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Differences in Discipline Consequence Assignment by Student Ethnicity/Race: A Multiyear, Texas Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Analyzed in this study was the degree to which differences were present in discipline consequence assignments as a function of student ethnicity/race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian). Statewide data were obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System on all middle school students for the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years. For each school year, inferential statistical procedures yielded statistically significant differences. A stair-step effect was present each school year in each grade level. Black students received statistically significantly higher rates of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension than did Hispanic, White, and Asian students. Hispanic students had statistically significantly higher rates of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension than White and Asian students. Implications are discussed and suggestions for policy and practice are made.

Keywords: *Student Ethnicity/Race, Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, In-School Suspension, Out-of-School Suspension, Middle school students*

INTRODUCTION

A connection exists between public education and attaining the American dream. Education is the key to the American dream (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003; Reardon, 2013). A diverse group of students are enrolled in the public school system in the United States with hopes of acquiring an education that will lead to success (Jones, Slate, & Martinez-Garcia, 2014). Unfortunately, however, the American dream is difficult to realize for some groups of students because of the color of their skin or the nation of their origin.

Well documented in the extant literature are discipline inequities among the major ethnic/racial groups (Anfinson et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2011; United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2016). In comparison to their Asian and White peers, Black and Hispanic students have been assigned a disproportionate amount of disciplinary consequences for over four decades (Khan & Slate, 2016). In addition to the studies on inequities between the four major ethnic/racial groups, several researchers (e.g., Kupchik & Ellis, 2008; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Mendez et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2011) have also conducted studies regarding discipline inequities between Black, White, and Hispanic students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016a), a higher percentage of Black students have been suspended or expelled than any other major ethnic/racial groups. In addition, Hispanic students and students of two or more races have been suspended or expelled more than White students. Asian students have been suspended the least often, among the major racial/ethnic groups. Regarding the data on suspension and expulsion, 36% of Black students, 21% of Hispanic students, 14% of White students, and 6% of Asian students have been suspended or expelled from school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016a).

The Brown v. Board of Education decision of 1954, declared "separate but equal" education unconstitutional. The Brown v. Board of Education (1954) legislation was the first of several legal mandates aimed towards equalizing education opportunities for all students, irrespective of race and ethnicity. Six decades later, racial inequality is still present in public schools (Berlinger & McLaughlin, 2016). In May of

2016, the nation was faced with the reality that racial inequality has yet to be resolved. U.S. District Court Judge Debra Brown ruled that a Mississippi town's current day segregation of high schools, based on student race was a delay of desegregation that deprived students of their constitutional right to an integrated education (Berlinger & McLaughlin, 2016).

Inequitable practices in schools, such as segregation and disparate discipline practices, negatively influence achievement gaps (Reardon, 2013). Decreasing the disproportionality of discipline consequence assignments is paramount to provide an equal opportunity for each child's success. Inequitable discipline practices not only increase the disproportionality of discipline consequence assignments, but also increase the likelihood of dropping out of school for Hispanic and Black students and increase the flow of Black students through the School-to-Prison Pipeline (Barnes & Slate, 2016; Boneshefski & Runge, 2014).

In response to the Reagan Administration's call to action, a zero tolerance movement was implemented in schools across the nation. Zero tolerance policies require school administrators to suspend and/or expel students for major infractions such as harassment, fighting, or assault and infractions as minor as disobedience, truancy, and obscene language (Mallet, 2016). As a result, prison-like practices are implemented in impoverished schools that minority students attend, in effort to maintain safety. Millions of students become mired in this punitive system. The education exclusion enforced by this system linked with criminalization of youth is referred to as the School-to-Prison Pipeline (Wilson, 2014).

The School-to-Prison Pipeline is largely comprised of a Hispanic and Black population. Hispanic and Black students are overrepresented in the number of students who receive disciplinary consequences, just as Hispanic and Black people are overrepresented in the national prison population (Lopez, 2015). This flow of Black and Hispanic students through the School-to-Prison Pipeline is attributed to zero tolerance policies. As mandated by zero tolerance policies, students are excluded from school and do not learn to change undesirable behaviors (Lopez, 2015). This punitive exclusion from school and failure to teach behavior modifications leads to increased levels of unacceptable criminal activity by students who initially posed little or no threat of harm to schools and communities (Lopez, 2015; Mallet, 2016). The chances of Hispanic and Black students facing criminal involvement is more like likely than the chance of attaining a quality education, as a result of the implementation of zero tolerance policies (Mallet, 2016).

Regarding the disproportionate assignment of discipline consequences to Hispanic and Black students in comparison to their White peers, Khan and Slate (2016) established that Grade 6 Hispanic students in Texas received 54% of the 62,034 in-school suspensions assigned. With respect to out-of-school suspension, Grade 6 Hispanic students received 54% of the assignments; Black students received 32%, and White students received 14% (Khan & Slate, 2016). A similar pattern was determined in the assignment of Discipline Alternative Education Program placement to Grade 6 students in Texas. Of the 6,104 Discipline Alternative Education Program placements assigned, 57% of placements were assigned to Hispanic students, 26% of placements were assigned to Black students, and 17% of placements were assigned to White students (Khan & Slate, 2016).

