

INEQUITIES IN DISCIPLINARY CONSEQUENCE ASSIGNMENT TO  
ELEMENTARY STUDENTS: A TEXAS STATEWIDE INVESTIGATION

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Doctor of Education

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by

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Madison Curtiss, whose constant love for learning and life have inspired me daily to pursue my dreams, so she will continue to chase hers. Being an educator's daughter isn't always easy, from late nights to early morning on campus, numerous weekends spent studying and writing, and spending many weekends with Mamoo and Papoo so I can work. I know it is not easy. I also want to dedicate this dissertation to my mom and dad. Growing up, I was given nothing but love and support, and now as an adult their love and support has only grown deeper. Their encouragement, support, and guidance is invaluable. Additionally, I dedicate this dissertation to my grandmother, Mimi, who showed me that women too can be independent and change the world. Lastly, this dissertation is dedicated to all my students. Each minute working on this dissertation was for them.

## **ABSTRACT**

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to examine the extent to which differences were present in discipline consequence assignment by ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black), gender, and economic status (i.e., Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor). Specifically, the assignment of discipline consequences to Grade 4 and 5 students in Texas was analyzed to determine whether inequities in their assignment might be present as a function of student ethnicity/race, gender, and economic status. The two discipline consequences that were analyzed in the three investigations in this journal-ready dissertation were the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension. The two grade levels on which data were obtained and analyzed were Grade 4 and Grade 5.

### **Method**

A causal-comparative research design was used in this study. Data on all participants were requested and obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System database through a Public Information Request. Archival data were obtained for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years for all Texas Grade 4 and Grade 5 students. Specific data requested from the Texas Education Agency were: grade level, student ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black), gender, economic status, and discipline consequence.

## **Findings**

The assignment of in-school suspension and the assignment of out-of-school suspension was analyzed for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students by ethnicity race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black), gender, and economic status (i.e., Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor) for two consecutive years. Inferential statistical procedures revealed the presence of statistically significant differences for all analyses. Black students received statistically significantly higher rates of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension than either Hispanic or White students. Boys received more discipline consequences than girls. Students who were Extremely Poor had statistically significantly higher rates of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension than their peers who were Moderately Poor and Not Economically Disadvantaged. The results of these studies provide strong evidence that inequities in discipline consequence assignment are present as early as Grades 4 and 5. Clear implications for policy and for practice were provided, as well as suggestions for future research.

**KEY WORDS:** Not economically disadvantaged, Extremely poor, Moderately poor, Ethnicity, Race, Gender, In-school suspension, Out-of-school suspension

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION/BRIEF REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Students are assigned discipline consequences every day in the United States. In the past decade, concerns have been expressed (Englehart, 2014; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Hilberth & Slate, 2014b; Skiba, Eckes, & Brown, 2009;) about inequities in the administration of discipline consequences with respect to student ethnicity/race (Arcia, 2006, 2007; Barnes & Slate, 2016; Curtiss & Slate, 2015; Hilberth & Slate, 2014b; Noguera, 2003) and with student gender (Curtiss & Slate, 2015; Henkel, Slate, & Martinez-Garcia, 2016). Discipline consequences result in students being removed from the classroom environment and a loss of instructional time. As such, achievement gaps may be exacerbated by these practices (George, 2015; Gregory et al., 2010; Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014). In this journal-ready dissertation, the extant literature was reviewed regarding the presence of discipline inequities with respect to student ethnicity/race for the first article. The research literature concerning discipline inequities by gender within three different ethnic/racial groups (i.e., White, Black, and Hispanic) was analyzed for the second article in this journal-ready dissertation. For the third research article, discipline inequities by student economic status were examined.

#### **Discipline Inequities by Race/Ethnicity**

In 2001, the United States Department of Education defined success for all students through the federal mandate, the No Child Left Behind Act. In this act, students were to have the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and, at a minimum, reach proficiency on state academic achievement standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). In 2015 the Obama administration recognized the need to change some of the No

Child Left Behind Act's requirements for schools and teachers. In response, the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) was passed. Focused on in this new education legislation is the importance of every child regardless of race/ethnicity, income, background, or zip code (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). In addition to race/ethnicity, many variables such as academic learning time, effective teachers (Fisher et al., 2015), and school culture (Meier, 2012) have been documented as being related to student achievement.

In support of the new Every Student Succeeds Act, Cheem and Galluzzo (2013) noted that one of the two variables upon which student academic success is contingent upon is ethnicity/race. In the United States, strong disparities exist between Black students and White students, and between Hispanic students and White students in regard to their academic achievement and to the rates of discipline consequences they experience (Englehart, 2014; Gregory et al., 2010; Hilberth & Slate, 2014a). Most discipline consequences that students receive remove them from their regular classroom environment. The two most commonly assigned discipline consequences are in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension and both are regarded as being exclusionary practices. Even though exclusionary discipline practices have not been documented to improve student behavior or school climate (Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014), in the 2011-2012 school year, 3.45 million students in the United States received an out-of-school suspension (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Many researchers (e.g., Englehart, 2014; Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014) have suggested that zero-tolerance policies in the United States in public schools have increased discipline inequities between students of different ethnic/racial groups. Zero-tolerance policies implemented in the 1990s include exclusionary practices that have



been used with increased frequency (American Psychological Association, 2008). These zero-tolerance policies originated from the Federal Gun Free School Act of 1994. Zero-tolerance policies were originally implemented to improve school climate by removing students immediately from the school environment when their behavior was considered to constitute a hazard to others (Englehart, 2014). Even though assignment of predetermined exclusionary consequences is given to students under the zero-tolerance policy, the circumstance or context of an incident are not considered (Englehart, 2014).

