak

According to Cohen (1988), if two groups’ means do not differ by 0.2 standard deviations or more, the difference is trivial, even if it is statistically significant. In essence, for this study, the effect size suggests the strength or magnitude of a moderate to strong practical significance between race/ethnicity and disproportionate discipline actions in the 2015-2018 school year.

Tables 4–5 present the chi-square findings for the 2015-2018 discipline placement by student group controlling for economically disadvantaged status. This association’s *p*-value was < .001, suggesting there is a statistical significance for Black girls’ disproportionate disciplinary assignments in Texas urban school districts for both non-economically and economically

disadvantaged Black girls Grades 3–9. The effect size for these findings, Cramer’s V, is moderate, according to Cohen (1988). For this study, the effect size suggests the strength or magnitude of a moderate practical significance between race/ethnicity and disproportionate discipline actions, controlling for economically disadvantaged in the 2015-2018 school year.

As shown in Table 4, a higher percentage (27.94%) of urban non-economically disadvantaged Black girls were subjected to disciplinary action(s) than urban non-economically disadvantaged White girls (16.66%). Similarly, as shown in Table 5, higher percentages (34.24%) of urban economically disadvantaged Black girls were subjected to disciplinary action than urban economically disadvantaged (1.95%) White girls. There was a significant association between the district type, subjection to disciplinary actions, and Black girls who were non-economically disadvantaged ($\chi^2 = 1.4e+03, p = .00$). Table 4 shows that of the total population ($N = 83,833$) in urban non-economically disadvantaged status, 639 (.76%) of Black girls were disciplined. Table 5 also shows in urban economically disadvantaged status ($N = 154,343$), 5,185 (3.36%) of Black girls were disciplined ($\chi^2 = 3.4e+03, p = .00$). Regardless of the economic status, Black girls were disproportionately disciplined compared to White girls in those school districts. These data suggest a significant statistical relationship between race and disproportionate disciplinary actions for Black girls. By contrast, the economic status of the White girls did not matter in their disciplinary placement actions in comparison to Black girls. Only 381 (.45%) of the district total White girls in urban non-economically disadvantaged status and 295 (1.95%) in urban economically disadvantaged status were assigned disciplinary assignments (see Tables 4 and 5, respectively).

Table 4

Chi-Square Analysis—Urban Districts Disciplinary Actions by Race Controlling for Non-Economically Disadvantaged Students

Race		Not Disciplined		Disciplined		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Asian	Freq.	10,807.00	13.25	1.00	.04	10,808.00	12.89
	Exp. Freq.	10,513.20	12.89	294.80	.00	10,808.00	12.89
African American	Freq.	8,532.00	10.46	639.00	27.94	9,171.00	10.94
	Exp. Freq.	8,920.80	10.18	250.20	.76	9,171.00	10.94
Hispanic	Freq.	30,598.00	37.52	1,259.00	55.05	31,857.00	38.00
	Exp. Freq.	30,987.90	36.50	869.10	1.50	31,857.00	38.00
White	Freq.	28,687.00	35.18	381.00	16.66	29,068.00	34.67
	Exp. Freq.	28,275.00	34.22	793.00	.45	29,068.00	34.67
Two or More Races	Freq.	2,717.00	3.33	7.00	.31	2,724.00	3.25
	Exp. Freq.	2,649.70	3.24	74.30	.01	2,724.00	3.25
Other	Freq.	205.00	.25	0.00	.24	205.00	.24
	Exp. Freq.	199.40	.24	5.60	.00	205.00	.24
Total	Freq.	81,546.00	100.00	2,287.00	100.00	83,833.00	100.00
	Exp. Freq.	81,546.00	97.27	2,287.00	2.73	83,833.00	100.00

Note. Pearson $\chi^2 = 0.00014$, $p = .000$; Likelihood $\chi^2 = 0.00016$, $p = .000$; Cramer's V = 0.128.

Freq. = Frequency; Exp. Freq. = Expected Frequency.

Table 5

Chi-Square Analysis—Urban Districts Disciplinary Actions by Race Controlling for Economically Disadvantaged Students

Race		Not Disciplined		Disciplined		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Asian	Freq.	4,311.00	3.10	1.00	.01	4,312.00	2.79
	Exp. Freq.	3,889.31	2.79	422.70	.00	4,312.00	2.79
African American	Freq.	23,342.00	16.77	5,185.00	34.24	28,527.00	18.48
	Exp. Freq.	25,730.70	15.12	2,796.30	3.36	28,527.00	18.48
Hispanic	Freq.	10,266.00	73.46	9,631.00	63.66	111,897.00	72.50
	Exp. Freq.	102,928.60	66.26	10,968.40	6.24	111,897.00	72.50
White	Freq.	7,526.00	5.41	295.00	1.95	7,821.00	5.07
	Exp. Freq.	7054.40	4.88	766.60	0.19	7,821.00	5.07
Two or More Races	Freq.	1,525.00	1.10	17.00	0.11	1,542.00	1.00
	Exp. Freq.	1,390.90	0.99	151.10	0.01	1,542.00	1.00
Other	Freq.	244.00	.18	0.00	0.00	244.00	0.16
	Exp. Freq.	220.10	.16	23.90	0.00	244.00	0.16
Total	Freq.	139,214.00	100.00	15,129.00	100.0	154,343.00	100.00
	Exp. Freq.	139,214.00	90.20	15,129.00	9.80	154,343.00	100.00

Note. Pearson $\chi^2 = 0.00034$, $p = .000$; Likelihood $\chi^2 = 0.00036$, $p = .000$; Cramer's V = 0.148.

Freq. = Frequency; Exp. Freq. = Expected Frequency.

Importantly, of all the female students subjected to disciplinary actions in non-economically disadvantaged urban districts ($N = 83,833$), 0.4% ($n = 1$) were Asian, 27.94% ($n = 639$) were Black, 55.05% ($n = 1,259$) were Hispanic/Latina, 16.66% ($n = 381$) were White, 0.31% ($n = 7$) were Two or More Races, and 0.00% ($n = 0$) were Other. For economically

disadvantaged urban districts, records for disciplined female students in urban districts showed 0.00% ($n = 1$) were Asian, 34.27% ($n = 5,185$) were Black, 63.66% ($n = 9,631$) were Hispanic/Latina, 1.95% ($n = 295$) were White, 0.11% ($n = 17$) were Two or More Races, and 0.00% ($n = 0$) were Other.

In urban districts, regardless of economic status, disproportionality was present in the assignment of disciplinary actions by race/ethnicity in the 2015-2018 academic school years. Of the girls identified as economically disadvantaged, Black girls 34.27% ($n = 28,527$) received 27% more instances of disciplinary actions than White girls 1.95% ($n = 7,821$). These numbers are exceedingly high compared to White girls receiving a disciplinary assignment. Black girls continued to receive higher percentages of disciplinary actions than all girls except Hispanic/Latina girls in major urban districts. Moreover, in every instance, the number of disciplinary instances increased for Black girls more than White girls did.

Tables 6-7 present the chi-square findings for the 2015-2018 discipline placement by student group controlling for the economically disadvantaged status. This association's p -value was .00, suggesting there is a statistical significance for Black girls' disproportionate disciplinary assignments in Texas urban school districts for both non-economically and economically disadvantaged Black girls in Grade 3–9. The effect size for these findings, Cramer's V , is moderate, according to Cohen (1988). For this study, the effect size suggests the strength or magnitude of a moderate practical significance between race/ethnicity and disproportionate discipline actions, controlling for economically disadvantaged in the 2015-2018 school year.

As shown in Table 6, a higher percentage (30.77%) of suburban non-economically disadvantaged White girls were subjected to disciplinary action(s) than suburban non-economically disadvantaged Black girls (33.22%). However, of the total population ($N =$

69,530), suburban non-economically disadvantaged Black girls, $n = 6,956$ (0.67%) were disproportionality subjected to disciplinary action compared to suburban non-economically disadvantaged White girls, $n = 35,458$ (0.72%).