In a similar study, Barnes and Slate (2016) established the presence of inequities in the assignment of discipline consequences in Texas schools, particularly to Hispanic and Black students. Barnes and Slate (2016) documented discipline inequities as early as Grades 4 and 5 in Texas elementary schools. Texas Grade 4 students received a total of 2,679 in-school suspensions. Of those 2, 679 suspensions, 40% were assigned to Black students, 26% were assigned to Hispanic students, and 34% were assigned to White students (Barnes & Slate, 2016). Concerning out-of-school suspensions, 480 out-of-school suspensions were assigned to Texas Grade 4 students, of which 61% were received by Black students. Hispanic Grade 4 students in Texas received 38% of the out-of-school suspensions assigned and White students received only 1% of the out-of-school suspensions that were assigned (Barnes & Slate, 2016).

With regard to the assignment of discipline consequences to Texas Grade 5 students, 9,862 in-school suspensions were given (Barnes & Slate, 2016). Black students received 38% of the in-school suspensions that were assigned, Hispanic students received 40% of the in-school suspensions that were assigned, and White students received 22% of in-school suspensions that were assigned. Out-of-school suspension rates for Texas Grade 5 students were similar to the out-of-school suspension rates for Texas

Grade 4 students. Again, Black students received the highest percentage of out-of-school suspension assignments, 64%, followed by Hispanic students, 31%; and then by White students who received only 6% of the total out-of-school suspensions.

Additional analyses of inequitable discipline practices in Texas public schools were conducted by Hilberth and Slate (2014) who focused specifically on discipline inequities between Grade 6, 7, and 8 Texas Black and White students. In Grade 6, Black students comprised 14.1% of the sample, compared to White students who comprised 34.7% of the sample. Of note here is that Black students received 32% of the in-school suspensions, more than twice their percentage of student enrollment. White students received 14.2% of the in-school suspensions that were assigned, which was less than half of their percentage of student enrollment (Hilberth & Slate, 2014). Out-of-school suspensions rates were similar, with Grade 6 Black students receiving 19.4% of assigned suspensions, in comparison to their White peers who received 3.7% of out-of-school suspensions (Hilberth & Slate, 2014). Both of these out-of-school suspension rates reflected substantial discrepancies with the Black and White student enrollment percentages.

Grade 7 discipline assignments followed the same pattern. White students comprised 35.2% of the sample, and Black students comprised 14.2% of the sample. Yet, 35.9% of Black students received in-school suspension, in comparison to 16.2% of White students who received in-school suspension (Hilberth & Slate, 2014). Out-of-school suspension rates for Texas Grade 7 were consistent with rates for Texas Grade 6, where 22.6% of the Black student sample received out-of-school suspension, in comparison to 4.8% of the White student sample who received out-of-school suspension (Hilberth & Slate, 2014).

Black students comprised 14.4% of the Grade 8 student enrollment but and received 36.4% of in-school suspensions. White students comprised 35.3% of the student enrollment but only received 17.5% of assigned in-school suspensions in Grade 8 (Hilberth & Slate, 2014). Similarly, with regard to out-of-school suspension, 23.2% of Black students were assigned to out-of-school suspension, in comparison to 5.4% of White students (Hilberth & Slate, 2014).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The No Child Left Behind Act (Public Law 107-110, 2001) brought about the implementation of numerous initiatives, focused on providing equal education opportunities to public school students, regardless of their ethnicity/race. Nonetheless, with the implementation of current policy, the Every Student Succeeds Act (Bill Number S.1177, 2015), discipline consequences are inequitably assigned to students by ethnicity/race in Texas public schools (Barnes & Slate, 2016; Hilberth & Slate, 2014). Hilberth and Slate (2014) documented that "Black students were disciplined at a higher rate than any other ethnic group" (p. 313). A trend comparable to the results of the Hilberth and Slate study was revealed when Barnes and Slate (2016) analyzed discipline consequences by student ethnicity/race for elementary school students. Suspensions for minor misbehaviors were assigned to Black students more often than to their White and Hispanic counterparts (Barnes & Slate, 2016; Boneshefski & Runge, 2014; Curtiss & Slate, 2015; Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Skiba et al., 2011). Black students were four times more likely to be suspended than White students and Hispanic students were two and a half times more likely to be suspended than White students (Boneshefski & Runge, 2014). White students were more likely to receive moderate consequences, such as detention, for noncompliance, minor misbehavior, or moderate infractions and were mainly assigned in-school suspension as a discipline consequence, whereas Black and Hispanic students were assigned consequences with less leniency (Barnes & Slate, 2016; Skiba et al., 2011).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which differences were present in discipline consequence assignments as a function of student ethnicity/race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian). These discipline consequences assignments were analyzed separately for the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years in Texas middle schools. Moreover, these discipline consequences were examined separately for students in Grades 6, 7, and 8. The specific focus in this investigation was whether the assignment of discipline consequences differed as a function of student ethnicity/race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian).