Since the development and implementation of zero-tolerance policies in schools in the United States, the expected benefits have not occurred (Englehart, 2014). In fact, an overuse and misuse of suspension has occurred, resulting in inequities in their use for different ethnic/racial groups (Skiba, 2014). Over the past 30 years exclusionary measures assigned to Black and Hispanic students have increased, resulting in negative student outcomes such as increased discipline sanctions as well as increased dropout rates (Skiba, 2014). For instance, Noguera (2008) stated, “Politicians and school officials have pledged to quell the tide of violence by converting schools into prison-like, lockdown facilities and by increasing penalties incurred for committing violent acts” (p. 85).

Over time the discipline policies developed from the zero-tolerance policy have been used to respond to minor offenses (Casella, 2003). For example, transgressions of White students involve straightforward referral decisions that are most likely present in school policy, whereas the transgressions of Black and Hispanic students may be judged as unacceptable or inappropriate depending on the teacher or administrator. Unfortunately, exclusionary punishments promote more negative behaviors than they do positive behaviors (Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014). Readers should note that, to date, no

empirical data are available to show that exclusionary practices reduce disruption or improve the school environment (Skiba, 2014). Furthermore, no evidence exists as of yet, that zero-tolerance policies have influenced the consistency of discipline in schools in a positive way (Englehart, 2014).

Concomitant with zero-tolerance policies contributing to the disproportionality of discipline consequences for minority students, Englehart (2014) discussed a common pattern associated with the inequalities of discipline management among students. He noted that White students were more likely to be referred for objectively identifiable transgressions, such as smoking, leaving without permission, vandalism, and obscene language (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Black and Hispanic students, however, were more likely to be referred for subjective transgressions in need of interpretation, such as disrespect, excessive noise, and threat. Noguera (2008) contributed the inequitable assignment of discipline consequences on the reliance of methods of control that have been successful in the past; such as subjective reasons instead of objective.

Unfortunately, clear relationships have been documented between ethnicity/race and discipline consequence assignment (Arcia, 2006, 2007; Barnes & Slate, 2016; Blake, Lewis, Moore, & Scott, 2011; Curtiss & Slate, 2015; Hilberth & Slate, 2014b; Noguera, 2003). With specific reference to the state of interest, Texas, in this investigation, Henkel et al. (2016) examined the relationship of out-of-school suspension with the reading and mathematics achievement of Texas boys and girls in Grades 6, 7, and 8. In each case, regardless of ethnicity/race, gender, or grade level, the average reading and mathematics

scores were statistically significantly lower for students who received an out-of-school suspension than for their peers who did not receive an out-of-school suspension.

Documented in the literature is Black and Hispanic students are more likely to be assigned school disciplinary consequences than are White students (Hilberth & Slate, 2014a, 2014b; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008). Wallace Jr. et al. (2008) established that Black students were suspended from school at the highest rate compared to other ethnic/racial groups, even though their ethnic/racial group constituted the lowest percentage of student enrollment. In comparison, White students had the highest ethnic/racial percentage of student enrollment and were suspended from school at the lowest rate.

In an analysis of suspension and expulsion rates for students of color in the United States, the U.S. Department of Education (2014) documented that Black students were suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than White students. As such, low-income Black and Hispanic students are at a greater risk and exposure to the negative effects of zero tolerance policies (Englehart, 2014). Black students were twice as likely as their White counterparts to receive an office discipline referral in elementary school and nearly four times as likely in middle school (Skiba et al., 2011). Comparisons between the discipline consequence assignments of Hispanic and White students and Black and White students are important because the inequities that exist could influence other important aspects of education, such as drop-out rates and academic achievement (Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014).

Black students are not only overrepresented in regard to receiving discipline consequences, but are disproportionately overrepresented when compared to White students and Hispanic students. Black students are subjected to out-of-school suspension

three to 22 times more often than White students (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). In a recent Texas statewide investigation, the state of interest in this article, Hilberth and Slate (2014b) analyzed Grade 6, 7, and 8 Black and White student discipline data. In their study, Hilberth and Slate (2014b) documented that even though Black student enrollment was substantially lower than White student enrollment, by almost half, Black students received statistically significantly higher rates of in-school suspension than White students by more than twice as many. Black students received a disproportional rate of school suspension when their percentage of student enrollment and rate of in-school suspension was compared to White students. This statistic represents a disproportional rate of school suspension by more than two times.

In the 2008-2009 school year, Black student enrollment in Texas middle schools was about 14%, however, the percentage of Black students who received in-school suspension was 32%, 35%, and 36% in Grade 6, 7, and 8, respectively (Hilberth & Slate, 2014b). Compared to White students whose total student enrollment was about 35% in Texas middle schools. The percentage of White students who received an in-school suspension was 14%, 16%, and 17.5% in Grade 6, 7, and 8, respectively. With respect to out-of-school suspension, the inequities in its assignment were remarkably similar to the results for in-school suspension. Only the numbers of students who received this consequence were lower than the numbers of students who received an in-school suspension.

Many factors including school policy, rights of students and parents, retention, teacher experience, funding, harassment, seclusion, and discipline led the United States Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan to declare education as the civil rights issue of this

generation (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Noguera (2015) emphasized the need for teachers and administration to engage in culturally responsive practices, because the current inequities in discipline consequence assignments by ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) constitute civil rights violations. Additionally, Duncan suggested education is the surest path out of poverty in the United States. As such, civil rights laws need to be vigorously enforced and all students need to receive a fair shot at a good future (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

### **Discipline Inequities for Boys and Girls Within Ethnicity/Race**

In the United States, Black and White students and Hispanic and White students have strong disparities in regard to their academic achievement and with respect to the rates of discipline consequences they experience (Englehart, 2014; Gregory et al., 2010; Hilberth & Slate, 2014a). For example, in 2014, 2.8 million K-Grade 12 students in the United States were assigned an out-of-school suspension (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Of the 2.8 million out-of-school suspensions assigned in the 2013-2014 school year, 1.1 million were assigned to Black students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), and boys received more than girls.

