

# Perceptions of School Disciplinary Measures

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## Abstract

Previous research has shown a disparity in school discipline, with minority students being overrepresented in exclusionary discipline compared to their White peers. The implications of overrepresentation in exclusionary discipline appear to be detrimental. Using a mixed design, this study examined how participants perceived punishments for students of varying ethnicities (Black, White and Hispanic) and genders (male and female). It also examined the role of participants' ethnicities and genders on their perceptions of punishments for students of the same or different demographics. Data was collected from participants of varying ages, genders, and races. However, most participants were White females. Results found a significant difference in the amount of days of in-school suspension given to Black students. However, the results were inconclusive involving Hispanic students. No significant results were found involving gender and the amount of days of suspension. Additionally, participants' own identities did not appear to play a role.

## Key Words:

School-to-prison pipeline, implicit bias, exclusionary discipline

Many studies have shown that minority students are overrepresented in exclusionary discipline, such as suspension or expulsion, in all levels of education (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Skiba et al., 2011). Thirty years of research on the topic has provided consistent results involving the disparity (Skiba et al., 2011). Research has examined concepts related to the institution for an explanation, such as a lack of cultural competence among educators and administrators (Fenning & Rose, 2007). The overrepresentation of minorities, particularly African American males, has serious implications, such as further exclusionary discipline, increased drop-out rates, and involvement with the criminal justice system, all of which contribute to the school-to-prison-pipeline (Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009). There has been

little and inconsistent research involving the topic and other ethnicities, specifically Hispanic students. This is an important area to research considering the growing Hispanic population in the United States (Nievar, Jacobsen, Chen, Johnson, & Dier, 2011). Much of the research has studied disciplinary data from schools, data from juvenile justice systems, and factors like those mentioned above that may offer an explanation for the disparities.

## Disparities in Discipline

Overrepresentation in exclusionary discipline by ethnic minorities has been documented since as early as 1975, when the Children's Defense Fund examined disciplinary data, finding that black students were suspended more often than white

students, and were more likely to be suspended from school repeatedly (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Further research by Skiba and colleagues (2002) found a rank order of those most to least likely to be suspended: black males, white males, black females, white females. These researchers also explained that black students were often referred for discipline for more minor violations compared to their white peers. “White students were significantly more likely to be referred to the office for smoking, leaving without permission, obscene language, and vandalism. In contrast, black students were more likely to be referred for disrespect, excessive noise, threat, and loitering” (Skiba et al., 2002, p. 334). Infractions committed by white students objectively warrant discipline, while those committed by black students are more subjective in nature.

Involving more serious offenses, Nicholson-Crotty and colleagues (2009) reported interesting statistics. Even for these severe violations that warrant suspension for any student regardless of ethnicity, black students continued to be overrepresented. For example, 95% of black students were suspended for weapons offenses, while only 85% of white students were suspended for the same infraction. For tobacco possession, black students were 1.5 times more likely to be suspended than white students (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009).

### **Other Minorities**

Other minorities may be targeted for exclusionary discipline as well. Although research involving Hispanic students has been inconsistent, it suggests a possible disparity. Some research has found that Hispanic students are often removed from the classroom, as are black students, for minor events that lead teachers to perceive these students as dangerous (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Other research has stated that Hispanic students are not overrepresented, but White students are underrepresented, which creates a disparity (Skiba et al., 2011). Another study reported that Hispanic males are more likely to “receive constant surveillance and be punished based on their style of dress, particularly if they project a ‘street’ or ‘gangster’ image” (Kupchik & Ellis, 2008, p. 553).

Hispanics are becoming the largest minority group in the country, but still do not possess the same amount of social or political power as African Americans. It is also argued that minorities may view differing minority groups as a source of competition, as they are both competing for the same resources while additionally facing oppression, leading researchers to suggest that minorities themselves may hold stereotyped beliefs about other minority groups (Buckler et al., 2009).

Research has also shown that punishments tend to vary between males and females, “with stereotypes of males leading to tighter surveillance and harsher penalties for violence, and stereotypes of females making it more likely that girls are verbally admonished or given minor punishments for displaying ‘unladylike’ behavior” (Kupchik & Ellis, 2008, p. 554). Black females, non-heterosexual students, and students with disabilities are also more likely to be overrepresented in disciplinary measures (Skiba, Arredondo, & Williams, 2014). Mizel and colleagues (2016) compare data from the 1972-1973 and 2009-2010 academic years to show that suspension rates have nearly doubled for black and Hispanic students, while only increasing a small amount for white students. The research shows that this is a topic in need of being examined in hopes of changing these disparities.