Significance of the Study

Racial inequality has unfortunately been a topic of concern and discussion in the United States for decades (Barnes & Slate, 2016; Boneshefski & Runge, 2014; Curtiss & Slate, 2015; Hilberth & Slate, 2014; McCluskey, 2014; Skiba et al., 2011). With respect to disciplining students, education practitioners must vigilantly monitor discipline practices to ensure that discipline consequences in the education environment are assigned in an equitable and nondiscriminatory manner (Boneshefski & Runge, 2014). The desired outcome of this monitoring process should be to establish and maintain equitable practices that lessen disproportionality in disciplinary actions. Analyzing school discipline data may provide education practitioners crucial insight, essential to establishing culturally responsive practices, with respect to discipline. Findings from this study may potentially inform, influence, and improve classroom practices, with respect to discipline.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (a) What is the difference in in-school suspension assignment as a function of ethnicity/race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian)?; (b) What is the difference in out-of-school suspension assignment as a function of ethnicity/race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian)?; (c) To what degree is a trend present in in-school suspension assignment as a function of ethnicity/race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian) across the three school years?; and (d) To what degree is a trend present in out-of-school suspension assignment as a function of ethnicity/race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian) across the three school years? Texas statewide data for the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years were analyzed to answer these research questions. Data were analyzed separately for students in Grades 6, 7, and 8.

METHODS

Research Design

The data that were used in this study constituted archival data from past events (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). For this reason, the independent variable involved in this research study could not be manipulated. As such, a non-experimental, causal comparative research design was used in this investigation (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Because both the independent variable and the dependent variables had already occurred, extraneous variables were not controlled in this study. The independent variable for this study was student ethnicity/race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian) and the dependent variables were discipline consequence assignments of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension in the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years in the State of Texas.

Participants and Instrumentation

Data for this study were obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System through a Public Information Request form. The Public Information Request form was submitted to obtain data for a Basic Statistics course at Sam Houston State University. The data that were used in this study to answer the research questions had not been analyzed. Inequities in discipline consequence assignments were analyzed separately for each school year by ethnicity/race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian). All Texas middle school students who received a disciplinary consequence during the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years were participants in this study. Specific data that were analyzed were:

- Student ethnicity/race,
- Student grade level, and
- Discipline consequence assigned.

Because the data have been audited by the Texas Education Agency, an assumption of minimal errors existed. Archival data were imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, then labeled and reduced to only include variables relevant to this study. For this study, only the two major discipline consequences were analyzed.

Major discipline consequences were in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension. In-school suspension is an initial disciplinary consequence that results in the removal of a student from the regular classroom by placing the student into a separate classroom (Texas Education Agency, 2010). Out-of-school suspension consequence is the removal of a student from the regular classroom as a disciplinary consequence that does not allow the student to attend school for a day and to not exceed three days in a row (Texas Education Agency, 2010).

RESULTS

In this study, the extent to which differences were present in the assignment of discipline consequences as a function of ethnicity/race for Grade 6, 7, and 8 students was analyzed. Data were examined for all middle school students in Texas who had been assigned a disciplinary consequence of in-school suspension and/or out-of-school suspension in the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years. Statistical procedures were then conducted to determine the degree to which student ethnicity/race may be related to the assignment of discipline consequences.

To address all of the research questions, Pearson chi-square procedures were calculated to determine the degree to which differences were present in the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension by ethnicity/race. Frequency data were present for both categorical variables: ethnicity/race and discipline consequence assignment. As such, the Pearson chi-square statistical procedure was viewed as the optimal statistical procedure to use. With the large sample size, the available sample size per cell was more than five. Therefore, underlying assumptions for use of a Pearson chi-square were met for each research question (Field, 2013). Results will now be presented, beginning with the 2013-2014 school year and Grade 6 students and ending with the 2015-2016 school year and Grade 8 students.

Grade 6 Results for In-School Suspension

For the 2013-2014 school year, the Pearson chi-square revealed a statistically significant difference in the assignment of in-school suspension, $\chi2(3) = 10154.51$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The Cramer's V was .16, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Apparent in the results was a stair-step effect (Carpenter, Ramirez, & Severn, 2006). Grade 6 Black students were assigned an in-school suspension greater than seven times more often than Asian students, two and one half times more often than White students, and more than one and one half times more often than Hispanic students. Hispanic students were assigned an in-school suspension four times more often than Asian students and more than one and a half times more often than White students. The frequencies and percentages of in-school suspension by student ethnicity/race for this school year are delineated in Table 1.

Table1. *Frequencies and Percentages of In-School Suspension Assignment by Ethnicity/Race for Grade 6 Students in the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 School Years*

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	Received an In-School Suspension *n* and %age of Total	Did Not Receive an In-School Suspension *n* and %age of Total
2013-2014		
Black	(*n* = 15,250) 29.1%	(*n* = 37,222) 70.9%
Hispanic	(*n* = 33,205) 16.2%	(*n* = 172,371) 83.8%
White	(*n* = 13,903) 11.5%	(*n* = 107,168) 88.5%
Asian	(*n* = 577) 3.9%	(*n* = 14,356) 96.1%
2014-2015		
Black	(*n* = 14,574) 27.5%	(*n* = 38,367) 72.5%
Hispanic	(*n* = 31,658) 15.0%	(*n* = 179,326) 85.0%
White	(*n* = 13,306) 11.0%	(*n* = 107,459) 89.0%
Asian	(*n* = 548) 3.4%	(*n* = 15,548) 96.6%
2015-2016		
Black	(*n* = 15,550) 29.0%	(*n* = 38,104) 71.0%
Hispanic	(*n* = 36,420) 17.0%	(*n* = 178,241) 83.0%
White	(*n* = 14,765) 12.2%	(*n* = 106,506) 87.8%
Asian	(*n* = 589) 3.5%	(*n* = 16,177) 96.5%