“In many school districts across the country, considerable controversy has been generated over the disproportionate number of African American and Latino students who are subjected to various forms of discipline” (Noguera, 2008, p. 101). Not only has the frequency of exclusionary practices increased since the onset of zero-tolerance policies implemented in the 1990s (American Psychological Association, 2008), but discipline inequities associated with exclusionary consequences between students of different ethnic/racial groups have increased as well (Englehart, 2014; Noguera, 2003;

Skiba, 2014). Exclusionary consequences have been overused and misused, while promoting inequities between gender and among different ethnic/racial groups (American Psychological Association, 2008; Casella, 2003). Over the past 30 years, exclusionary discipline assignments assigned to Black and Hispanic students have increased and created negative effects on student outcomes (Skiba, 2014). Empirical evidence is not available that exclusionary discipline assignments reduce disruption or improve the school environment (Skiba, 2014).

The effects of exclusionary discipline practices, documented to have negative influences within the educational environment, are evident in The School to Prison Pipeline (George, 2015). The School to Prison Pipeline involves policies, practices, and conditions that facilitate the criminalization within educational environments and the process by which the criminalization results in the incarceration of youth (George, 2015). For instance, Black boys and girls are represented disproportionately in prisons when compared to other racial/ethnic groups, as well as overrepresented in the prison population of the United States (George, 2015; Lopez, 2015). These race and gender discipline disparities are a consequence of the biases and stereotypes rooted in U.S. history (George, 2015). In fact, Skiba et al. (2002) contended that the abuse and misuse of discipline strategies such as zero-tolerance, suspension, and expulsion have fostered the growth of the School to Prison Pipeline for Black males. For Black and Hispanic students, objectively identifiable transgressions were more likely used when White students were referred for a discipline consequence, such as smoking, leaving without permission, and vandalism (Englehart, 2014; Skiba et al., 2002).

Also documented in the research literature is that boys of all racial and ethnic groups are more likely than are girls to receive disciplinary sanctions (Gregory et al., 2010). White and Black girls are half as likely as White and Black boys to receive a discipline consequence (Gregory et al., 2010). Gregory (1995) concluded Black boys were especially at risk, with Black boys being 16 times more likely than White girls to receive a disciplinary sanction. In recent investigations conducted in the state of interest for this investigation, Texas, White students and girls were less likely to experience school disciplinary consequences than were Black and Hispanic boys (Hilberth & Slate, 2014a, 2014b; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008). Similar to Engelhart (2014), Blake et al. (2010) investigated differences in discipline consequences with regard to gender. Black girls were twice as likely to receive discipline infractions for objective infractions; such as defiance, improper dress, and fighting than their White and Hispanic counterparts. This nonconformity with traditional feminine behaviors influences the negative experiences that Black girls have with school discipline (Murphy, Acosta, & Kennedy-Lewis, 2013). Although Black boys have garnered national attention in regard to the disparate impact of discriminatory discipline practices (George, 2015), Black girls are suspended at higher rates than any other racial or ethnic group. In fact, Black girls are suspended at a rate six times the rate of White girls for innocuous offenses, such as willful defiance or wearing natural hairstyles (George, 2015).

In a recent Texas study, Curtiss and Slate (2015) analyzed discipline consequence data for boys and girls in Grade 4 and Grade 5 in Texas. Grade 5 boys received 88% of the discipline consequences, with violations of local code of conduct constituting the reason for 99.5% of the consequences. These data were interpreted to mean a more

subjective discipline process was present for boys in Grade 5 than for girls. Disciplinary sanctions for girls were for violating a local code of conduct and subjective in nature (Curtiss & Slate, 2015), whereas the reasons that boys were assigned a disciplinary sanction were slightly more violent than that of the girls.

In a recent report, the U.S. Department of Education (2014) analyzed exclusionary practices, suspension, and expulsion rates for students of color in the United States. Black students were suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than White students. Additionally, boys received more discipline assignments than girls, particularly Black boys. Furthermore, in a national sample, Black students received an office discipline referral twice as often as their White counterparts in elementary school and nearly four times as often in middle school (Skiba et al., 2011). Analyzing the discipline consequence assignments of Black and White students and Hispanic and White students is important because inequities that exist could influence other important aspects of education, such as drop-out rates and academic achievement (Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014). Of importance is that exclusionary discipline consequences are assigned to students who can least afford to be out of the classroom (Arcia, 2007; Butler, Lewis, Moore III, & Scott, 2012).

Henkel (2015) documented that students who are suspended from school struggle academically compared to those students who are not suspended, most likely because they are missing instructional time (Miles & Stipek, 2006; Pokorski, 2010). In Henkel's study, discipline consequence data were analyzed for two school years for Texas students in Grades 6, 7, and 8. In her investigation, she examined the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Reading and Mathematics (TAKS) test scores for students who



were assigned in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or a discipline alternative education program placement compared to their peers who were not assigned a discipline consequence. Henkel documented that White, Hispanic, and Black boys and girls who were assigned to in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or to a discipline alternative education program placement had statistically significantly lower TAKS Reading and Mathematics scores than their peers who were not assigned discipline consequences. Similarly, the receipt of a discipline consequence was more negatively related to mathematics performance than to reading performance. In a separate investigation, Henkel et al. (2016) investigated the relationship of in-school suspension to reading and mathematics achievement of White, Black, and Hispanic students in Grades 6, 7, and 8. They also examined the academic achievement of boys and girls within each ethnic/racial group. Students who received an in-school suspension had lower reading and mathematics test scores than their peers who did not receive in-school suspension. Similar to the previous study, mathematics scores were more negatively influenced by the in-school suspension than were reading scores.

In another recent investigation, Barnes and Slate (2016) analyzed disciplinary inequities for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students based on ethnicity/race and gender. Similar to previous studies, they established the presence of statistically significant differences in discipline consequences between Black, Hispanic, and White students. For Grade 4 and Grade 5 students, Black and Hispanic students received many more instances of out-of-school suspension than did White students. Moreover, boys in Grade 5 received statistically significantly more in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions than did Grade 5 girls.