Table 6

Chi-Square Analysis–Suburban Districts Disciplinary Actions by Race Controlling for Non-Economically Disadvantaged Students

Race		Not Disciplined		Disciplined		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Asian	Freq.	5,095.00	7.49	2.00	0.13	5,097.00	7.33
	Exp. Freq.	4,986.50	7.33	110.5	0.00	5,097.00	7.33
African American	Freq.	6,492.00	9.54	464.00	30.77	6,956.00	10.00
	Exp. Freq.	6,805.10	9.34	150.90	0.67	6,956.00	10.00
Hispanic	Freq.	19,029.00	27.97	541.00	35.88	19,570.00	28.15
	Exp. Freq.	19,145.60	27.37	424.40	0.78	19,570.00	28.15
White	Freq.	34,957.00	51.39	501.00	33.22	35,458.00	51.00
	Exp. Freq.	34,689.00	50.28	769.00	0.72	35,458.00	51.00
Two or More Races	Freq.	2,354.00	3.46	0.00	0.00	2,354.00	3.39
	Exp. Freq.	2,302.90	3.39	51.10	0.00	2,354.00	3.39
Other	Freq.	95.00	0.14	0.00	0.00	95.00	0.14
	Exp. Freq.	2,92.90	0.14	2.10	0.00	95.00	0.14
Total	Freq.	68,022.00	100.00	1,508.00	100.00	69,530.00	100.00
	Exp. Freq.	68,022.00	97.83	1,508.00	2.17	69,530.00	100.00

Note. Pearson $\chi^2 = 955.793$, $p = .000$; Likelihood $\chi^2 = 880.640$, $p = .000$; Cramer's V = 0.117.

Freq. = Frequency; Exp. Freq. = Expected Frequency

A similar relationship was present for the economically disadvantaged suburban Black girls, $n = 2,376$ (3.06%) were disproportionately subjected to disciplinary action in comparison to suburban non-economically disadvantaged White girls, $n = 312$ (0.40%). There was a significant association between the suburban district type, subjection to disciplinary actions, and White students who were non-economically disadvantaged and economically disadvantaged. These data suggest a relationship between the economic status and their placement in disciplinary actions for Black girls. By contrast, the economic status of the White girls did not matter in their disciplinary placement actions.

There was a significant association between the district type, subjection to disciplinary actions, and Black girls who were non-economically disadvantaged ($\chi^2 = 955.7929, p = .00$). Table 6 shows that of the total population ($N = 69,530$) in suburban non-economically disadvantaged status, 464 (0.67%) of Black girls were disciplined. And in suburban economically disadvantaged status ($N = 77,756$), 2,376 (3.06%) of Black girls were disciplined ($\chi^2 = 1.6e+03, p = .00$). Regardless of the economic status, Black girls were disproportionately disciplined compared to White girls in those school districts. These data suggest a significant statistical relationship between race and disproportionate disciplinary actions for Black girls. By contrast, the economic status of the White girls did not matter in their disciplinary placement actions. In comparison to Black girls (see Table 6), only 501 (0.78%) of district total White girls (see Table 4) in suburban non-economically disadvantaged status and 312 (0.40%) in suburban economically disadvantaged status were assigned disciplinary assignments irrespective of economic status.

Importantly, of all the female students subjected to disciplinary actions in non-economically disadvantaged urban districts ($N = 69,530$), 0.13% ($n = 2$) were Asian, 30.77% (n

= 464) were Black, 35.88% ($n = 541$) were Hispanic/Latina, 33.22% ($n = 501$) were White, 0.00% ($n = 0$) were Two or More Races, and 0.00% ($n = 0$) were Other. For economically disadvantaged, records for disciplined female students in suburban districts ($N = 77,756$) showed 0.00% ($n = 0$) were Asian, 34.68% ($n = 2,376$) were Black, 60.71% ($n = 4,160$) were Hispanic/Latina, 4.55% ($n = 312$) were White, 0.04% ($n = 3$) were Two or More Races, and 0.00% ($n = 1$) were Other.

In suburban districts, irrespective of economic status, disproportionality was present in the assignment of disciplinary actions by race/ethnicity in the 2015-2018 academic school years. Of the girls identified as economically disadvantaged, Black girls, 34.68% ($n = 14,552$), received almost seven times as many disciplinary actions as White girls, 4.55% ($n = 8,679$). In almost every instance, numbers for Black girls are exceedingly high compared to White girls who received a disciplinary assignment. Concerning females in major urban districts, Black girls continued to receive higher percentages of disciplinary actions than all girls except Hispanic/Latina girls. Furthermore, in every instance, the number of disciplinary instances increased more for Black girls than White girls.

Chi-Square Findings

After accounting for various demographic covariates, there is a statistically significant racial group difference (with Black girls serving as the reference group) in how Black girls are disproportionately disciplined in Texas urban and suburban public-school districts. For the disciplinary action rates, Black girls who were economically disadvantaged had statistically significantly higher disciplinary assignment rates than White girls who were economically disadvantaged and, in most instances, who were non-economically disadvantaged. In all three

school years and all grade levels, Black girls who were economically disadvantaged received the highest disciplinary assignment rates amongst all racial groups, except for Hispanic/Latina girls.

Concerning suburban school districts ($N = 69,530$) and whether students were considered non-economically disadvantaged, Black girls ($n = 464$) 30.77% received almost as many instances of disciplinary actions as White girls ($n = 501$) 35.88%, as shown in Table 5. For all suburban school districts ($N = 77,756$) in 2015-2018, and whether students were considered economically disadvantaged, Black girls ($n = 2,376$) 34.68% received almost seven times as many instances of disciplinary actions than White girls ($n = 312$) 4.55%, as shown in Table 7.

For all urban school districts ($N = 83,333$) in 2015-2018, and whether students were considered non-economically disadvantaged, Black girls ($n = 639$) 27.94% received almost two times as many instances of disciplinary actions than White girls ($n = 381$) 16.66%. For all urban school districts ($N = 154,343$) in the same year, and whether students were considered economically disadvantaged, Black girls ($n = 5,185$) at 34.27% received more than 17.5 times as many instances of disciplinary actions than White girls ($n = 295$) at 1.95%.

On average, based on each year's random sample, the number of disciplinary actions assigned to girls has remained the same. Of these disciplinary actions in suburban and urban school districts, the numbers for Black girls are exceedingly high, irrespective of district type, compared to the White girls subjected to disciplinary action, as shown in Tables 8-13. These findings support Hypothesis 1: A relationship exists between race/ethnicity in the disproportion of disciplinary assignments. In this case, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 7

Chi-Square Analysis—Suburban Districts Disciplinary Actions by Race Controlling for Economically Disadvantaged Students

Race		Not Disciplined		Disciplined		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Asian	Freq.	1,896.00	2.67	0.00	0.00	1,896.00	2.44
	Exp. Freq.	1,728.90	2.44	167.10	0.00	1,896.00	2.44
African American	Freq.	12,176.00	17.17	2,376.00	34.68	14,552.00	18.71
	Exp. Freq.	13,269.70	15.66	1,282.30	3.06	14,552.00	18.71
Hispanic	Freq.	47,216.00	66.59	4,160.00	60.71	51,376.00	66.07
	Exp. Freq.	46,848.70	60.72	4,527.30	5.35	51,376.00	66.07
White	Freq.	8,367.00	11.80	312.00	4.55	8,679.00	11.16
	Exp. Freq.	7,914.20	10.76	764.80	0.44	8,679.00	11.16
Two or More Races	Freq.	1,061.00	1.50	3.00	0.04	1,064.00	1.37
	Exp. Freq.	970.20	1.36	93.80	0.00	1,064.00	1.37
Other	Freq.	188.00	0.27	1.00	0.01	189.00	0.24
	Exp. Freq.	172.30	0.24	16.70	0.00	189.00	0.24
Total	Freq.	70,904.00	100.00	6,852.00	100.00	77,756.00	100.00
	Exp. Freq.	70,904.00	91.19	6,852.00	8.81	77,756.00	100.00

Note. Pearson $\chi^2 = 0.00016$, $p = .000$; Likelihood $\chi^2 = 0.00018$, $p = .000$; Cramer's V = 0.146. Freq. = Frequency; Exp. Freq. = Expected Frequency.

Logistic Regression Analysis

In this section, the researcher presents and discusses the results for Research Question 2: What effects do disproportionate discipline rates have on reading academic achievement levels for Black girls in the three academic years considered in the study?

H2: A relationship exists between subjecting Black female students, Grades 3–9 to disproportionate disciplinary actions and their academic reading achievement level.

H₀: All factors being equal, disproportionate disciplinary actions do not affect Texas' Black girls in Grades 3–9 academic reading achievement levels.

H₁: All factors being equal, disproportionate disciplinary actions affect Texas' Black girls in Grades 3–9 academic reading achievement levels.