### **Previous Explanations**

Previous research has attempted to explain this disparity through other factors, such as socioeconomic status and the belief that minority students simply misbehave more frequently than their white peers. One hypothesis claimed that minority students simply misbehaved more than White students because of the stressors they have been exposed to and learning maladaptive behaviors, leading to the unfamiliarity with norms and expectations of schools (Skiba et al., 2011). Each claim was refuted in a large study that controlled for each factor (Skiba et al., 2002). In this study, each student’s socioeconomic status was controlled for using free or reduced lunch status. However, controlling for this variable made no significant change in the data, showing that socioeconomic status had minimal, if any, influence

on disparities in discipline (Skiba et al., 2002). Since black students are more frequently referred for minor infractions, the hypothesis that minority students misbehave more was rejected (Skiba et al., 2002). Although other hypotheses were rejected, researchers would not conclude that the disparities are due to discrimination.

### **The Role of Educators and Administrators**

With aforementioned hypotheses being rejected, researchers began looking at the educators, administrators, and institutions as a source of the disparity. Researchers pointed out that the majority of educators in the country are White females, which creates the potential for stereotyping or cultural misunderstandings (Skiba et al., 2011). For example, Skiba and colleagues described that “teachers were more likely than parents to rate African-American students as more problematic and less likely than parents to rate White students’ behavior as more problematic” (2011, p. 87).

Fenning and Rose (2007) describe overrepresentation of minority students as resulting from a perceived loss of control by the teacher. Recent concerns about school safety have put more pressure on educators, which may lead to more conflict between the students and educators. For example, when a disruption among many students occurs, a black or Hispanic student may be designated as the instigator and is then referred for disciplinary action (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Researchers also cited the unspoken rules and expectations that are in place at schools, which are often developed from a European American perspective. Students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds may have difficulties conforming to these standards if they are not known what is expected of them (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Communication styles may also be a source of misunderstanding. Teachers may view a communication style that is different from their own culture’s communication as being disrespectful (Skiba et al., 2002).

Other studies have examined the role of school security in this process. Recent increases in school security often include surveillance measures, such

as cameras and locker searches, School Resource Officers, or police officers placed in schools, and harsher punishments (Kupchik & Ellis, 2008). However, these measures are often implemented in schools with a larger population of minority students. Although students positively rate school security measures when a non-police guard is present, African American students are more likely to perceive school rules and enforcement of rules as less fair (Kupchik & Ellis, 2008). Students’ perceptions of their teachers have also been examined. Researchers reported that African American students receive less support, contact, and praise from their teachers compared to White students, and believe educators have lower academic expectations for them (Hinjosa, 2008). These student perceptions may be exactly as they appear, as studies have shown that teachers rate African American students lower on academic abilities and effort. African American students are also less likely to be considered “gifted” (Hinjosa, 2008). These actions could have further implications, as “perceived teacher bias by minority students is correlated with student dropout rates” (Hinjosa, 2008, p. 176).

### **Restorative Practices and Positive Behavior Support**

More recent research has called for disciplinary measures that are less exclusive and teach positive behaviors. Suspension and expulsion have repeatedly been proven ineffective, in addition to contributing to other negative outcomes due to the student being out of the classroom for an extended period (Kline, 2016). Serious consequences such as these are thought to stem from the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 and the use of zero tolerance policies for discipline (Okilwa & Robert, 2017). Zero tolerance policies attempt to punish all infractions harshly and fairly, but their effectiveness has been questioned, leading to new disciplinary models.

Restorative practices, or an attempt “to respectfully respond to students’ inappropriate behavior, while offering an inclusive, educational, non-punitive approach” are currently being researched and recommended (Kline, 2016, p. 99). These practices

will help to build a relationship between the students, teachers, and community, hoping to increase the emotional investment within each relationship. Skiba and colleagues also proposed a graduated model of discipline, in which “the severity of consequences are scaled in proportion to the seriousness of the infraction, often in conjunction with a tiered model of discipline” (2011, p. 101).