Mendez and Knoff (2003) examined the relationship of exclusionary practices with student gender and ethnicity/race. In their study, they established that Black girls were more likely than were White boys to be suspended at every grade level. Furthermore, the U.S. Census Bureau (2012) established Black girls to be twice as likely to drop out of high school than were White girls.

Not only have researchers (e.g., Arcia, 2006; Butler et al., 2012; Skiba et al., 2009) documented the presence of inequities in the assignment of discipline consequences for Black boys and girls, but the reason for the assignments can also be considered inequitable and discriminatory. Discipline toward Black girls is more often considered discretionary discipline and related to demeanor, rather than to objective actions, such as fighting (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Morris, 1997). Morris (1997) and Mendez and Knoff (2003) contended the discretionary discipline was due to cultural differences between Black and White cultures; as well as, referrals differing substantially between White and Hispanic girls. Additionally, the lack of emphasis on analyzing data on Black girls may be in part to the perception that girls, in general, pose less risk for behavior problems given their greater academic achievement and gender bias (Blake et al., 2011). With school teachers and school administrators typically being White, cultural differences between Black and White cultures reflect a culture disconnect (Morris, 1997).

Documented in the literature are clear inequities associated with discipline consequences within public schools in the United States (Arcia, 2006; Blake et al., 2011; Butler et al., 2012; Curtiss & Slate, 2015; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2009). The United States Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan declared education as the civil rights issue of our generation (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The current

inequities in discipline consequence assignments among ethnic/racial groups (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) and gender constitute civil rights violations. Accordingly, enforcing civil rights laws and providing equity in education is essential for all students to be given a chance at a successful future (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

### **Discipline Inequities by Student Economic Status**

“Children growing up in poverty have a higher likelihood of exposure to multiple forms of adversity that jeopardize their chances of academic success” (Friedman-Krauss & Raver, 2015, p. 1). In addition to jeopardizing their chances of academic success, children with higher levels of poverty perform more poorly on measures of emotion and cognitive deregulation when compared to their more advantaged peers (Friedman-Krauss & Raver, 2015). Heberle and Carter (2015) determined that students who are economically disadvantaged have higher than average rates of externalizing behavior problems in addition to lower cognitive and academic performance than their peers who are not economically disadvantaged. Many factors contribute to their lower academic, emotional, and cognitive success, such as children from poverty are more likely to attend lower quality schools, have less qualified teachers, have less access to cognitive enriching materials, and experience disruptions in their home environments (Friedman-Krauss & Raver, 2015).

According to The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2016), “Large and persistent poverty-based disparities continue to characterize the nation’s academic achievement” (p. 10). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2016) documented that the gap in proficiency between low income students and students of higher income increased by about four points. Of note is that the percentage of students

who were enrolled in the free or reduced price lunch program increased from 39.7% in 2003 to 51.5% in 2015 (Student Achievement in the Era of Accountability, 2016). In 2010, the United States Census reported that 22% of all children in the United States were under the Federal poverty line (Heberle & Carter, 2015). Therefore, not only does a poverty-based disparity in academic achievement exist in the United States, but the gap is widening and the poverty population is growing.

The U.S. Department of Education (2001) declared, in the federal mandate, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, all students are to have an equal opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. Skiba (2014) described academic engagement as the number one variable for student academic achievement, however when students are disciplined in an exclusionary manner, such as suspension or expulsion the academic engagement is lost, and so is the equality, equity, and goals of our nation's education legislation. Furthermore, exclusionary discipline practices have not been recognized to improve student behavior (Noguera, 2003). In the 2011-2012 school year, the United States Department of Education documented 3.45 million students received an out-of-school suspension (Skiba, 2014), therefore contributing to a loss in academic engagement. More recently, in 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act was passed. Focused on in this new legislation is the importance of equality for every child regardless of race/ethnicity, income, background, or zip code (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The Federal Gun Free School Act of 1994 originated zero tolerance policies within The United States' public schools. Zero-tolerance policies implemented in the 1990s included exclusionary practices that have been used with increased frequency (American Psychological Association, 2008). Since the implementation of zero-tolerance

policies, discipline inequities associated with exclusionary consequences among students of different ethnic/racial backgrounds have increased (Englehart, 2014; Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014). Under the zero-tolerance policy, circumstance or context of an incident are not considered when an assignment of predetermined exclusionary consequences are given to students (Englehart, 2014).

Zero-tolerance policies were created to provide a safe school climate by using exclusionary practices when responding to serious behavior. The expected effects of the implementation of zero-tolerance policies have not been seen (Englehart, 2014). However, unexpectedly an overuse and misuse of exclusionary discipline has occurred, and these policies have promoted inequities between boys and girls, different ethnic/racial groups, and students from different economic groups. Unfortunately, over time the policies developed have evolved to be used to respond to minor offenses (Casella, 2003). In the end, exclusionary punishments promote more negative behaviors than they do positive behaviors (Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014). Over the past 30 years, negative effects; such as poor academics, increased negative behavior, and school drop outs for Black and Hispanic students have increased due to the assignment of exclusionary measures (Skiba, 2014). Even though exclusionary assignments have been connected to negative effects for Black and Hispanic students, evidence is not available to show that zero-tolerance policies have influenced discipline in schools in a positive way (Englehart, 2014), or shown evidence of exclusionary practices reducing disruption or improvement of the school environment (Skiba, 2014).

In a recent investigation in the state of interest, Texas, for this study, Khan and Slate (2016) analyzed differences in the percentage of Grade 6 Black students, Hispanic

students, and White students who assigned to in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and discipline alternative education program as a function of their economic status. All of their analyses yielded statistically significant results. In every instance, Grade 6 Black, Hispanic, and White students who were economically disadvantaged received more instances of in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and discipline alternative education program placement than their ethnic/racial peers who were not economically disadvantaged. Although not addressed in their study, a clear lack of equity in discipline consequence assignment by student ethnicity/race was also demonstrated in these results. Regardless of economic status, Grade 6 Black and Hispanic students received more discipline consequences than did their peers. In their study, Khan and Slate reported Black students enrolled in middle school were two times more likely to be suspended and expelled than their White peers.