Concerning the 2014-2015 school year, the Pearson chi-square again revealed a statistically significant difference in the assignment of in-school suspension, $\chi2(3) = 9721.18$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The Cramer's V was .16, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Clearly apparent in the results was a stair-step effect (Carpenter et al., 2006). Grade 6 Black students received an in-school suspension eight times more often than Asian students, two and one half times more often than White students, and more than one and one half times more often than Hispanic students. Hispanic students received an in-school suspension greater than

four times more often than Asian students and more than one and one third times more often than White students. Revealed in Table 1 are the frequencies and percentages for in-school suspension by student ethnicity/race for the 2014-2015 school year.

With respect to the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed in the assignment of in-school suspension, $\chi 2(3) = 8861.52$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .15 (Cohen, 1988). Similar to the previous two years, a stair-step effect was clearly apparent (Carpenter et al., 2006). Grade 6 Black students received an in-school suspension seven times more often than Asian students, more than twice as often as White students, and more than one and one half times more often than Hispanic students. Hispanic students received an in-school suspension greater than three times more often than Asian students and almost one and one third times more often than White students. Table 1 contains the frequencies and percentages for the assignment of in-school suspension by student ethnicity/race for this school year.

Grade 7 Results for In-School Suspension

Regarding the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of in-school suspension, $\chi 2(3) = 11255.53$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The Cramer's V was .16, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Evident in the results was a stair-step effect (Carpenter et al., 2006). Grade 7 Black students were assigned an in-school suspension more than seven and one half times more often than Asian students, more than two times more often than White students, and more than one and one half times more often than Hispanic students. Hispanic students received an in-school suspension four times more often than Asian students and more than one and one half times more often than White students. Presented in Table 2 are the frequencies and percentages for the assignment of in-school suspension by student ethnicity/race in this school year.

Table2. *Frequencies and Percentages of In-School Suspension Assignment by Ethnicity/Race for Grade 7 Students in the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 School Years*

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	Received an In-School Suspension *n* and %age of Total	Did Not Receive an In-School Suspension *n* and %age of Total
2013-2014		
Black	(*n* = 17,206) 31.9%	(*n* = 36,710) 68.1%
Hispanic	(*n* = 40,278) 19.0%	(*n* = 171,435) 81.0%
White	(*n* = 15,913) 12.8%	(*n* = 108,295) 87.2%
Asian	(*n* = 633) 4.2%	(*n* = 14,371) 95.8%
2014-2015		
Black	(*n* = 16,055) 30.0%	(*n* = 37,435) 70.0%
Hispanic	(*n* = 37,493) 17.8%	(*n* = 172,842) 82.2%
White	(*n* = 15,124) 12.4%	(*n* = 107,092) 87.6%
Asian	(*n* = 572) 3.7%	(*n* = 15,084) 96.3%
2015-2016		
Black	(*n* = 15,550) 29.0%	(*n* = 38,104) 71.0%
Hispanic	(*n* = 36,420) 17.0%	(*n* = 178,241) 83.0%
White	(*n* = 14,765) 12.2%	(*n* = 106,506) 87.8%
Asian	(*n* = 589) 3.5%	(*n* = 16,177) 96.5%

In the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of in-school suspension, $\chi 2(3) = 10222.91$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .16 (Cohen, 1988). Similar to the previous year, a stair-step effect (Carpenter et al., 2006) was present. Black students in Grade 7 were assigned in-school suspension more than eight times more often than Asian students and two and one half times more often than White students and Hispanic students. Hispanic students in Grade 7 were assigned an in-school suspension more than four times more often than Asian students and almost one and one half times more often than White students. The frequencies and percentages for the assignment of in-school suspension by student ethnicity/race for this school year are presented in Table 2.

For the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed in the assignment of in-school suspension, $\chi2(3) = 9766.44$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The Cramer's V or effect size was .15, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Congruent with the previous two years, a stair-step effect was clearly evident (Carpenter et al., 2006). Black students in Grade 7 were assigned an in-school suspension seven times more often than were Asian students, more than two times more often than were White students, and more than one and one half times more often than were Hispanic students. Hispanic students were assigned an in-school suspension more than four and one half times more often than were Asian students and more than one and one third times more often than were White students. Table 2 contains the frequencies and percentages of in-school suspension assignments by student ethnicity/race in the 2015-2016 school year.

Grade 8 Results for In-School Suspension

Concerning the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of in-school suspension, $\chi2(3) = 9850.05$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The Cramer's V or effect size was .16, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). A stair-step effect was apparent in the results (Carpenter et al., 2006). Black students in Grade 8 were assigned an in-school suspension more than six and one half times more often than Asian students, more than two times more often than White students, and more than one and one half times more often than Hispanic students. Hispanic students were assigned an in-school suspension four times more often than Asian students and almost one and one half times more often than White students. Revealed in Table 3 are the frequencies and percentages for in-school suspension assignments by student ethnicity/race in the 2013-2014 school year.