The research reviewed leads to four testable hypotheses. First, it is hypothesized that participants will punish African American students more harshly than white students. Research has clearly shown a disparity in discipline among African American students, which leads to the belief that participants will be more accepting of stricter punishments toward these students. Second, it is hypothesized that participants will punish Hispanic students more harshly as well. Although there has been little research in this area, studies and statistics reviewed have shown that overrepresentation in discipline may be common in this group too. Third, it is expected that participants will punish male students more harshly than female students. Several studies have shown that male students are more likely to be referred for discipline. Lastly, it is expected that a participant’s ethnicity will influence the way they punish those of a different ethnicity. To test these hypotheses, a within-subjects design was used in which participants reviewed three students who have committed similar discipline-worthy acts and made decisions about appropriate disciplinary responses.

## Methods

### Participants

The majority of participants (N = 146) were White (74.7%) and female (67.8%), with an average age of 44.24 years, with a minimum age of 18 years and a maximum age of 81 years. Other participants identified as Black (2.1%), 2.7% identified as Asian, and 2.7% identified as other, biracial, or multiracial. Participants were recruited in three ways. First, the study was posted to a university online psychology research participation system, Sona Systems. It was also posted to Hanover’s

Psychological Research on the Net. Finally, the study was shared through social media.

### Measures

*Vignettes.* To measure participants’ perceptions of punishments, three vignettes were created for the purpose of this study asking participants to indicate what they believed an appropriate punishment would be. After being randomly assigned to a male or female condition, participants read three vignettes describing disciplinary infractions committed by three students, with a first and last name implying the ethnicity of these students. Names were created from two previous studies examining the role of name and ethnicity in the hiring process (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Darolia et al., 2015). Three ethnicities are included in the study, Black, White, and Hispanic. The names used in the study were Tyrone Washington, Tanisha Washington, Brad Thompson, Kristen Thompson, Carlos Hernandez, and Isabella Hernandez. An example statement from the vignette is: “Middle school student, Carlos Hernandez, started a fight in the cafeteria during lunch. After being sent to the principal’s office, Carlos is being considered for suspension. Each disciplinary infraction in the vignette involved the student starting a fight in various locations at a middle school. After reading the vignette, participants were asked to adjust a sliding scale ranging from zero to fifteen, indicating how many days of in-school and out-of-school suspension they believed were appropriate for each student. Participants were then asked if they think the student’s actions warrant the possibility of expulsion. Participants then selected how many days of in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspension each student should receive, through a sliding scale ranging from zero to fifteen. A yes/no question followed each vignette, asking if the participant believed the student should be expelled.

*Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale.* The Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale (Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000) was also used. This measure contains twenty items, measuring participants’ beliefs about racism. Participants were asked to indicate their beliefs about each statement on a

seven-item scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The measure was shown to have high internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ). The measure contains statements such as “White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin,” and “It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities.”

*Demographics.* Demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey to identify the participant’s age, gender, and ethnicity. Questions were multiple choice, text entry, or both; if the participants indicated “other” on demographic questions about race or gender, they were directed to a text entry question.

**Procedure**

Participants first read an implied consent form. After indicating that they were over the age of 18 and consent to participate in the study, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, male or female. Participants who indicated that they were under the age of 18 were directed to the end of the survey and no data was collected.

Between the vignettes, questions about school disciplinary policies were asked as a form of distraction from the true purpose of the study. These questions gave information about the type of policy, such as zero tolerance policies, and asked the participants to indicate how much they agree or disagree with this policy, and a description as to why they agree or disagree. Since information from these questions is not necessarily important for testing the hypotheses, data from these questions was not analyzed.

After the third vignette, participants were instructed to complete the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (COBRAS). The final step in the procedure was collecting demographic information from participants. Participants were asked to indicate their age, gender, and race. After completing demographic information, participants were directed to the end of the survey.

**Results**

**Hypothesis One**

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was calculated comparing the days of in-school suspension for three ethnicities (See Table 1). A small to medium significant effect was found ( $F(1, 144) = 5.977, p = .016, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$ ). Follow-up paired samples *t* test revealed that days of in-school suspension given were higher among Black students ( $M = 3.03, sd = 3.16$ ) compared to White students ( $M = 2.6, sd = 3.09$ ),  $t(145) = 2.515, p = .013, d = .25$ . and among Black students ( $M = 3.03, sd = 3.16$ ) compared to Hispanic students ( $M = 2.61, sd = 3.3$ ),  $t(145) = 3.027, p = .003, d = .14$ . There was no significant difference in days of in-school suspension among White students ( $M = 2.6, sd = 3.09$ ) and Hispanic students ( $M = 2.61, sd = 3.3$ ),  $t(145) = -.104, p = .917, d = .14$ . These results support the first hypothesis, that Black students were punished more harshly than White students. However, the results only show a disparity for in-school suspension. No significant difference was found in out-of-school suspension among each ethnicity ( $F(1, 144) = .004, p > .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$  see Table 1).