The analysis for this research is based on logistic regression results that measure the odds that there will be an increase or decrease in the probability of success for the dependent variable for every unit's increase in the independent variable (Acevedo, 2016). In addition, to what degree can the independent variables help predict the odds that impact Black girls' achievement levels while controlling for economically disadvantaged status? For this purpose, the value identified as the $\text{Exp}\beta$ (Exponential of the Beta coefficient) represents the probability that a student will meet grade-level achievement in reading. The p -value shows whether the variable was found statistically significant. Using a particular variable as a predictor of the dependent variable, its ability to predict the outcome variable does not happen by chance (see table results). Also included in the analysis are the beta coefficients (β) for each of the explanatory variables in the logistic regression equation, along with the standard error (SE) for each variable. The beta coefficients, along with the constant value, allowed for calculating the log odds of a student's disproportionate disciplinary actions and meeting reading achievement levels. However, the odds

ratio estimates are the most descriptive in explaining the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The odds ratio estimates tell us the change in odds of being in one of the dependent variable categories for every unit increase of any given variable in the model. The researcher predicted the odds of students' disproportionate disciplinary actions and meeting reading achievement levels. A value of one for the odds ratio means no change in odds as the variable increased. A value of less than one for the odds ratio means that for every unit increase of a given variable, students' odds of meeting reading achievement levels decreased. A value of more than one means that for every unit increase of a given variable, students' odds of meeting reading achievement levels increased. In addition to the odds ratios, a 95% confidence interval for each of the odds ratio estimates was calculated. If the confidence interval included the value of one, it means the odds ratio was not statistically significant.

The descriptive definitions of the variables for this study are as follows:

- Dependent Variable
 - Reading Achievement Level
 - 1 = Meets Achievement Level
 - 0 = Does Not Meet Achievement Level
- Independent Variables
 - Discipline: 1 = Yes, 0 = No
 - District: 1 = Urban, 0 = Suburban
 - Economically Disadvantaged: 1 = Yes, 0 = No
 - Race/Ethnicity: Categorical Variable 1 = Black, 2 = Hispanic/Latina, 3 = Asian, 4 = Two or More Races, 5 = White, 6 = Other.

Table 8 presents the logistic regression model summary for the 2015-2016 school year. The overall model summary shows a statistically significant relationship between disciplinary actions and reading achievement of Grades 3–9 girls in Texas. Specifically, the 2015-2016 logistic regression model reliably distinguished between students who Met Grade Level in reading and those who did not (-2 loglikelihood = 202150.93). To test the null hypothesis that the data fit the specified model, the Hosmer and Lemeshow Goodness-of-Fit test was conducted (22) $p = .56$; $\chi^2(6, N = 162,758) = 4.88, p = .00$, and the null hypothesis is rejected since the p -value is less than .05. Hosmer et al. (2013) recommend that independent variables should have a significance level of $p < .15$ to enter the model. This meant the predicted probabilities did not deviate from the probabilities in such a way that was not aligned with the prediction of the binary distribution, and the model was adequate for analysis purposes. Therefore, disproportionate disciplinary actions do impact the reading achievement of Black girls Grades 3–9 in Texas. Furthermore, the model explained the proportion of variance explained by the predictors was 18% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in disproportionate disciplinary actions and correctly classified 66% of cases.

Table 8

Logistic Regression for 2015-2016 Disciplinary Actions and Reading Achievement–Model

Summary

-2 Log	χ^2	df	p	Hosmer & Lemeshow Tests			Nagelkerke
				χ^2	df	p	r^2
202150.93	23440.74	22	.00	4.88	6	.56	.18

Note. $N = 162,758$, the model correctly classified 66% of the cases.

A logistics regression analysis to investigate if there are a relationship between subjecting female students, Grades 3–9, to disproportionate disciplinary actions and their impact on their academic reading achievement level in the 2015-2018 academic school years was conducted. The predictor variables, race/ethnicity, disciplinary actions, economically disadvantaged status, and district type were tested a priori to verify there was no violation of the assumption of the logit's linearity. In addition, the odds ratio (95% CI's) is presented indicating if the experiment were run several times (i.e., 1,000 times), the range would contain the true parameter 95% of the time (Acevedo, 2016).

From these results, you can see that in the 2015-2016 academic school years, individual predictors in the model showed that among student characteristics, predictable variables race/ethnicity, disciplinary actions, economically disadvantaged, and district type (urban/suburban) were statistically significant in predicting students' odds of meeting reading achievement levels.

Of the four predictors included in the 2015-2016 model, race/ethnicity, disciplinary actions, economically disadvantaged status, and district type (urban/suburban) made statistically significant contributions to the model. The odds ratios for Asian, Two or More Races, and White girls were greater than one, indicating that girls who identified as Asian, Two or More Races, and White were more likely to meet reading achievement levels. Specifically, Asian ($p = .00$), Two or More Races ($p = .00$), and White ($p = .00$) girls had a statistically significant influence on meeting reading achievement levels to the model/prediction and those who did not meet reading achievement levels. Conversely, Black ($p = .44$) and Hispanic ($p = .57$) girls did not add statistical significance to the model. The logistics regression coefficients are presented in Table 9.

Among race/ethnicity, White girls are a positive and statistically significant predictor of the probability of meets reading achievement level. With each increase of one on this predictor, the odds of meeting reading achievement levels for White girls changed by a factor of 2.05 (meaning the odds are increasing). In other words, White girls were two times more likely (odds ratio = 2.05) to meet reading achievement levels than not to meet reading achievement levels. In comparison, the race/ethnicity predictor of Black girls is negative, and there is no statistically significant prediction of the probability of meets reading achievement level. The odds ratio of less than one (odds ratio = 0.85) and the negative coefficient (β , -0.16) indicate that for every one-unit increase on race/ethnicity, the odds of a Black girl meeting reading achievement level decreases or is reduced by a multiplicative factor of 0.85. Another way to understand this finding is through percentage change. Percentage change comes from the formula $[\exp(\beta)-1] * 100$.

For White girls, the odds of meeting reading achievement level is $[\exp(2.05)-1] * 100 = 105\%$ higher when you increase in one unit (1%) the percentage of those White girls who did not meet achievement levels. In comparison, although not statistically significant, the percentage of girls who identified as Black in Texas' schools, Grades 3–9 negatively associated with meeting reading achievement level. Therefore, for every percent increase in the predictor variable, the odds of a Black girl meeting achievement reading level was reduced by $[\exp(0.85)-1] * 100 = 15\%$.

Concerning the predictor variable disciplinary actions, the odds ratio for Black ($p = .00$), Hispanic ($p = .00$), and White ($p = .00$) girls had a statistically significant influence on meeting reading achievement levels to the model/prediction and not meeting reading achievement levels. Conversely, Asian ($p = 1.00$) and Two or More Races ($p = .20$) did not add statistical significance to the model.

Table 9*Logistic Regression Coefficients for 2015-2016 Disciplinary Actions and Reading Achievement*

Predictor	β	SE β	Wald's χ^2	df	p	Odds ratio	95% CI
Race/Ethnicity							
Black	-0.16	0.21	0.60	1	.44	0.85	[0.56, 1.28]
Hispanic	-0.12	0.21	0.32	1	.57	0.89	[0.59, 1.34]
Asian	1.18	0.21	31.39	1	.00	3.26	[2.16, 4.93]
Two	0.65	0.22	8.97	1	.00	1.91	[1.25, 2.91]
White	0.72	0.21	11.81	1	.00	2.05	[1.36, 3.06]
Disciplinary Action							
Black	-0.85	0.04	382.17	1	.00	0.43	[0.39, 0.47]
Hispanic	-0.98	0.03	935.30	1	.00	0.38	[0.35, 0.40]
Asian	-21.65	40192.97	.00	1	1.00	0.00	[0.00, 0.00]
Two	-0.66	0.51	1.65	1	.20	0.52	[0.19, 1.41]
White	-0.73	0.08	77.65	1	.00	0.48	[0.41, 0.57]
Economically Disadvantaged							
Black	-0.83	0.03	796.86	1	.00	0.44	[0.41, 0.46]
Hispanic	-0.88	0.02	2966.05	1	.00	0.41	[0.40, 0.43]
Asian	-1.19	0.05	528.26	1	.00	0.31	[0.28, 0.34]
Two	-1.17	0.08	204.73	1	.00	0.31	[0.26, 0.36]
White	-1.24	0.03	1937.53	1	.00	0.29	[0.27, 0.31]
Other	-1.07	0.24	19.71	1	.00	0.34	[0.21, 0.55]
District (Urban/Suburban)							
Black	-0.26	0.03	80.17	1	.00	0.77	[0.73, 0.82]
Hispanic	-0.01	0.01	0.29	1	.59	0.99	[0.96, 1.02]
Asian	-0.35	0.07	28.48	1	.00	0.71	[0.62, 0.80]
Two	0.09	0.09	1.01	1	.32	1.10	[0.92, 1.31]
White	0.14	0.03	21.43	1	.00	1.16	[1.08, 1.23]
Other	-0.39	0.25	2.47	1	.12	0.68	[0.42, 1.10]
Constant	0.45	0.21	4.64	1	.03	1.57	

Note. $N = 162,758$. CI = Confidence Interval for the odds ratio.