Ethnic/racial gaps in the administration of discipline consequences have been extensively documented. However, an economic disproportionality of school disciplinary assignments also exists. Over the past 25 years, an economic and racial disproportionality has been documented consistently in the administration of school discipline (Skiba et al., 2002). A frequently documented fact in school discipline literature is that students of color, particularly Black males from low income populations, are at an increased risk of receiving exclusionary discipline sanctions (Butler et al., 2012). More specifically, academic success is greater for White students who typically have a higher economic status than for students of different races/ethnicities and economic status (Cheem & Galluzzo, 2013; Hilberth & Slate, 2014a, 2014b; Wallace Jr.

et al., 2008). Additionally, students are at an increased risk for school suspension if they are economically disadvantaged (Skiba et al., 2002).

To investigate the relationship between school suspension and students who were economically disadvantaged further, McElderry and Cheng (2014) analyzed exclusionary discipline practices and the relationships with student characteristics, mother characteristics, parental involvement, school location, and service provision. Analyzing a national dataset of Grade 7 through Grade 12 students, they determined that students had an increased risk of school exclusion if the students' mothers received public assistance or were employed full-time. The emotional and financial stress of providing resources for family survival was surmised to prohibit these parents from active parental involvement.

In another recent investigation in Texas, Lopez and Slate (2016) investigated the extent to which differences might be present in disciplinary alternative education program placements for Grade 7 and Grade 8 White students based on their economic status. Grade 7 and Grade 8 White students who were economically disadvantaged were placed in disciplinary alternative education program placements statistically significantly more often than were their counterparts who were not economically disadvantaged. Student economic status was statistically significantly related to higher rates of discipline (Lopez & Slate, 2016).

Although inequities in discipline between boys and girls and ethnic/racial groups have been documented, Henkel (2015) investigated the consequences of the discipline inequities received by students. Henkel (2015) examined the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Reading and Mathematics test scores of White, Hispanic,

and Black boys and girls assigned in-school suspension and their peers who were not assigned in-school suspension. Those students who were assigned in-school suspension had statistically significant lower TAKS Reading and Mathematics scores, with the mathematics scores being more adversely influenced than were the reading scores. Henkel (2015) concluded that students who were suspended from school struggled more academically compared to students who were not suspended. Miles and Stipek (2006) would contributed the students' academic struggles to missed instructional time.

Another consequence associated with the inequities of public school discipline are the effects it has on student graduation rates in high school and a student's future involvement in the juvenile justice system. More than 80% of Texas adult prison inmates are school drop outs (Fowler, Lightsey, Monger, & Aseltine, 2010). The single most important predictor of student future involvement in the juvenile justice system is a prior history of disciplinary referrals at school (Fowler et al., 2010). Additionally, where students attend school is the greatest predictor of whether or not students will be assigned a discretionary in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or a disciplinary alternative education placement (Fowler et al., 2010).

### **Statement of the Problem**

George (2015) emphasized several systematic factors that have lasting consequences on student achievement including an overreliance on exclusionary discipline. These discipline consequences lead to increased absences, less time in class, low motivation, higher drop-out rate, lower self-esteem, and lower achievement (Christle, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004; Gregory et al., 2010; Henkel, 2015; Hilberth & Slate, 2014a; Skiba et al., 2009). Disproportionality of discipline consequences among different



ethnic/racial groups may lead to disproportionate effects on student academic achievement (Skiba et al., 2009). Academic gaps are apparent between ethnic/racial groups, gender, and students of poverty, and they are widening (George, 2015; Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002). However, even beyond the declines in academic performance, exclusionary discipline assignments have also been linked to an increase in high school drop-out rates (Fowler et al., 2010; Skiba, 2014). Of importance is that dropouts contribute disproportionately a higher percentage of the nation's prison inmates, have a higher unemployment rate (Fowler et al., 2010), and are reported to have poorer health than students with a high school diplomas (Cataldi & KewalRamani, 2009; Gregory et al., 2010).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to examine the extent to which differences were present in discipline consequence assignment by ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black), gender, and economic status (i.e., Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor). Specifically, the assignment of discipline consequences to Grade 4 and 5 students in Texas was analyzed to determine whether inequities in their assignment might be present as a function of student ethnicity/race, gender, and economic status. The two discipline consequences that were analyzed in the three investigations in this journal-ready dissertation were the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension. The two grade levels on which data were obtained and analyzed were Grade 4 and Grade 5.

### **Significance of the Study**

As a result of the three studies in this journal-ready dissertation, key information was obtained about relationships that may be present between discipline consequence assignment and student demographic characteristics of ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Black, and Hispanic), gender, and economic status. The information that was gathered may be used to assist policymakers and educational leaders on the degree to which inequities might exist in the assignment of discipline consequences. Policymakers and educational leaders will be able to utilize the findings of these three research studies to determine whether changes might be warranted in the discipline policies used in schools. The findings of this study will have practical application for local school districts because the presence of inequities in discipline consequence assignments, should they be established herein, would constitute violations of students' civil rights and would, therefore, necessitate changes in discipline policies.

### **Definition of Terms**

Terms that are important to the three research studies that were conducted in this journal-ready dissertation are defined below.

#### **Black**

The Texas Education Agency (2013) defined Black or African American as “students having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa” (p. 2).

**Ethnicity**

The Texas Education Agency (2009) classified ethnicity as American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian or Pacific Islander; Black, not of Hispanic origin; Hispanic, or White, not of Hispanic origin.