*Table 1:* Results for Days of In-School and Out-of-School Suspension Given

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Groups</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Days of In-School Suspension</b>	Black	146	3.03	3.16	5.977	.016
	White	146	2.60	3.10		
	Hispanic	146	2.61	3.30		
<b>Days of Out-of-School Suspension</b>	Black	146	.98	1.87	.004	.949
	White	146	1.01	2.24		
	Hispanic	146	.99	2.24		

**Hypothesis Two**

Chi-square test for independence were used to examine if males and females were equally likely to be expelled, as well as Black, White, and Hispanic students. Each chi-square was found to be significant (see Table 3), indicating that in all conditions, males and females, who were Black, White, or Hispanic were more likely to not be expelled for their behavior (see Table 2). These results do not support the hypothesis that minority and male students would be punished more harshly. No data was significant in supporting the second hypothesis, that Hispanic students would be punished more harshly than White students.

Table 2: Expulsion Frequencies

	Yes	No
<b>Black Male</b>	10	65
<b>White Male</b>	5	60
<b>Hispanic Male</b>	6	54
<b>Black Female</b>	6	61
<b>White Female</b>	4	57
<b>Hispanic Female</b>	4	54

Table 3: Results for Expulsion

Ethnicity	Gender	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Black v. White</b>	Male	29.87	1	< .001
	Female	47.14	1	< .001
	Total	73.02	1	< .001
<b>Black v. Hispanic</b>	Male	18.7	1	< .001
	Female	45.54	1	< .001
	Total	59.79	1	< .001
<b>White v. Hispanic</b>	Male	28.42	1	< .001
	Female	58.0	1	< .001
	Total	80.37	1	< .001

**Hypothesis Three**

An independent samples t-test found no significant difference in severity of punishment (in or out of school) based on participant gender (Table 4) or participant ethnicity (Table 5).

Table 4: Gender and Suspension

Ethnicity	Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Days of In-School Suspension</b>						
Black	Male	77	3.21	3.72	.7	.485
	Female	69	2.84	2.39		
White	Male	77	2.65	3.63	.22	.826
	Female	69	2.54	2.38		
Hispanic	Male	77	2.57	3.93	-.147	.883
	Female	69	2.65	2.43		
<b>Days of Out-of-School Suspension</b>						
Black	Male	77	.97	1.67	.7	.485
	Female	69	.99	2.08		
White	Male	77	.9	1.69	.22	.826
	Female	69	1.13	2.74		
Hispanic	Male	77	1.06	2.34	-.147	.883
	Female	69	.91	2.13		

Table 5: Influence of Participant Ethnicity on Severity of Punishment

Stimulus Ethnicity	Participant Ethnicity	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Days of In-School Suspension</b>						
Black					.328	.744
	Caucasian	109	3.16	3.26		
	Minority	12	2.83	3.04		
White					.238	.813
	Caucasian	109	2.98	3.25		
	Minority	12	2.75	2.67		
Hispanic					-.323	.748
	Caucasian	109	3.08	3.26		
	Minority	12	3.42	4.6		
<b>Days of Out-of-School Suspension</b>						
Black					.345	.731

	Caucasian Minority	109 12	1.04 .83	2 1.27		
White					.539	.591
	Caucasian Minority	109 12	1.23 .83	2.48 1.64		
Hispanic					-.494	.622
	Caucasian Minority	109 12	1.14 1.5	2.13 4.3		

A significant, moderate, negative correlation was found between age and COBRAS score ( $r(113) = -0.432, p < .001$ ). As age increased, COBRAS score decreased, indicating greater endorsement of the color-blind attitudes presented in the measure. Another significant, weak, negative correlation was found between a lower COBRAS score and the amount of days of in-school suspension given to Black students ( $r(146) = -0.208, p = .024$ ) and Hispanic students ( $r(146) = -0.227, p = .014$ ).