Table3. *Frequencies and Percentages of In-School Suspension Assignment by Ethnicity/Race for Grade 8 Students in the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 School Years*

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	Received an In-School Suspension *n* and %age of Total	Did Not Receive an In-School Suspension *n* and %age of Total
2013-2014		
Black	(*n* = 16,848) 31.3%	(*n* = 37,044) 68.7%
Hispanic	(*n* = 39,728) 19.2%	(*n* = 167,126) 80.8%
White	(*n* = 16,929) 13.5%	(*n* = 108,908) 86.5%
Asian	(*n* = 694) 4.8%	(*n* = 13,915) 96.2%
2014-2015		
Black	(*n* = 16,054) 29.5%	(*n* = 38,332) 70.5%
Hispanic	(*n* = 38,711) 18.1%	(*n* = 175,274) 81.9%
White	(*n* = 16,434) 13.2%	(*n* = 108,532) 86.8%
Asian	(*n* = 643) 4.1%	(*n* = 14,991) 95.9%
2015-2016		
Black	(*n* = 15,262) 28.4%	(*n* = 38,555) 71.6%
Hispanic	(*n* = 36,901) 17.3%	(*n* = 176,906) 82.7%
White	(*n* = 15,306) 12.5%	(*n* = 107,078) 87.5%
Asian	(*n* = 619) 3.8%	(*n* = 15,569) 96.2%

With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of in-school suspension, $\chi2(3) = 9042.67$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The Cramer's V was .15, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). A stair-step effect (Carpenter et al., 2006) was again present. Grade 8 Black students were assigned an in-school suspension more than seven times more often than Asian students, two times more often than White students, and more than one and one half times more often than Hispanic students. Hispanic students in Grade 8 were assigned an in-school suspension more than four times more often than Asian students and more than one and one third times more often than White students. The frequencies and percentages for the assignment of in-school suspension by student ethnicity/race for this school year are presented in Table 3.

Regarding the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed in the assignment of in-school suspension, $\chi2(3) = 8755.97$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .15 (Cohen, 1988). Similar to the previous two years, a stair-step effect was

clearly apparent (Carpenter et al., 2006). Black students in Grade 8 were assigned an in-school suspension more than seven times more often than their Asian peers, more than two times more often than their White peers, and more than one and one half times more often than their Hispanic peers. Hispanic students in Grade 8 were assigned an in-school suspension more than four and one half times more often than for Asian students and more than one and one third times more often than for White students. Delineated in Table 3 are the frequencies and percentages of in-school suspension assignments by student ethnicity/ race in the 2015-2016 school year.

Trends for In-School Suspension

Across the four ethnic/racial groups over the three years of data that were analyzed, a stair-step effect (Carpenter et al., 2006) was clearly established in the assignment of in-school suspension. Black students in all three grade levels received an in-school suspension statistically significantly more often than did Asian, White, and Hispanic students. Similarly, Hispanic students in all three grade levels were assigned an in-school suspension statistically significantly more often than were Asian and White students.

Grade 6 Results for Out-of-School Suspension

For the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed in the assignment of out-of-school suspension, $\chi 2(3) = 13605.21$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The Cramer's V was .19, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Apparent in the results was a stair-step effect (Carpenter et al., 2006). Grade 6 Black students received an out-of-school suspension 15 times more than Asian students, more than five and one half times more often than White students, and more than two times more often than Hispanic students. Hispanic students received an out-of-school suspension six times more often than Asian students and more than two times more often than White students. The frequencies and percentages of out-of-school suspension by student ethnicity/race for this school year are delineated in Table 4.

Table4. *Frequencies and Percentages of Out-of-School Suspension Assignment by Ethnicity/Race for Grade 6 Students in the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 School Years*

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	Received an Out-of-School Suspension *n* and %age of Total	Did Not Receive an Out-of-School Suspension *n* and %age of Total
2013-2014		
Black	(*n* = 10,067) 19.2%	(*n* = 42,405) 80.8%
Hispanic	(*n* = 16,538) 8.0%	(*n* = 189,038) 92.0%
White	(*n* = 4,073) 3.4%	(*n* = 116,998) 96.6%
Asian	(*n* = 196) 1.3%	(*n* = 14,737) 98.7%
2014-2015		
Black	(*n* = 9,302) 17.6%	(*n* = 43,639) 82.4%
Hispanic	(*n* = 15,293) 7.2%	(n = 195,691) 92.8%
White	(*n* = 3,678) 3.0%	(*n* = 117,087) 97.0%
Asian	(*n* = 172) 1.1%	(*n* = 15,924) 98.9%
2015-2016		
Black	(*n* = 9,457) 17.6%	(*n* = 44,414) 82.4%
Hispanic	(*n* = 15,797) 7.3%	(*n* = 200,097) 92.7%
White	(*n* = 3,781) 3.1%	(*n* = 116,397) 96.9%
Asian	(*n* = 212) 1.2%	(*n* = 16,878) 98.8%

With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of out-of-school suspension, $\chi 2(3) = 12708.34$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The Cramer's V was .18, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Clearly apparent in the results was a stair-step effect (Carpenter et al., 2006). Grade 6 Black students received an out-of-school suspension more than 16 times more often than Asian students, more than five and one half times more often than White students, and more than two times more often than Hispanic students. Hispanic students received an out-of-school suspension more than six and one half times more often than Asian students and more than two times more often than White students. Table 4 contains the frequencies and percentages for out-of-school suspension by student ethnicity/race for the 2014-2015 school year.