**Economic Disadvantage**

This term is used when referring to students who are identified by school districts as having a disadvantage as outlined by certain federal guidelines. Economic disadvantage exists when students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program. Additional economic disadvantage includes

a) from a family with an annual income at or below the official federal poverty line, b) eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) or other public assistance, c) received a Pell Grant or comparable state program of need-based financial assistance, d) eligible for programs assisted under the Title of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), or e) eligible for benefits under the Food Stamp Act of 1977. (Texas Education Agency, 2014, p. 4.117)

**Extremely Poor**

This term is used when referring to students who were eligible for the free lunch program. To be eligible for free price lunch program a family's income must be at or below 130% of the federal poverty line (Federal Register, 2016).

**Hispanic**

The Texas Education Agency (2013) defined Hispanic/Latino as “students of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race” (p. 2).

**In-School Suspension**

This phrase is defined by the Texas Education Agency (2010) as the first method of disciplinary consequence for students. An in-school suspension consequence is the removal of a student from the regular classroom as a disciplinary consequence by placing the student into a separate classroom.

**Moderately Poor**

This term is used when referring to students who were eligible for the reduced lunch program. A family’s income must be of 131% to 185% of the federal poverty line to be eligible for the reduced price lunch (Federal Register, 2016).

**Not Economically Disadvantaged**

Students referred to as Not Poor were not eligible for the free or reduced lunch program (Federal Register, 2016). Included in this group of students may also be students whose parents did not apply for the free or reduced lunch program, but who would have been eligible, had they completed the application process.

**Out-of-School Suspension**

The Texas Education Agency (2010) describes out-of-school suspension as the second method of disciplinary consequence, following in-school suspension. An 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.

### **White**

The Texas Education Agency (2013) defines White students as “having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa” (p. 2).

### **Procedures**

Following approval from the doctoral dissertation committee and prior to conducting this research study, an application was submitted to the Sam Houston State University Institutional Review Board for approval. Once the application was approved by the Sam Houston State University Institutional Review Board, data from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years for all Grade 4 and Grade 5 students in Texas were obtained.

Following receipt of the data from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System, then the data were converted into a data file used in a statistical analysis software program. The statistical software program used to address the research questions in the three studies was IBM’s Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS- Version 23). Specific variables that were analyzed in this investigation were: in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions of Grade 4 and Grade 5 students based on ethnic/racial membership (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black), gender, and on economic status (i.e., Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor).

### **Literature Review Search Procedures**

For the purpose of this journal-ready dissertation proposal, the literature regarding differences in discipline consequences among Grade 4 and Grade 5 students based ethnic/racial membership (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black), gender, and on economic status (i.e., Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor) was examined. Phrases that were used in the search for applicable literature were: discipline consequences, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and discipline gap. All searches were conducted via the EBSCO Host database. Recent academic journals that contained scholarly peer reviewed articles were reviewed.

Key word searches for discipline consequences yielded 22,292 results and by narrowing the range from 2000 to 2016 and limiting articles to include only peer reviewed articles, the search was reduced to 6,600. This number was reduced to 660 results when Education and Equity was added to the search and further reduced to 258 results when the term Elementary was added. For this reason, the terms race and gender, and economic status were used to reduce the search to 129 and 9 articles respectively. Key words in school suspension were used and 15,851 articles from 2000 to 2015 were displayed. The terms education and equity were used to reduce the search to 13,961 and 2,442 articles respectively. Key words elementary were used and 1,501 articles from 2000 to 2015 were displayed. The terms race, gender, and economic status were used to reduce the search to 1,182, 853, and 142 articles, respectively.

### **Delimitations**

The delimitations for this study involved a sole focus on discipline consequences that were assigned to Grade 4 and Grade 5 students in Texas. Specifically addressed in

this study were the two major discipline consequences that are assigned in Texas: in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension. Only data on students in two grade levels, Grades 4 and 5, were obtained and analyzed. The three studies in this journal-ready dissertation were further delimited by using only two years of discipline consequence data (i.e., 2013-2014 and 2014-2015). These two school years of data were analyzed because they were the two most recent years in which the State of Texas has available data. Another delimitation was a determination of degree of economic status (i.e., Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor) solely by the federal government's definition of poverty. In this journal-ready dissertation, discipline consequence data were analyzed for only the three major ethnic/racial groups (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) of students in Texas public schools.

### **Limitations**

For the purpose of this journal-ready dissertation, discipline consequences other than in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension were not examined. As such, the degree to which any inequities that were determined in this journal-ready dissertation are generalizable to other discipline consequences assigned in Texas schools is not known. Only archival data for Texas Grade 4 and Grade 5 students were obtained and analyzed. As such, neither the independent variables (i.e., ethnicity/race, gender, and economic status) nor the dependent variables (i.e., in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension) were controlled due to the causal-comparative nature of the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Another limitation reflects the manner in which students were determined to be economically disadvantaged. Parents have to complete an application to be eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program. Some parents whose

children would be eligible for a free or reduced price lunch do not complete or submit the required applications. As a consequence, some Grade 4 and Grade 5 children in this study were classified in this journal-ready dissertation as being in the Not Economically Disadvantaged group when, had the application materials been completed, they would have been placed in either the Moderately Poor or the Extremely Poor group.

### **Assumptions**

For the purpose of this journal-ready dissertation, the assumption was made that the discipline data and the economic status, gender, and ethnic/racial data in the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System database were accurately reported to the state. Moreover, the consistency in which Texas elementary schools collect and report student data was assumed to be accurate and reliable statewide. Therefore, any deviations from these assumptions may result in inaccurate data, thereby resulting in inaccurate findings.

### **Organization of the Study**

In this journal-ready dissertation, three research investigations were conducted. In the first journal-ready dissertation article, research questions were on the degree to which differences might be present in discipline consequence assignment for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students in Texas as a function of their ethnicity/race. In the second journal-ready dissertation article, the research questions that were addressed were on the extent to which differences might exist in discipline consequence assignment for Grade 4 and Grade 5 boys and girls in Texas as a function of their ethnicity/race. Finally, for the third journal-ready dissertation article, the research questions involved the differences in discipline consequences for Grade 4 and Grade 5 boys and girls in Texas as a function of



their economic status (i.e., Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor).