**Hypothesis Four**

*Table 6: Correlation Matrix Between All Variables – Ratings of Male Students Below the Diagonal and Ratings of Female Students Above the Diagonal*

	COBRAS	Age	Black Student IS	Black Student OS	Black Student Expel	White Student IS	White Student OS	White Student Expel	Hispanic Student IS	Hispanic Student OS	Hispanic Student Expel
1	—	0.06	-0.38*	-0.71*	0.10	-0.41**	-0.68**	0.12	-0.36*	-0.61*	0.12
2	-0.24	—	0.27	-0.08	0.13	0.22	0.17	0.02	0.28	0.19	0.02
3	0.28	0.08	—	0.69*	-0.36*	0.91** *	0.57	-0.36*	0.87***	0.59*	-0.36*
4	-0.47*	-0.1 2	0.09	—	-0.55*	0.73*	0.97** *	-0.63*	0.91**	0.96***	-0.63*
5	-0.05	-0.0 3	-0.44** *	0.14	—	-0.17	-0.57*	0.86** *	-0.33*	-0.65**	0.86***
6	0.13	0.04	0.96** *	0.69*	-0.032*	—	0.75*	-0.24	0.95***	0.72*	-0.24
7	-0.35	-0.0 2	0.50	0.81** *	NAC	0.84*	—	-0.57*	0.91**	0.98***	-0.57*
8	-0.18	-0.1 9	-0.27	NAC	0.69** *	-0.21	NAC	—	-0.47**	-0.65**	1.00***
9	0.36*	0.07	0.91** *	0.72	-0.30	0.88** *	0.56	-0.24	—	0.88	-0.47**
10	0.29	0.10	0.45	0.82** *	NAC	0.19	0.41	NAC	0.89*	—	-0.65**
11	-0.27	-0.1 6	-0.19	NAC	0.39*	-0.11	0.06	0.69** *	-0.34*	-0.87** *	—

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , NAC = Not Able To Compute. 1 = COBRAS, 2 = Age, 3 = Black Student In-School Suspension Days (IS), 4 = Black Student Out of School Suspension Days, 5 = Black Student Expel (Yes or No), 6 = White Student In-School Suspension Days, 7 = White Student Out of School Suspension Days, 8 = White Student Expel (Yes or No), 9 = Hispanic Student In-School Suspension Days, 10 = Hispanic Student Out of School Suspension Days, 11 = Hispanic Student Expel (Yes or No).

**Discussion**

The results from the present study show participants gave more days of in-school suspension to Black students compared to White and Hispanic students.

These results are similar to previous research, showing a disparity in discipline among Black students (Results showed no significant disparities in punishment of Hispanic students, replicating

previous research involving the population that has also been inconclusive (Skiba et al., 2002). However, the results replicate previous studies in showing a disparity among Black students (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009). The results did not show a significant difference in out-of-school suspensions or expulsions among students of different ethnicities. Although there were no significant results for out-of-school suspension and expulsion, bias is shown involving in-school suspension.

No significant difference was found between the severity of the punishment and the gender of the student involved, failing to support previous research which states that males are likely to be punished more harshly than females. This could be due to the type of disciplinary infraction described in the vignettes. Previous research states that males may participate in more externalizing behaviors, which leads to a greater frequency of punishment among male students (Skiba et al., 2002). However, in this study male and female students in the vignettes engaged in the same behavior. In addition, participants were only assigned to one gender. Perhaps if participants received vignettes containing both genders, they would be more likely to punish males and females differently. Skiba and colleagues (2002) cited the cultural competency of educators as a possible explanation for bias in discipline, leading to the hypothesis that a participant's ethnicity would influence their punishment for students of similar or different ethnicities. However, the results did not support this hypothesis. Ethnicity may play a larger role in real-life interactions between teachers and students, but it is understandable that it may not have the same influence when a participant is determining a punishment for a hypothetical student and situation.

Although not mentioned in any hypotheses, two interesting results were found involving scores on the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale. A relationship was shown between COBRAS score and age. As participant age increased, COBRAS scores lowered, meaning overall the individuals of greater ages endorsed a greater amount of color-blind racial attitudes. In addition, a

relationship was found between COBRAS score and the number of days of in-school suspension given to minority students. The more color-blind racial ideas participants reported, the more days of in-school suspension they gave to Black and Hispanic students. There was no relationship between color-blind racial ideas participants reported and length of in-school suspension they gave to White students.