Regarding the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed in the assignment of out-of-school suspension, $\chi 2(3) = 12536.98$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .18 (Cohen, 1988). Similar to the previous two years, a stair-step effect was clearly apparent (Carpenter et al., 2006). Grade 6 Black students received an out-of-school suspension more than 14 and one half times more often than Asian students, more than five and one half times more often than White students, and more than twice as often as Hispanic students. Hispanic students received an out-of-school suspension more than six times more often than Asian students and more than two times more often than White students. Delineated in Table 4 are the frequencies and percentages for the assignment of out-of-school suspension by student ethnicity/race for this school year.

Grade 7 Results for Out-of-School Suspension

Concerning the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of out-of-school suspension, $\chi 2(3) = 14402.32$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The Cramer's V was .19, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Apparent in the results was a stair-step effect (Carpenter et al., 2006). Grade 7 Black students were assigned an out-of-school suspension more than 11 and one half times more often than Asian students, more than five times as much as White students, and more than two times more often than Hispanic students. Hispanic students were assigned an out-of-school suspension more than five and one half times more often than Asian students and more than two and one half times more often than White students. Presented in Table 5 are the frequencies and percentages for the assignment of out-of-school suspension by student ethnicity/race for the 2013-2014 school year.

Table5. *Frequencies and Percentages of Out-of-School Suspension Assignment by Ethnicity/Race for Grade 7 Students in the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 School Years*

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	Received an Out-of-School Suspension *n* and %age of Total	Did Not Receive an Out-of-School Suspension *n* and %age of Total
2013-2014		
Black	(*n* = 11,441) 21.2%	(*n* = 42,475) 78.8%
Hispanic	(*n* = 21,120) 10.0%	(*n* = 190,593) 90.0%
White	(*n* = 4,891) 3.9%	(*n* = 119,317) 96.1%
Asian	(*n* = 272) 1.8%	(*n* = 14,732) 98.2%
2014-2015		
Black	(*n* = 10,317) 19.3%	(*n* = 43,173) 80.7%
Hispanic	(*n* = 19,209) 9.1%	(*n* = 191,126) 90.9%
White	(*n* = 4,853) 4.0%	(*n* = 117,363) 96.0%
Asian	(*n* = 204) 1.3%	(*n* = 15,452) 98.7%
2015-2016		
Black	(*n* = 10,406) 19.4%	(*n* = 43,248) 80.6%
Hispanic	(*n* = 19,396) 9.0%	(*n* = 195,265) 91.0%
White	(*n* = 4,724) 3.9%	(*n* = 116,547) 96.1%
Asian	(*n* = 209) 1.2%	(*n* = 16,557) 98.8%

With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of out-of-school suspension, $\chi 2(3) = 12229.54$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .17 (Cohen, 1988). Similar to the previous year, a stair-step effect (Carpenter et al., 2006) was present. Black students in Grade 7 were assigned out-of-school suspension more than 14 and one half times more often than Asian students, more than four and one half times more often than White students, and more than two times more often than Hispanic students. Hispanic students in Grade 7 were assigned an out-of-school suspension seven times more often than Asian students and more than two times more often than White students. The frequencies and percentages for the assignment of out-of-school suspension by student ethnicity/race for the 2014-2015 school year are presented in Table 5.

Regarding the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed in the assignment of out-of-school suspension, $\chi 2(3) = 12641.58$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The Cramer's V or effect size

was .18, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Congruent with the previous two years, a stair-step effect was clearly evident (Carpenter et al., 2006). Black students in Grade 7 were assigned an out-of-school suspension 16 times more often than Asian students, more than four and one half times more often than White students, and more than two times more often than as Hispanic students. Hispanic students were assigned an out-of-school suspension more than seven and one half times more often than Asian students and more than two times more often than White students. Table 5 contains the frequencies and percentages of out-of-school suspension assignments by student ethnicity/race for the 2015-2016 school year.

Grade 8 Results for Out-of-School Suspension

For the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of out-of-school suspension, $\chi 2(3) = 12565.58$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The Cramer's V or effect size was .18, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). A stair-step effect was apparent in the results (Carpenter et al., 2006). Black students in Grade 8 were assigned an out-of-school suspension more than 11 and one half times more often than Asian students, more than four and one half times more often than White students, and two times more often than Hispanic students. Hispanic students were assigned an out-of-school suspension more than five and one half times more often than Asian students and more than two times more often than White students. Revealed in Table 6 are the frequencies and percentages for out-of-school suspension assignments by student ethnicity/race in the 2013-2014 school year.