Specifically, in relation to disciplinary actions, the odds ratio was less than one for Black girls (odds ratio = 0.43) and White girls (odds ratio = 0.48), and the coefficients (β) were negative for Black (-0.85) and White (-0.73) girls. The odds ratio of 0.43 and the negative coefficients (β , -0.85) for Black girls indicate that for every one-unit increase in disciplinary action, the odds a Black girl will meet reading achievement levels decreases by a multiplicative factor of 0.43. Similarly, the odds ratio of less than one (odds ratio = 0.48) indicates that for every one-unit increase on race/ethnicity, the odds of a White girl meeting reading achievement level decreases or is reduced by a multiplicative factor of 0.48.

An alternative and sometimes more understandable interpretation can be written as a percentage change. That is, for those girls who identified as White in Texas' schools, Grades 3–9, there was a negative association with meeting reading achievement level. Therefore, for every percentage of increase in the predictor variable (disciplinary action), the odds of a White girl meeting achievement reading level was reduced by $[\exp(0.48)-1] * 100 = 52\%$.

In comparison, the percentage of girls who identified as Black in Texas' schools' Grades 3–9, negatively associated with meeting reading achievement level indicates that for every percent increase in the predictor variable, the odds of a Black girl meeting achievement reading level was reduced by $[\exp(0.43)-1] * 100 = 57\%$. Notably, the odds ratio for every Black girl who meets reading achievement levels shows that there were 57% less likely for Black girls who meet reading achievement levels than White girls 52% less likely to meet reading achievement levels.

In relation to economically disadvantaged status (as measured by percentage of free or reduced-price lunch), Black ($p = .00$), Hispanic ($p = .00$), Asian ($p = .00$), Two or More Races ($p = .00$), White ($p = .00$), and Other ($p = .00$) girls all had a statistically significant influence on

meeting reading achievement levels to the model/prediction and not meeting reading achievement levels. The odds ratio for Black (odds ratio = 0.44), Hispanic (odds ratio = 0.41), Asian (odds ratio = 0.31), Two or More Races (odds ratio = 0.31), White (odds ratio = 0.29), and Other (odds ratio = 0.34) girls were all less than one and coefficients (β) were all negative. This indicates that the odds of meeting reading achievement levels decrease for all female students who were considered economically disadvantaged irrespective of their race/ethnicity or ED status. In other words, Black girls are 56% less likely to meet reading achievement levels than not to have met reading achievement levels. In contrast, White girls are 71% less likely to meet reading achievement levels than not.

Regarding the predictor variable district type (suburban/urban), Black ($p = .00$), Asian ($p = .00$), and White ($p = .00$) girls made statistically significant contributions to the model. Conversely, Hispanic ($p = .59$), Two or More Races ($p = .32$) and, Other ($p = .12$) girls did not add statistically significant to the model. The odds ratio for Black (odds ratio = 0.77) was less than one. The coefficient (β) was negative, indicating Black girls in suburban/urban districts were less likely to meet reading achievement levels. Conversely, for White girls, there was a positive odds ratio of more than one (odds ratio = 1.16), and the coefficient (β) were positive (0.14). This indicates that White girls in suburban/urban school districts are almost two times (odds ratio = 1.16) more likely to meet reading achievement levels based on district assignments. Said in percentage, Black girls were 23% less likely to meet reading achievement level than not meet reading achievement level. On the other hand, White girls were 16% less likely to meet reading achievement levels than not.

Table 10 presents the logistic regression model summary for the 2016-2017 school year. The overall model summary shows a statistically significant relationship between disciplinary

actions and reading achievement of Grades 3–9 girls in Texas. Specifically, the 2016-2017 logistic regression model reliably distinguished between students who Met Grade Level in reading and those who did not (-2 loglikelihood = 211878.04). To test the null hypothesis that the data fit the specified model, the Hosmer and Lemeshow Goodness-of-Fit test was conducted (23) $p = .61$; $\chi^2(7, N = 170,533) = 5.39, p = .00$, and the null hypothesis is rejected since the p -value is less than .05. Once again, this meant that the predicted probabilities did not deviate from the probabilities, so that it was not aligned with the prediction of the binary distribution, and the model was adequate for analysis purposes. Therefore, disproportionate disciplinary actions do impact the reading achievement of Black girls Grades 3–9 in Texas. Furthermore, the model explained the proportion of variance explained by the predictors was 18% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in disproportionate disciplinary actions and correctly classified 52% of cases.

Table 10

Logistic Regression for 2016-2017 Disciplinary Actions and Reading Achievement–Model

Summary

-2 Log	χ^2	df	p	Hosmer & Lemeshow Tests			Nagelkerke r^2
				χ^2	df	p	
211878.04	24330.66	23	.00	5.39	7	.61	.18

Note. $N = 170,533$, the model correctly classified 52% of the cases.

In the 2016-2017 academic school year findings, individual predictors in the model showed that among student characteristics, predictable variables race/ethnicity, disciplinary actions, economically disadvantaged, and district type (urban/suburban) were statistically significant in predicting the odds of students meeting reading achievement levels.

Of the predictor variables included in the model, Asian ($p = .00$), Two or More Races ($p = .00$), and White ($p = .00$) girls had a statistically significant influence on meeting reading achievement levels to the model/prediction and those who did not meet reading achievement levels. Conversely, Black ($p = .72$) and Hispanic ($p = .48$) girls did not add statistically significant to the model. The logistics regression coefficients are presented in Table 11.

Among the race/ethnicity categories, White girls had an odds ratio of 2.54 ($p = .00$). This means that holding all other variables in the model constant, the odds of White girls who meet the reading achievement level were almost three times (odds ratio = 2.54) more likely than the odds of White girls who did not meet reading achievement levels. In comparison (although not statistically significant), the odds ratio for Black girls was greater than one (odds ratio = 1.07), and the coefficient (β) was positive (0.07). The odds ratio of 1.07 and the positive coefficient (β , 0.07) for Black girls shows for every one-unit increase on race/ethnicity, the odds of a Black girl will meet reading achievement level increases by a multiple of 1.07.

In other words, holding all other variables in the model constant, the odds were increasing 1.07 times more for Black girls that meet reading achievement levels when increasing in one unit the percentage of the independent variable race/ethnicity than for those Black girls who did not. Another way to understand this finding is that for White girls, the odds of meeting reading achievement level is $[\exp(2.54)-1] * 100 = 154\%$ higher when you increase in one unit (1%) the percentage of those White girls who did not meet achievement levels. In comparison, and again although not statistically significant, for every percent increase in the predictor variable, the odds of a Black girl meeting achievement reading level is $[\exp(1.07)-1] * 100 = 7\%$ higher when you increase in one unit (1%) the percentage of those Black girls who did not meet reading achievement levels.

Table 11*Logistic Regression Coefficients for 2016-2017 Disciplinary Actions and Reading Achievement*

Predictor	β	SE β	Wald's χ^2	df	p	Odds ratio	95% CI
Ethnicity							
Black	0.07	0.19	0.13	1	.72	1.07	[0.76, 1.56]
Hispanic	0.14	0.19	0.50	1	.48	1.14	[0.79, 1.67]
Asian	1.39	0.19	51.41	1	.00	4.01	[2.74, 5.85]
Two	0.99	0.20	24.80	1	.00	2.68	[1.82, 3.96]
White	0.93	0.19	23.75	1	.00	2.54	[1.75, 3.70]
Disciplinary Action							
Black	-0.93	0.04	448.40	1	.00	0.40	[0.36, 0.43]
Hispanic	-1.06	0.03	1082.88	1	.00	0.35	[0.33, 0.37]
Asian	1.23	1.07	1.32	1	.25	3.41	[0.42, 27.69]
Two	-1.14	0.60	3.60	1	.06	0.32	[0.10, 1.04]
White	-0.84	0.08	107.40	1	.00	0.43	[0.37, 0.50]
Economically Disadvantaged							
Black	-0.85	0.03	867.24	1	.00	0.43	[0.40, 0.45]
Hispanic	-0.87	0.02	3119.04	1	.00	0.42	[0.41, 0.43]
Asian	-1.26	0.05	653.92	1	.00	0.28	[0.26, 0.31]
Two	-1.24	0.08	250.96	1	.00	0.29	[0.25, 0.34]
White	-1.28	0.03	2116.29	1	.00	0.28	[0.27, 0.30]
Other	-0.77	0.23	11.05	1	.00	0.46	[0.29, 0.73]
District (Urban/Suburban)							
Black	-0.22	0.03	59.30	1	.00	0.80	[0.76, 0.85]
Hispanic	-0.02	0.01	2.17	1	.14	0.98	[0.95, 1.01]
Asian	-0.22	0.06	12.66	1	.00	0.80	[0.71, 0.90]
Two	0.02	0.09	0.06	1	.82	1.02	[0.86, 1.21]
White	0.21	0.03	46.63	1	.00	1.23	[1.16, 1.31]
Other	0.19	0.26	0.51	1	.48	1.20	[0.72, 2.01]
Constant	0.17	0.19	0.81	1	.37	1.19	

Note. $N = 170,533$. CI = Confidence Interval for the odds ratio.