These findings in part suggest support for the school to prison pipeline. Many researchers have suggested that disparities in school discipline can later lead to the same disparities in the criminal justice system. Not only are minorities overrepresented in school discipline, but also “in arrest statistics and have historically borne the brunt of punitive sanctions implemented by courts and correctional officials” (Buckler, Wilson, & Salinas, 2009, p. 239). Children of minority groups make up 60% of individuals held by juvenile justice systems across the country and are eight times more likely than white children to be placed in juvenile detention facilities (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009). Skiba and colleagues (2014) provide a definition of this concept:

The school-to-prison pipeline is a construct used to describe policies and practices, especially with respect to school discipline, in the public schools and juvenile justice system that decrease the probability of school success for children and youth, and increase the probability of negative life outcomes, particularly through involvement in the juvenile justice system (p. 546).

Several studies examining school disciplinary data and criminal justice system data have found striking similarities (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009). From previous research, it seems as though students who may not conform to the social, behavioral, and academic standards of a school are seen as dangerous and targeted for removal through exclusionary discipline (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Buckler and colleagues suggest that this process occurs through symbolic racism, which is created through a combination of “anti-Black affect and traditional conservative values” (2009, p. 240). Compared to the type of racism shown earlier in our

country's history, which deemed minorities as biologically inferior to Whites, symbolic racism takes a new stance. Minorities are viewed as culturally inferior, or not possessing traits to become autonomous and able to achieve the same levels of social and political power as Whites (Buckler et al., 2009). In other words, minorities do not possess the American ideals of "hard work, individualism, thrift, punctuality, sexual repression, and delay of gratification," while upholding characteristics such as "laziness, seeking of favoritism and handouts, and impulsivity" (Buckler et al., 2009, p. 240). It is possible that these exact attitudes may lead to the disparities in exclusionary discipline and later involvement in the criminal justice system.

Once a student is suspended, other factors are set in motion that make typical progression through school more difficult, leading to more negative outcomes. Labeling theory is used to explain some of these factors (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009). Once a student is suspended, he becomes stigmatized and is more likely to associate with other students facing a similar fate, some of which may be more antisocial. This also interferes with the formation of self-concept. As the student is stigmatized and seen as delinquent by others, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, which could include adverse thinking about authority and the school itself. More simply put, one suspension is likely to lead to another. Multiple suspensions often lead to decreased academic performance and an increased drop-out rate (Kline, 2016). As Nicholson-Crotty and coauthors (2009) explains, "once black students are excluded from the first institution, their behaviors become much more observable by the second" (p. 1008).

### **Limitations and Future Studies**

Some limitations of the present study include the external validity, as the sample was small and overall the participants were similar in gender and ethnicity, and the self-report nature of the study. Although participants were distracted with filler questions, they could have been aware of their own biases and attempted to answer in a socially desirable manner. Additionally, data was collected

from a variety of sources and may not be representative of the broader population. Specifically, a sample of teachers and school administration would be important, including schools from varying levels of diversity, both in ethnicity and gender, but also socioeconomic background of students. Using this sample, we may find dramatic differences in the perceptions and rating provided, based on the experience these individuals have in the school system and working with a variety of different students. Thus, these findings should be considered with caution, as though an experimental design was used, order effects, socially desirable responding, and other variables could also have impacted participants' responses. However, the experimental design nature of the study helps to substantiate the findings presented, compared to using a survey approach. Additionally, studies with smaller sample sizes, similar to this study have lower statistical power, the significant results with small to moderate effect sizes further support the results of the study.

Future research should continue to examine disparities in discipline involving a variety of ethnicities, especially those with which results have largely been inconclusive. Specifically, beyond exploring ethnic diversity of students, future directions may include indications of student socioeconomic status, disability status, or even sexual identity and the intersection of these various identities. These factors, potentially illustrated through viewing clips of students engaging in behavior, or vignettes with images attached, may provide further insight into the nuanced manners in which minority identities are biased against, similar to race.

Previous research has shown a disparity in school discipline among minority students for decades (Skiba et al., 2011). Overrepresentation in exclusionary discipline has been linked with other negative outcomes, such as high drop-out rates and involvement with the juvenile justice system and later in life, the criminal justice system (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009). As these implications are very serious, it is important for the

topic to continually be research, and for solutions to be developed to reduce these disparities.

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