Table6. *Frequencies and Percentages of Out-of-School Suspension Assignment by Ethnicity/Race for Grade 8 Students in the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 School Years*

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	Received an Out-of-School Suspension *n* and %age of Total	Did Not Receive an Out-of-School Suspension *n* and %age of Total
2013-2014		
Black	(*n* = 11,208) 20.8%	(*n* = 42,684) 79.2%
Hispanic	(*n* = 21,450) 10.4%	(*n* = 185,404) 89.6%
White	(*n* = 5,766) 4.6%	(*n* = 120,071) 95.4%
Asian	(*n* = 256) 1.8%	(*n* = 14,353) 98.2%
2014-2015		
Black	(*n* = 10,706) 19.7%	(*n* = 43,680) 80.3%
Hispanic	(*n* = 20,849) 9.7%	(*n* = 193,136) 90.3%
White	(*n* = 5,475) 4.4%	(*n* = 119,491) 95.6%
Asian	(*n* = 223) 1.4%	(*n* = 15,411) 98.6%
2015-2016		
Black	(*n* = 10,478) 19.5%	(*n* = 43,339) 80.5%
Hispanic	(*n* = 20,551) 9.6%	(*n* = 193,256) 90.4%
White	(*n* = 5,316) 4.3%	(*n* = 117,068) 95.7%
Asian	(*n* = 218) 1.3%	(*n* = 15,970) 98.7%

In the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of out-of-school suspension, $\chi 2(3) = 11940.13$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The Cramer's V was .17, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). A stair-step effect (Carpenter et al., 2006) was again present. Grade 8 Black students were assigned an out-of-school suspension 14 times more often than Asian students, four and one half times more often than White students, and two times more often than Hispanic students. Hispanic students in Grade 8 were assigned an out-of-school suspension almost seven times more often than Asian students and more than two times more often than White students. The frequencies and percentages for the assignment of out-of-school suspension by student ethnicity/race for this school year are presented in Table 6.

With regard to the 2015-2016 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed in the assignment of out-of-school suspension, $\chi 2(3) = 11696.60$, $p < .001$, by student ethnicity/race. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .17 (Cohen, 1988). Similar to the previous two years, a stair-step effect was clearly apparent (Carpenter et al., 2006). Black students in Grade 8 were assigned an out-of-school suspension more than 15 times more often than Asian students, four and one half times more often than White students, and

two times more often than Hispanic students. Hispanic students in Grade 8 were assigned an out-of-school suspension more than seven times more often than Asian students and two times more often than White students. Delineated in Table 6 are the frequencies and percentages of out-of-school suspension assignments by student ethnicity/race in the 2015-2016 school year.

Trends for Out-of-School Suspension

A stair-step effect (Carpenter et al., 2006) was clearly established in the assignment of out-of-school suspension across the three years of data that were analyzed and for students in the three different grade levels. Each year, Black students in all three grade levels received an out-of-school suspension statistically significantly more often than did Asian, White, and Hispanic students. Similarly, Hispanic students in all three grade levels were assigned an out-of-school suspension statistically significantly more often than White and Asian students in each year.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the degree to which differences were present in discipline consequence assignments as a function of student ethnicity/race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian) was examined for Texas middle school students in the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years. In each school year at each grade level over this 3-year time period, statistically significant differences were documented in the assignment of discipline consequences as a function of student ethnicity/race. The presence of trends in the assignment of discipline consequences by student ethnicity/race was determined, subsequent to the statistical analyses. Results will now be summarized.

Throughout the 2013-2014 through the 2015-2016 school years, across each of the three grade levels, Black students received the highest rates of in-school suspension. In-school suspension rates for Black students ranged from 27.5% to 29.1% in Grade 6, from 29.0% to 31.9% in Grade 7, and from 28.4% to 31.3% in Grade 8 in these three school years. For Hispanic students, in-school suspension rates ranged from 15.0% to 17.0% in Grade 6, from 9.0% to 17.0% in Grade 7, and from 17.3% to 19.2% in Grade 8 in these three school years. In comparison to these in-school suspension rates, the in-school suspension rates for White students ranged from 11.0% to 12.2% in Grade 6, from 12.2% to 12.8% in Grade 7, and from 12.5% to 13.2% in Grade 8 in these three school years. In-school suspension rates for Asian students ranged from 3.4% to 3.9% in Grade 6, from 3.5% to 4.2% in Grade 7, and from 3.8% to 4.8% in Grade 8 in these three school years. In strong agreement with Carpenter et al. (2006), a stair-step effect was clearly established in the assignment of in-school suspension by student ethnicity/race. Readers are directed to Table 7 for a summary of effect sizes across the three school years for in-school suspension rates by student ethnicity/race for Grade 6, 7, and 8 students.

Table7. *Summary of Effect Sizes for In-School Suspension Assignment by Ethnicity/Race for Grade 6-8 Students in the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 School Years*

Grade Level and School Year	Cramer's V	Effect Size Range	Highest ISS Rate
Grade 6			
2013-2014	.16	Small	Black students
2014-2015	.16	Small	Black students
2015-2016	.15	Small	Black students
Grade 7			
2013-2014	.17	Small	Black students
2014-2015	.16	Small	Black students
2015-2016	.16	Small	Black students
Grade 8			
2013-2014	.16	Small	Black students
2014-2015	.15	Small	Black students
2015-2016	.15	Small	Black students

With respect to out-of-school suspension, across each of the three grade levels, higher percentages of Black students received an out-of-school suspension in the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and the 2015-2016 school years than their peers. Out-of-school suspension rates for Black students ranged from 17.6% to 19.2% in Grade 6, from 29.0% to 31.9% in Grade 7, and from