This journal-ready dissertation is comprised of five chapters. Chapter I includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, delimitations, limitations, assumptions, and outline of the proposed journal-ready dissertation. In Chapter II, the first journal-ready dissertation investigation involving the differences in discipline consequences as a function of ethnicity/race was provided. In Chapter III, the second journal-ready research investigation on the differences in discipline consequences for boys and girls as a function of ethnicity/race was discussed. In Chapter IV, the third journal-ready research investigation on the differences in discipline consequences for boys and girls as a function of economic status was presented. Finally, in Chapter V was a summary of each study, implications for policy and practice, suggestions for future research, and conclusions.

**CHAPTER II**  
DISCIPLINE INEQUITIES AS A FUNCTION OF ETHNICITY/RACE FOR  
TEXAS GRADE 4 AND 5 STUDENTS

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This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

### **Abstract**

The extent to which differences were present in the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension as a function of ethnicity/race for Texas Grade 4 and Grade 5 students for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years was determined in this investigation. Statistically significant differences, albeit small effect sizes, were present between White and Black students and between Hispanic and Black students in the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension for each year analyzed. Black students were assigned in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension at statistically significantly higher rates than either White students or Hispanic students in Grade 4 and Grade 5. Of importance were clear disproportionalities in exclusionary discipline assignments. The smallest ethnic/racial group in terms of student enrollment, Black students, had the highest rates of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspensions. Implications of results and recommendations for future research were provided.

**Keywords:** White, Hispanic, Black, In-School-Suspension, Out-of-School Suspension

## DISCIPLINE INEQUITIES AS A FUNCTION OF ETHNICITY/RACE FOR TEXAS GRADE 4 AND 5 STUDENTS

In 2001, the United States Department of Education defined success for all students through the federal mandate, the No Child Left Behind Act. In this act, students were to have the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and, at a minimum, reach proficiency on state academic achievement standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). In 2015 the Obama administration recognized the need to change some of the No Child Left Behind Act's requirements for schools and teachers. In response, the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) was passed. Focused on in this new education legislation is the importance of every child regardless of race/ethnicity, income, background, or zip code (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). In addition to race/ethnicity, many variables such as academic learning time, effective teachers (Fisher et al., 2015), and school culture (Meier, 2012) have been documented as being related to student achievement.

In support of the new Every Student Succeeds Act, Cheem and Galluzzo (2013) noted that one of the two variables upon which student academic success is contingent upon is ethnicity/race. In the United States, strong disparities exist between Black students and White students, and between Hispanic students and White students in regard to their academic achievement and to the rates of discipline consequences they experience (Englehart, 2014; Gregory et al., 2010; Hilberth & Slate, 2014b). Most discipline consequences that students receive remove them from their regular classroom environment. The two most commonly assigned discipline consequences are in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension and both are regarded as being exclusionary practices. Even though exclusionary discipline practices have not been documented to

improve student behavior or school climate (Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014), in the 2011-2012 school year, 3.45 million students in the United States received an out-of-school suspension (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Many researchers (e.g., Englehart, 2014; Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014) have suggested that zero-tolerance policies in the United States public schools have increased discipline inequities between students of different ethnic/racial groups. Zero-tolerance policies implemented in the 1990s include exclusionary practices that have been used with increased frequency (American Psychological Association, 2008). These zero-tolerance policies originated from the Federal Gun Free School Act of 1994. Zero-tolerance policies were originally implemented to improve school climate by removing students immediately from the school environment when their behavior was considered to constitute a hazard to others (Englehart, 2014). Even though assignment of predetermined exclusionary consequences is given to students under the zero-tolerance policy, the circumstance or context of an incident are not considered (Englehart, 2014).

Since the development and implementation of zero-tolerance policies in schools in the United States, the expected benefits have not occurred (Englehart, 2014). In fact, an overuse and misuse of suspension has occurred, resulting in inequities in their use for different ethnic/racial groups (Skiba, 2014). Over the past 30 years, exclusionary measures assigned to Black and Hispanic students have increased, resulting in negative student outcomes such as increased discipline sanctions as well as increased dropout rates (Skiba, 2014). For instance, Noguera (2008) stated, “Politicians and school officials have pledged to quell the tide of violence by converting schools into prison-like, lockdown facilities and by increasing penalties incurred for committing violent acts” (p. 85).

Over time the discipline policies developed from the zero-tolerance policy have been used to respond to minor offenses (Casella, 2003). For example, transgressions of White students involve straightforward referral decisions that are most likely present in school policy, whereas the transgressions of Black and Hispanic students may be judged as unacceptable or inappropriate depending on the teacher or administrator.

Unfortunately, exclusionary punishments promote more negative behaviors than they do positive behaviors (Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014). Readers should note that, to date, no empirical data are available to support that exclusionary practices reduce disruption or improve the school environment (Skiba, 2014). Furthermore, no evidence exists as of yet, that zero-tolerance policies have influenced the consistency of discipline in schools in a positive way (Englehart, 2014).

Concomitant with zero-tolerance policies contributing to the disproportionality of discipline consequences for minority students, Englehart (2014) discussed a common pattern associated with the inequalities of discipline management among students. He noted that White students were more likely to be referred for objectively identifiable transgressions, such as smoking, leaving without permission, vandalism, and obscene language (Skiba et al., 2002). Black and Hispanic students, however, were more likely to be referred for subjective transgressions in need of interpretation, such as disrespect, excessive noise, and threat. Noguera (2008) contributed the inequitable assignment of discipline consequences on the reliance of methods of control that have been successful in the past; such as subjective reasons instead of objective reasons.

Unfortunately, clear relationships have been documented between ethnicity/race and discipline consequence assignment (Arcia, 2006, 2007; Barnes & Slate, 2016; Blake

et al., 2011; Curtiss & Slate, 2015; Hilberth & Slate, 2014b; Noguera, 2003). With specific reference to the state of interest, Texas, in this investigation, Henkel et al. (2016) examined the relationship of out-of-school suspension with the reading and mathematics achievement of Texas boys and girls in Grades 6, 7, and 8. In each case, regardless of ethnicity/race, gender, or grade level, the average reading and mathematics scores were statistically significantly lower for students who received an out-of-school suspension than for their peers who did not receive an out-of-school suspension.