With disciplinary actions, the odds ratio for Black ($p = .00$), Hispanic ($p = .00$), and White ($p = .00$) girls had a statistically significant influence on meeting reading achievement levels to the model/prediction and not meeting reading achievement levels. Conversely, Asian ($p = .25$) and Two or More Races ($p = .06$) did not add any statistical significance to the model. Specifically, in relation to disciplinary actions, the odds ratio for Black girls (odds ratio = 0.40) and White girls (odds ratio = 0.43) were less than one, and the coefficients (β) were negative for Black (-0.93) and White (-0.84) girls. The odds ratio of 0.40 and the negative coefficients (β , -0.93) for Black girls shows for every one-unit increase in disciplinary actions, the odds a Black girl will meet reading achievement levels decreases a multiplicative factor of 0.40. Similarly, the odds ratio of 0.43 and the negative coefficients (β , -0.84) for White girls indicates that for every one-unit increase on disciplinary actions, the odds a White girl will meet reading achievement levels decreases by a multiplicative of 0.43. Alternatively, as a percentage change, for girls who identified as White in Texas' schools, Grades 3–9, there was a negative association with meeting reading achievement level. For every percent increase in the predictor variable (disciplinary action), the odds of a White girl meeting achievement reading level was reduced by $[\exp(0.43)-1] * 100 = 57\%$. In comparison, the percentage of girls identified as Black in Texas' schools' Grades 3–9 is negatively associated with meeting reading achievement levels. For every percent increase in the predictor variable, the odds of a Black girl meeting achievement reading level was reduced by $[\exp(0.40)-1] * 100 = 60\%$. Notably, the odds ratio for every Black girl who meets reading achievement levels was 0.40 (60%) times as many Black girls who were less likely to meet reading achievement levels than White girls 0.43 (57%) who met and did not meet reading achievement levels.

In relation to economically disadvantaged status (as measured by percentage of free or reduced-price lunch), Black ($p = .00$), Hispanic ($p = .00$), Asian ($p = .00$), Two or More Races ($p = .00$), White ($p = .00$), and Other ($p = .00$) girls all had a statistically significant influence on meeting reading achievement levels to the model/prediction and not meeting reading achievement levels. The odds ratio for Black (odds ratio = 0.43), Hispanic (odds ratio = 0.42), Asian (odds ratio = 0.28), Two or More Races (odds ratio = 0.29), White (odds ratio = 0.28), and Other (odds ratio = 0.46) girls were all less than one and coefficients (β) were all negative. This indicates that the odds of meeting reading achievement levels decrease for all female students who were considered economically disadvantaged irrespective of their race/ethnicity or ED status. Still, irrespective of their ED status, Black girls are 57% less likely to meet reading achievement levels than not to have met reading achievement levels. In, White girls are 72% less likely to meet reading achievement levels than not.

Regarding the predictor variable district type (suburban/urban), Black ($p = .00$), Asian ($p = .00$), and White ($p = .00$) girls made statistically significant contributions to the model. Conversely, Hispanic ($p = .14$), Two or More Races ($p = .82$) and, Other ($p = .48$) girls did not add statistically significant to the model. The odds ratio for Black (odds ratio = 0.80) was less than one. The coefficient (β) was negative, indicating the odds for Black girls in suburban/urban districts were 0.80 times less likely to meet reading achievement levels than not meeting reading achievement levels. Conversely, for White girls, there was a positive odds ratio of more than one (odds ratio = 1.23), and the coefficient (β) were positive (0.21). This indicates that White girls in suburban/urban school districts are almost two times (odds ratio = 1.23) more likely to meet reading achievement levels based on district assignments predictor variable. Said in a percentage, Black girls were 20% less likely to meet reading achievement levels than not meet reading

achievement levels. On the other hand, White girls were 23% more like to meet reading achievement levels than not.

Table 12 presents the logistic regression model summary for the 2017-2018 school year. The overall model summary shows a statistically significant relationship between disciplinary actions and reading achievement of Grades 3–9 girls in Texas. Specifically, the 2017-2018 logistic regression model reliably distinguished between students who Met Grade Level in reading and those who did not (-2 loglikelihood = 213842.48). To test the null hypothesis that the data fit the specified model, the Hosmer and Lemeshow Goodness-of-Fit test was conducted (22) $p = .16$; $\chi^2(6, N = 169,955) = 9.21, p = .00$, and the null hypothesis is rejected since the p -value is less than .05. Once again, this meant that the predicted probabilities did not deviate from the probabilities in such a way that was not aligned with the prediction of the binary distribution, and the model was adequate for analysis purposes. Therefore, disproportionate disciplinary actions do impact the reading achievement of Black girls Grades 3–9 in Texas. Furthermore, the model explained the proportion of variance explained by the predictors was 16% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in disproportionate disciplinary actions and correctly classified 66% of cases.

Table 12

Logistic Regression for 2017-2018 Disciplinary Actions and Reading Achievement–Model

Summary

-2 Log	χ^2	df	p	Hosmer & Lemeshow Tests			Nagelkerke r^2
				χ^2	df	p	
213842.48	21764.733	22	.00	9.21	6	.16	.16

Note. $N = 169,955$, the model correctly classified 66% of the cases.

In the 2017-2018 academic school year findings, individual predictors in the model showed that among student characteristics, predictable variables race/ethnicity, disciplinary actions, economically disadvantaged, and district type (urban/suburban) were statistically significant in predicting the odds of students meeting reading achievement levels.

Of the predictor variables included in the model, Asian ($p = .00$), Two or More Races ($p = .00$), and White ($p = .00$) girls had a statistically significant influence on meeting reading achievement levels to the model/prediction and those who did not meet reading achievement levels. Conversely, Black ($p = .38$) and Hispanic ($p = .50$) girls did not add statistically significant to the model.

Among the race/ethnicity categories, White girls had an odds ratio of 1.93 ($p = .00$). This means that holding all other variables in the model constant, the odds of White girls who meet the reading achievement level were almost two times (odds ratio = 1.93) more likely than the odds of White girls who did not meet reading achievement levels. Another way to state the odds ratio is that for every White girl who did not meet reading achievement levels, there were almost 1.93 times as many White girls who did meet reading achievement levels. Specifically (although not statistically significant) in relation to race/ethnicity, the odds ratio for Black girls was less than one (odds ratio = 0.83), and the coefficient (β) was negative (-0.19). The odds ratio of 0.83 and the negative coefficient (β , -0.19) for Black girls indicates that for every one-unit increase in race/ethnicity, the odds of a Black girl will meet reading achievement level decreases a factor of 0.83. Another way to understand this finding is that for White girls, the odds of meeting reading achievement level is $[\exp(1.93)-1] * 100 = 93\%$ higher when you increase in one unit (1%) the percentage of those White girls who meet reading achievement levels. In comparison, although not statistically significant, for every percent increase in the predictor variable, the odds of a

Black girl meeting reading achievement level is $[\exp(0.83)-1] * 100 = 17\%$ higher when you increase in one unit (1%) the percentage of those Black girls who meet reading achievement levels

In relation to disciplinary actions, the odds ratio for Black ($p = .00$), Hispanic ($p = .00$), Two or More Races ($p = .00$), and White ($p = .00$) girls had a statistically significant influence on meeting reading achievement levels to the model/prediction and not meeting reading achievement levels as shown in Table 13. Conversely, Asians ($p = 1.00$) did not add any statistical significance to the model. Specifically, with disciplinary actions, the odds ratio for Black girls (odds ratio = 0.42) and White girls (odds ratio = 0.36) were less than one, and the coefficients (β) were negative for Black (-0.88) and White (-1.02) girls. The odds ratio of 0.42 and the negative coefficients (β , -0.88) for Black girls indicates that for every one-unit increase on disciplinary actions, the odds a Black girl will meet reading achievement levels decreases by a multiplicative factor of 0.42.