28.4% to 31.3% in Grade 8 in these three school years. For Hispanic students, out-of-school suspension rates ranged from 15.0% to 17.0% in Grade 6, from 17.0% to 19.0% in Grade 7, and from 17.3% to 19.2% in Grade 8 in these three school years. In comparison to these out-of-school suspension rates, the out-of-school suspension rates for White students ranged from 11.0% to 12.2% in Grade 6, from 12.2% to 12.8% in Grade 7, and from 12.5% to 13.5% in Grade 8 in these three school years. Out-of-school suspension rates for Asian ranged from 3.4% to 3.9% in Grade 6, from 3.5% to 4.2% in Grade 7, and from 3.8% to 4.8% in Grade 8 in these three school years. Again, findings were in strong agreement with Carpenter et al. (2006) of the presence of a stair-step effect in the assignment of out-of-school suspension by student ethnicity/race. A summary of the effect sizes for out-of-school suspension rates by student ethnicity/race for Grade 6, 7, and 8 students across the three school years is presented in Table 8.

Table8. *Summary of Effect Sizes for Out-of-School Suspension Assignment by Ethnicity/Race for Grade 6-8 Students in the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 School Years*

Grade Level and School Year	Cramer's V	Effect Size Range	Highest OSS Rate
Grade 6			
2013-2014	.19	Small	Black students
2014-2015	.18	Small	Black students
2015-2016	.18	Small	Black students
Grade 7			
2013-2014	.19	Small	Black students
2014-2015	.17	Small	Black students
2015-2016	.18	Small	Black students
Grade 8			
2013-2014	.18	Small	Black students
2014-2015	.17	Small	Black students
2015-2016	.17	Small	Black students

Implications for Policy and for Practice

Statistically significant disparities were evident in the assignment of discipline consequences to Grade 6, 7, and 8 students by their ethnicity/race throughout the 3-year time period analyzed. Black students were assigned an in-school suspension and an out-of-school suspension much more often than their Asian, White, and Hispanic peers in all three grade levels in all three analyzed school years. Similarly, Hispanic students were assigned an in-school suspension and an out-of-school suspension much more often than their Asian and White peers in all three school years and in all three grade levels. With these findings in mind, school leaders are encouraged to conduct an analysis of their school campus and their school district discipline strategies to ascertain the extent to which student ethnicity/race is related to discipline consequence assignment. Results from such audits could then be used to cultivate changes in discipline systems or foster the development of new discipline systems. School district leaders are also encouraged to increase the cultural diversity of school administrators, teachers, and other staff members. Another suggestion would be for school district leaders to provide professional development on multicultural awareness for school administrators, teachers, and other staff members.

Review and revision of codes of conduct are other implications for practice. This code of conduct analysis could augment the effort to reduce the inequitable flow of Black and Hispanic students through the School-to-Prison pipeline. The creation of codes of conduct with outlined consequences for discipline violations is encouraged by school district leaders and school campus leaders to decrease administrator subjectivity. Outlined consequences for discipline violations would also allow for a systematic assignment of consequences contingent upon the infraction and irrespective of student ethnicity/race. Educator cognizance of discipline disparities could increase with recurrent analysis of discipline data. A final implication for practice would be to determine the underlying reasons for the inequities in the assignment of discipline consequences by student ethnicity/race.

Recommendations for Future Research

Examined in this study was the relationship between student ethnicity/race and the assignment of discipline consequences, specifically in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension, to

students in Grades 6, 7, and 8. Future researchers could extend this study by analyzing in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension data by gender within ethnic/racial groups. As the data analyzed in this investigation were on only middle school students, researchers are encouraged to extend this study to students enrolled in other grade levels, such as elementary schools and high schools. This extended analysis would help determine if the inequities delineated herein are also occurring at the elementary school or high school levels. Researchers are also recommended to extend this study to other states, as the degree to which the inequities identified in this study are generalizable to students in other states is unknown.

Researchers are encouraged to examine discipline consequences as a function of other student characteristics such as students who are at-risk, student level of poverty, gender, and English Language Learner status. A thorough understanding of the presence of inequities in the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension would expand the existing literature on discipline. Moreover, research should be conducted on the extent to which the discipline consequences of Discipline Alternative Education Placement, Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Placement, and expulsion are assigned in an inequitable manner. To what degree are students given different discipline consequences, based on the color of their skin, is a resonating question. As such, a final recommendation for future research would be to analyze the reasons why students are assigned a discipline consequence.

CONCLUSION

In this multiyear, statewide analysis, the degree to which differences were present in discipline consequence assignments as a function of student ethnicity/race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian) in Texas middle schools during the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years was addressed. Inferential statistical analyses yielded statistically significant differences in the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension to Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian students. For the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and the 2015-2016 school years, Black students were assigned both in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension statistically significantly more often than their Asian, White, and Hispanic peers. In addition, Hispanic students were assigned both in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension statistically significantly more often than were their Asian and White grade level peers. Congruent with previous researchers (e.g., Anfinson et al., 2010; Barnes & Slate, 2016; Berlinger & McLaughlin, 2016; Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Khan & Slate, 2016; Kupchik & Ellis, 2008; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Mendez et al., 2002; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016; Skiba et al., 2011; United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2016), clear inequities were established in the assignment of these two discipline consequences for Black and Hispanic students. Of note in this study was the presence of a consistent stair-step effect in discipline consequence assignment (Carpenter et al., 2006) by student ethnicity/race.

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