Similarly, the odds ratio of 0.36 and the negative coefficients (β , -1.02) for White girls indicates that for every one-unit increase on disciplinary actions, the odds a White girl will meet reading achievement levels decreases by a multiplicative factor of 0.36. As a percentage change, for girls who identified as White in Texas' schools, Grades 3–9, there was a negative association with meeting reading achievement level. For every percent increase in the predictor variable (disciplinary action), the odds of a White girl meeting achievement reading level was reduced by $[\exp(0.36)-1] * 100 = 64\%$. In comparison, the percentage of girls identified as Black in Texas' schools' Grades 3–9 is negatively associated with meeting reading achievement levels. For every percent increase in the predictor variable, the odds of a Black girl meeting achievement reading level was reduced by $[\exp(0.42)-1] * 100 = 58\%$.

Table 13*Logistic Regression Coefficients for 2017-2018 Disciplinary Actions and Reading Achievement*

Predictor	β	SE β	Wald's χ^2	df	p	Odds ratio	95% CI
Ethnicity							
Black	-0.19	0.21	0.76	1	.38	0.83	[0.55, 1.26]
Hispanic	-0.14	0.21	0.45	1	.50	0.87	[0.57, 1.32]
Asian	1.17	0.21	29.91	1	.00	3.22	[2.12, 4.90]
Two	0.66	0.22	9.17	1	.00	1.93	[1.26, 2.96]
White	0.66	0.21	9.58	1	.00	1.93	[1.27, 2.92]
Disciplinary Action							
Black	-0.88	0.04	391.56	1	.00	0.42	[0.38, 0.46]
Hispanic	-0.96	0.03	991.79	1	.00	0.38	[0.36, 0.41]
Asian	19.96	17451.11	0.00	1	1.00	0.00	[0.00, 0.00]
Two	-2.37	0.76	9.39	1	.00	0.10	[0.02, 0.43]
White	-1.02	0.09	143.04	1	.00	0.36	[0.31, 0.43]
Economically Disadvantaged							
Black	-0.79	0.03	735.93	1	.00	0.46	[0.43, 0.48]
Hispanic	-0.80	0.02	2657.18	1	.00	0.45	[0.44, 0.46]
Asian	-1.07	0.05	464.53	1	.00	0.34	[0.31, 0.38]
Two	-1.12	0.07	227.63	1	.00	0.33	[0.28, 0.38]
White	-1.19	0.03	1902.61	1	.00	0.31	[0.29, 0.32]
Other	-0.81	0.24	11.09	1	.00	0.44	[0.28, 0.72]
District (Urban/Suburban)							
Black	-0.29	0.03	107.08	1	.00	0.75	[0.71, 0.79]
Hispanic	-0.02	0.01	1.44	1	.23	0.98	[0.95, 1.01]
Asian	-0.34	0.06	28.60	1	.00	0.71	[0.63, 0.81]
Two	-0.04	0.08	0.19	1	.67	0.96	[0.82, 1.34]
White	0.18	0.03	32.41	1	.00	1.19	[1.12, 1.26]
Other	-0.37	0.28	1.80	1	.18	0.69	[0.40, 1.19]
Constant	0.50	0.21	5.51	1	.02	1.64	

Note. $N = 162,758$. CI = Confidence Interval for the odds ratio.

In relation to economically disadvantaged status, Black ($p = .00$), Hispanic ($p = .00$), Asian ($p = .00$), Two or More Races ($p = .00$), White ($p = .00$), and Other ($p = .00$) girls all had a statistically significant influence on meeting reading achievement levels to the model/prediction and not meeting reading achievement levels. The odds ratio for Black (odds ratio = 0.46), Hispanic (odds ratio = 0.45), Asian (odds ratio = 0.34), Two or More Races (odds ratio = 0.33), White (odds ratio = 0.31), and Other (odds ratio = 0.44) girls were all less than one and coefficients (β) were all negative. This indicates that the odds of meeting reading achievement levels decreases for all female students who were considered economically disadvantaged irrespective of their race/ethnicity or ED status. In other words, Black girls are 54% less likely to meet reading achievement levels than not to have met reading achievement levels. In contrast, White girls are 69% less likely to meet reading achievement levels than not for every percent increase in the predictor variable.

Regarding the predictor variable district type (suburban/urban), Black ($p = .00$), Asian ($p = .00$), and White ($p = .00$) girls made statistically significant contributions to the model. Conversely, Hispanic ($p = .23$), Two or More Races ($p = .67$) and, Other ($p = .18$) girls did not add statistically significant to the model. The odds ratio for Black (odds ratio = 0.75) was less than one. The coefficient (β) was negative, indicating Black girls in suburban/urban districts were less likely to meet reading achievement levels. In other words, Black girls in urban districts have an odds of 0.75 times less likely to meet reading achievement levels than not meeting reading achievement levels.

Conversely, for White girls, there was a positive odds ratio of more than one (odds ratio = 1.19), and the coefficient (β) were positive (0.18). This shows White girls in urban school districts are almost two times (odds ratio = 1.19) more likely to meet reading achievement levels

based on district assignments. Presented in percentage, Black girls assigned to an urban school district were 25% more not likely to meet reading achievement level than meet reading achievement level. On the other hand, White girls were 19% more likely to meet reading achievement levels than not.

Logistics Findings

In this section, the researcher presents results from the logistic regression analysis on ethnicity, disciplinary action, economically disadvantaged status, and school district type, and reading achievement of Grades 3–9 Texas girls. The dichotomous variable “meets reading achievement level” was regressed on variables describing students’ background characteristics, race/ethnicity, disciplinary action, economically disadvantaged status, and district assignment (suburban versus urban). The results of this analysis are shown in Tables 8-13. The researcher performed regression analysis to examine whether the independent variables of race/ethnicity, disciplinary action, economic status, and school district (suburban/urban) predict Black girls’ reading achievement levels in Grades 3–9 in Texas. Mean differences between Black girls’ reading achievement levels for the 2015-2018 academic school years were calculated and accompanied by 95% confidence intervals, odds ratio, and *p* values (Green & Salkind, 2010). Using the Wald χ^2 statistic shows that disciplinary actions were statistically significant in predicting the odds of students performing at Meets Grade Level in reading. More specifically, compared to Black girls, White girls were significantly more likely to meet reading achievement levels based on disproportionate disciplinary actions, regardless of their economic status and district assignment.

The data supports the conclusion that disproportionate disciplinary actions impact Black girls’ achievement levels in Texas suburban and urban school districts. Importantly, in most

instances, disproportionate disciplinary actions affected Black girls' reading achievement more than White girls for the three consecutive school years studied. Data indicate that discipline hurts all races regarding meeting reading achievement levels when categorized as economically disadvantaged. These findings support Hypothesis 2 (H₁): Disproportionate disciplinary actions affect Texas' Black girls in Grades 3–9 academic reading achievement levels. In this case, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Summary of Findings from the Data Analysis

The data collected from the Texas Education Agency's PEIMS were analyzed. Two hypotheses were tested and summarized. In this study, chi-square was used to analyze the association between race/ethnicity and disciplinary actions while controlling for economically disadvantaged status. This study also utilized logistic regression to examine whether the student characteristics (race/ethnicity, disciplinary assignments, and school district type, economically disadvantaged) predict reading achievement at the Meets Grade Level performance among Texas female students in Grades 3–9 while controlling for economically disadvantaged status.

The hypotheses tested were supported by the results of the chi-square analysis. For instance, the results produced a statistically significant relationship between the independent variable of race/ethnicity and the dependent variable of disciplinary action ($p < .05$). Therefore, the results of the chi-square rejected the null hypothesis. In addition, a logistic regression analysis was performed to examine whether the independent variables of race/ethnicity, economic status, disciplinary action, and school district (suburban/urban) predict reading achievement levels for Grades 3–9 Texas female students. The logistic regression results show that the student characteristics, race/ethnicity, economic status, disciplinary assignments, and school district type are significant predictors of reading achievement at the Meets Grade Level

performance among Texas Black female students in Grades 3–9. Therefore, the results of the logistics regression rejected the null hypothesis.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter highlights and discusses the researcher's significant findings while taking into consideration the study's intersectionality theory framework. Next, this quantitative study's questions, hypothesis, and purpose are restated. Finally, this chapter concludes with limitations and recommendations for future implicating policy and practice for educational improvement for Black girls in Texas public school districts.

Restatement of the Research Questions and Hypothesis

Research Question 1 and Hypothesis 1

The study answered Research Question 1: What is the relationship between Black girls' disproportionate discipline rates in Texas public schools, Grades 3–9, in comparison to White girls in their peer group? This study hypothesized that all factors being equal, a student's race leads to disproportionality of disciplinary assignments. After conducting a chi-square analysis, when comparing the independent variables or predictors with the discipline rates of the State of Texas school districts, there is a statistically significant relationship. That is, there is a significant difference between disproportionate discipline rates toward Black girls compared to all other girls regardless of their economic status.

Research Question 2 and Hypothesis 2

The study also answered Research Question 2: What effects do disproportionate discipline rates have on academic achievement levels for Black girls in 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 academic years? Moreover, the study hypothesized that all factors being equal, a student's disciplinary assignment impacts academic achievement. A regression analysis was conducted on the same data sets using the state's disproportionate discipline rates within the

sample. It was found that there is a statistically significant relationship between the disproportionate discipline rates and achievement levels for Black girls compared to White girls in Texas school districts, which means that the disproportionate discipline actions toward Black girls significantly negatively impact their achievement levels compared to White girls.

Findings Combined with Intersectionality Theory

The hypotheses that there is a relationship between the dependent variable and the predictors are supported since all variables were found to be statistically significant. In alignment with the literature review, a significant finding in this study is the independent variables represented by the percentage of Black girls in the Texas major urban and suburban public-school districts showed strong evidence that Black girls are more likely to be disproportionately disciplined, thus, impacting their achievement levels compared to White girls (Morris, 2007). Substantial evidence in this study shows this could be found in how race and gender biases affect Black girls' inequality. An assumption can be made that teachers perceived power and authority often feel threatened when they do not understand how to handle Black girls' uniqueness—that is, their cultural differences (Hill Collins, 2000). Heriot (2019) asserts that not understanding Black girls' experiences can lead to difficulties understanding how to solve tense situations in the classroom that can end in subjective disciplinary practices. Furthermore, an incorrect interpretation of behavior while at the same time social expectations are added that make it easier for Black girls to end up pushed out of the classroom (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016).

According to McElderry and Cheng (2014) and Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) these marginalized students may end up in the school to-prison pipeline for that reason. McElderry and Cheng (2014) further argue marginalized students who are most in need of a supportive educational environment are being pushed out of school through biased disciplinary practices. In

addition, Nelson and Lind (2015) asserts the overrepresentation of Black girls can support this incarceration in the juvenile justice system and how the education system marginalizes Black girls based on their academic and behavioral issues, resulting in, the beginning of the school to prison pipeline for these students. Importantly, these disproportionate disciplinary practices not only make Black girls more likely to join the school-to-prison pipeline, but they also negatively impact academic performance and economic success (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009; Skiba et al., 2014).

This finding aligns with previous literature that argues that the intersections of their identity hinder black girls' achievement in reading as Black and female in public school settings and disproportionate disciplinary policy, such as zero-tolerance (Mathies et al., 2020). For example, a critical study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2013) studied the differences in Black girls reading content knowledge. In the study, Black girls were assessed using descriptive statistics. Results suggested that Black girls' overall reading achievement across a decade of reading NAEP assessments can be categorized as at or below the proficiency level.

Implications

As findings from this study reflect, whether urban or suburban districts, or whether or not students are assigned economically disadvantaged, higher percentages of disciplinary actions were assigned to Black girls than White in Texas public schools. The data and findings from this study provide evidence of the disparate impact in the assignment of disciplinary consequences Black girls experience daily.

The data and findings from this study should interest policymakers, teachers, administrators, practitioners, and academic scholars. This study could inform public policy and

program decisions of public administrators on the implications of intersectionality and disproportionate disciplinary practices for Black girls in the State of Texas. Importantly, this study implies teachers and administrators require training in understanding historical and contemporary racism, equity, and power (Milner & Tenore, 2010). In conjunction with this, teachers need the training to recognize how racism affects their own biases and stereotypes they hold about Black girls. Contemporarily, when Black girls behave in ways that contrast societal normative femininity, they are at risk of being pushed out of the classroom, thus, increasing the likelihood that they will interact with the criminal legal system (Annamma et al., 2019). According to Annamma et al. (2019), in order to correct this, instead of implementing disciplinary exclusion when Black girls act in ways that do not align with White femininity, educators should take the opportunity to learn the diversity of cultural behaviors that Black girls display.

Moreover, this study's implication aligns with the inequities in disciplinary consequences and suggests a framework to assist teachers and administrators in bridging the gap in educational programming and policies. Such a focus on Black girls and discipline in urban and suburban school districts is vital in helping inform research through a more rigorous analysis of the intersectionality of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989). There is a crucial need in this field for analysis to simultaneously look at race and gender because discipline reform efforts targeting racial discipline gaps do not usually differentiate strategies by sex (E. Morgan et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). These gender-neutral policy and intervention recommendations appear to reflect assumptions Black males and females are disciplined for identical reasons and, therefore, need similar interventions (Morris, 2012). Findings from this study and the extant literature on the unique experiences of Black girls in

schools and society suggest that the social construct of gender and femininity norms intersects with race/ethnicity forms Black girls' educational outcomes (Blake et al., 2010; DeBlase, 2003). In particular, issues of societal gender norms around femininity are of great importance because these norms are aligned with White, middle-class values (Annamma, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Consequently, Black girls tend to experience disproportionate disciplinary assignments if their personalities, attitudes, attire, and hairstyles deviate from society and, by extension, educational institutions expect (Blake et al., 2011; Crenshaw et al., 2015; Richie, 2012). These voiceless narratives about Black girls are the impetus of the social processes that frequently push Black girls out of school and into prisons, which negatively impacts their achievement level—particularly, their reading proficiency.

As previously mentioned, although efforts by Texas to continuously monitor the performance of low performing and marginalized groups are notable, very little progress has been made in closing the reading proficiency gaps in Texas and across the nation (Reardon, 2013; L. A. Wright et al., 2016). Therefore, the fact remains that Black students in Texas perform at significantly lower reading levels than students nationally (NCES, 2015; Office of Texas Governor, 2017). Again, acknowledging the dire need to address performance differences could decrease the probability of high school dropout rates, disproportionality in discipline practices, and school-to-prison pipeline track, especially for Black girls, for years to come (Lee & Slate, 2014).

Research Limitations

The strength of this study lies in its conceptual framing and focus on Black girls, the limitation of this study is the reliance on the validity of statistical data from one school district to describe their experiences (Annamma et al., 2019). Findings from this study are generalizable to

other school districts with similar discipline policies, serving a comparable population of students in an urban and suburban setting (Annamma et al., 2019). According to Creswell (2009) quantitative research can be used in response to relational questions of variables within the research. “Quantitative researchers seek explanations and predictions that will generate to other persons and places. The intent is to validate relationships and to develop generalizations that contribute to theory” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 102). For example, a report from the New York Equity Coalition explains that public schools in New York City district were nearly 11 times as likely to suspend Black female students in comparison to their White female peers (The New York Equity Coalition, 2019). On the other hand, data were limited to public schools and did not include information about charter and private schools inside or outside the State of Texas. Charter schools and private schools have their own set of disciplinary rules and are not necessarily within the Texas Education state policies (TEA, 2019b). Further investigation of these patterns using a larger sample of schools and districts would increase significantly further knowledge and policy advancement.

Another limitation to this study was the use of binary logistics regression. Because the model utilized a dichotomous variable discipline (disciplined and not disciplined), all levels of severity of discipline assignments were not tested. Future research should include a multinomial logistics regression analyses for dependent variables in discrete, ordinal categories—that is, data which can be placed into some kind of order on a scale. Multinomial logistic regression is a simple extension of binary logistic regression that allows for more than two categories of the dependent or outcome variable. For example, the discipline types could be distinguished by in/out-of-school suspension, expulsion, JJEAP, and DEAP controlling for economically disadvantaged factors. Multinomial logistics regression is very similar to logistic regression

except that here you can have more than two possible outcomes. This quantitative analysis will show the ability to determine the relative influence of one or more predictor variables to the criterion value and the ability to identify outliers, or anomalies (Schwab, 2002).

Additional limitations or threats to the validity include sample size, personal bias, and it has tendencies of taking a snapshot of a phenomenon at a specific moment in time and disregards whether the phenomenon has happened over an extended timeframe (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). A further weakness is that the quantitative research paradigm overlooks the respondents' experiences and perspectives in highly controlled settings because there lacks a direct connection between researchers and the participants when collecting data (Ary et al., 2013). As a result, the data obtaining method becomes objective (Queirós et al., 2017).

Finally, this study was correlational and did not provide causal evidence of the dynamics that lead to discipline disparities among Black girls. Misbehavior is not a random phenomenon, so there are likely other factors not captured in the data set that may also explain why Black girls are more likely to be disciplined in comparison to White girls.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations for future research can be made. To note, these recommendations only support the questions and hypotheses about underlying mechanisms behind this phenomenon using intersectionality theory and the study's findings as a guide. To date, hundreds of books, articles, conferences, and seminars exist about the plight of Black boys. Even the White House has chimed in with *My Brother's Keeper* (White House, 2014). Conversely, Black girls in public schools and society have received inadequate attention, correctly, how disproportionate disciplinary actions might adversely impact their daily lives (J. F. Gregory, 1997; Raffaele Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2002). Moreover,

existing research and public policy debates fail to report the degree to which Black girls' experiences are both similar to and different from those experienced by Black boys and non-Black girls within their peer group (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

To achieve more socially aware disciplinary practices, the current study results suggest future research to be developed by the schools to reduce suspensions and expulsions. First, research in this area should include measures such as the nature of the schools' discipline philosophy or code of conduct, students' access to culturally responsive instruction, and the availability of prevention or intervention programs. Secondly, teachers should train to become culturally aware of their beliefs and perceptions around Black girls to develop training strategies to prevent implicit and explicit biased disciplinary practices. This training will prevent Black girls' criminalization based on their race/ethnicity, societal stereotypes, and economic status. Third, teachers, SROs, and administrators should be trained not only to identify special needs that Black girls experience but also to address them in order to avoid the misunderstanding of actions of individuals and be related to an action of misconduct. Fourth, according to Monroe (2006), schools should implement programs to maintain learners' interest through engaging and interactive curriculums. For example, using culturally diverse, gender-inclusive curriculums that integrate Black historical events is critical for engaging students of color, particularly Black girls, and developing relationships with them. This aggregate information about cultures may help facilitate understanding among educators. Also, schools should begin to include images and examples that reflect the cultural norms of the students in the classroom. Educators should be consciously aware not to participate or reinforce negative stereotypes often associated with Black girls such as Jezebel and Sapphire caricatures, loud and unladylike. This will help negate society's negative discourses on how Black girls behave.

Although some authors, like Delgado and Stefancic (2017), propose that in order to address disciplinary issues, schools should have a race-conscious approach, this author suggests an intersectionality theory approach in order to improve school inequalities involving discipline measures. This approach encourages stakeholders to stop thinking about Black girls experience through a single lens (i.e., race or gender) that limits understanding of ways gender interacts with race (Wing, 2003), but more as Black girls and women as both Black and female, and thus subject to discrimination based on both race/ethnic and gender, and often, a combination of the two (Crenshaw, 1989). This will help to explain the inequalities happening around Black girls and move those stakeholders to a level where race/ethnicity, gender, and other aspects in their lives need to be addressed in order to understand the way Black girls experience a multitude of marginalized identities. An intersectionality approach implies a better understanding of Black girls, their needs, and their particular traits. This approach could be the first step to stop the criminalization of Black girls and other girls of color in schools that perpetuate a cycle of overrepresentation resulting in Black girls being more likely to be pushed out of school based on their race/ethnicity and gender.

Furthermore, as the literature shows, the idea of utilizing intersectionality research attests to the interplay between education and power. However, it does not put forth a particular theory of *power* as such. As a result, I hope to contribute to the intersectionality theory by broadening the term to include the concept of a hybrid intersectionality to make evident the ways in which social differences and inequalities exist in hegemonic power relations that are centered around zero-tolerance policies, disproportionate discipline practices, and biases toward Black girls that this study builds upon from historical insights (Chow, 2016).

This author would argue that the hybrid concept of intersectionality theory coupled with intergroup threat theory (ITT; experienced when members of one group perceive that another group is in a position to cause them harm) will provide a useful framework to better understand of the phenomenon of inequality in education for Black girls in the U.S public school system. Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) and integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) covers a myriad of theoretical approaches to how and why people label and categorize one another. This collaborative framework might delve into what might frighten one group (or individual) about another group (or individual) and what those fears might produce in the form of perceptions and actions. Black girls face many of the negative issues associated with intersectionality theory and ITT which proposes group threat racialization ensues when Whites feel the need to use their power to maintain established control by enforcing overzealous rules and policies (Stephan, Ybarra & Morrison, 2009). These rules and policies are often geared toward minorities and in the face of a growing minority population which result in White society encouraging more rigorous racialized practices such as zero-tolerance policies in order to “protect” their existing beliefs, power, and privileges (Blalock, 1967; Patton, Crenshaw, Haynes, & Watson, 2016). By broadening intersectionality theory’s aspect of marginalization to include ITT of cultural patterns of threats as sources of prejudice, future research will shed new light on current predicaments of injustices Black girls experience in public schools across the United States. Patricia Hill Collins (2012) argues that from these types of perspectives, intersectionality and pragmatism are aligned and have much to offer each other.

Moreover, school districts, administrators, and teachers must consistently evaluate and reevaluate discipline procedures. Ultimately, as such environments are established, educators can

use alternative disciplinary strategies that facilitate equity and dialogue, which do not exclude or signal to a student that she is not worthy of an education.

Conclusions

Supported by the findings and existing literature centered on Black girls and school discipline patterns, Black girls in Grades 3–9 in Texas schools, are subject to disproportionate disciplinary practices. Such discriminatory practices result in achievement gaps due to the loss of instructional time for Black girls compared to White girls, thus, serving as a significant barrier to economic success and perpetuating the school to prison pipeline (Rothstein, 2015).

While previous research focused on rendering one particular out-group powerless based on their intersection, the author contributed to the existing literature on how perceived threats, coupled with intersectionality theory, impact both discipline practices and achievement gaps for Black girls. Time and again, these prejudices are the impetus of overzealous laws such as school zero-tolerance policies (Hoffman, 2014; Klehr, 2009), the fallout of lost economic opportunity (Duncan et al., 1994; Sorensen, 1994), and academic achievement gaps (Douglas et al., 2008).

In Chapter 4, the researcher found the data supports the conclusion that disciplinary actions do indeed impact the achievement level for Black girls in Texas suburban and urban school districts. Importantly, in most instances, discipline impacted reading achievement for Black girls more than White girls for the three consecutive school years studied. In the occurrences where White girls were less likely than Black girls to meet reading achievement, data indicated discipline hurts all races regarding meeting reading achievement levels when categorized at economically disadvantaged.

In short, racial differences in disciplinary actions and meeting reading achievement levels were statistically significant with Black girls more than most other girls within the peer group

and academic irrespective of socioeconomic status and school district assignment. Not surprisingly, Black girls are disciplined through an exclusion for a vast array of reasons—many associated with the increasingly punitive responses to negative student behavior and the absence of alternatives to disciplinary assignments (Morris, 2016). Unlike other girls, Black girls experience discipline due to administrators’ misrepresentation that makes them uniquely vulnerable to academic marginalization (Billingsley, 2018). Indeed, a phenomenon often leads Black girls to come into contact with the juvenile and the criminal legal systems school-to-prison pipeline. Black girls at risk of the school-to-prison pipeline track are pushed out of school and experience disproportionately race- and gender-based oppressions, including being stereotyped, poor student-teacher relationships, and biases how policies like zero tolerance are enforced (Morris, 2012).

This study represents an effort to improve policy and practice through research in urban and suburban public schools in Texas. Using intersectionality theory, this author would argue that dominant discourses about Black girls inform the reasons why Black girls enter the school discipline system through office referrals and are punished more often than White girls. This study seeks justice by expanding research to include Black girls, a marginalized population that is often left out of conversations around inequities in school discipline, and academic achievement levels.

Black girls possess varied experiences, and there is a multitude of ways of being a Black girl. No one set of behaviors should be expected or demanded from them to be given equal access to educational opportunities. There is no doubt that education is a significant key to success in life. Public policy has the capacity to either perpetuate or eliminate discrimination, and race and gender inequality. Therefore, policymakers and administrators must ensure every

child, regardless of race or gender, be afforded the opportunity to an education, and poised to succeed.

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