Documented in the literature is Black and Hispanic students are more likely to be assigned school disciplinary consequences than are White students (Hilberth & Slate, 2014a, 2014b; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008). Wallace Jr. et al. (2008) established that Black students were suspended from school at the highest rate compared to other ethnic/racial groups, even though their ethnic/racial group constituted the lowest percentage of student enrollment. In comparison, White students had the highest ethnic/racial percentage of student enrollment and were suspended from school at the lowest rate.

In an analysis of suspension and expulsion rates for students of color in the United States, the U.S. Department of Education (2014) documented that Black students were suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than White students. As such, low-income Black and Hispanic students are at a greater risk and exposure to the negative effects of zero-tolerance policies (Englehart, 2014). Black students were twice as likely as their White counterparts to receive an office discipline referral in elementary school and nearly four times as likely in middle school (Skiba et al., 2011). Comparisons between the discipline consequence assignments of Hispanic and White students and Black and White students are important because the inequities that exist could influence

other important aspects of education, such as drop-out rates and academic achievement (Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014).

Black students are not only overrepresented in regard to receiving discipline consequences, but are disproportionally overrepresented when compared to White students and Hispanic students. Black students are subjected to out-of-school suspension three to 22 times more often than White students (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). In a recent Texas statewide investigation, the state of interest in this article, Hilberth and Slate (2014b) analyzed Grade 6, 7, and 8 Black and White student discipline data. In their study, Hilberth and Slate documented that even though Black student enrollment was substantially lower than White student enrollment, by almost half, Black students received statistically significantly higher rates of in-school suspension than White students by more than twice as many. Black students received a disproportional rate of school suspension when their percentage of student enrollment and rate of in-school suspension was compared to White students. This statistic represents a disproportional rate of school suspension by more than two times.

In the 2008-2009 school year, Black student enrollment in Texas middle schools was about 14%, however, the percentage of Black students who received in-school suspension was 32%, 35%, and 36% in Grade 6, 7, and 8, respectively (Hilberth & Slate, 2014b). Compared to White students whose total student enrollment was about 35% in Texas middle schools, the percentage of White students who received an in-school suspension was 14%, 16%, and 17.5% in Grade 6, 7, and 8, respectively. With respect to out-of-school suspension, the inequities in its assignment were remarkably similar to the results for in-school suspension. Only the numbers of students who received this



consequence were lower than the numbers of students who received an in-school suspension.

Many factors including school policy, rights of students and parents, retention, teacher experience, funding, harassment, seclusion, and discipline led the United States Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan to declare education as the civil rights issue of this generation (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Noguera (2015) emphasized the need for teachers and administration to engage in culturally responsive practices, because the current inequities in discipline consequence assignments by ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) constitute civil rights violations. Additionally, Duncan suggested education is the surest path out of poverty in the United States. As such, civil rights laws need to be vigorously enforced and all students need to receive a fair shot at a good future (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

### **Statement of the Problem**

George (2015) emphasized several systematic factors that have lasting consequences on student achievement: (a) an overreliance on zero-tolerance practices and exclusionary practices, such as in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension; (b) an overreliance on law enforcement tactics; and (c) a history of systemic racism and inequality. The rate of discipline consequences is higher for Black students and Hispanic students when compared to their White counterparts creating an inequity in discipline consequences. These discipline consequences lead to increased absences, less time in class, low motivation, higher drop-out rates, lower self-esteem, and lower achievement (Gregory et al., 2010). Disproportionality of discipline consequences among different ethnic/racial groups may lead to disproportionate effects on student academic

achievement (Skiba, Eckes, & Brown, 2009). Furthermore, exclusionary discipline consequence assignments have been linked to low student achievement (Gregory et al., 2010).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this article was to examine the extent to which differences were present in the receipt of in-school suspension by ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students. A second purpose of this article was to determine the degree to which differences were present in the receipt of out-of-school suspension by ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students. Finally, the extent to which results were consistent across grade levels and across the two disciplinary consequences was ascertained.

### **Significance of the Study**

An extensive body of research (e.g., Arcia, 2007; Hilberth & Slate, 2014a, 2014b; Gregory et al., 2010; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008) exists in which a direct connection has been documented between discipline consequences and student demographic characteristics such as ethnicity/race. However, the majority of research has been conducted on higher grade levels (Henkel et al., 2016; Hilberth & Slate, 2014a, 2014b; Lopez & Slate, 2016). Few researchers (e.g., Barnes & Slate, 2016; Curtiss & Slate, 2015) have examined the disproportionality of discipline consequences for students in elementary schools. As such, the presence of inequities in the assignment of these two disciplinary consequences by student ethnicity/race was established. The findings of this study have practical application for school administrators and classroom teachers in ensuring their pedagogical practices and disciplinary efforts are equitable for students in different

ethnic/racial groups in elementary schools. In addition, the findings also provide educational leaders with important empirical data for sound policymaking regarding discipline.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in this investigation: (a) What is the difference in the assignment of in-school suspension by ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) for Grade 4 students?; (b) What is the difference in the assignment of in-school suspension by ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) for Grade 5 students?; (c) What is the difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension by ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) for Grade 4 students?; and (d) What is the difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension by ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) for Grade 5 students? These research questions were repeated for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. After the two years of school data were analyzed, the extent to which consistencies were present in the results for the research questions was ascertained.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

A non-experimental, causal-comparative research design (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012) was used for this study. In such a research design, neither the independent variable nor the dependent variable was manipulated. The archival data that were analyzed represented past events (Johnson & Christensen, 2012); thus, the independent variables had already occurred and extraneous variables were not controlled. The independent variable involved in this research article was the ethnicity/race (i.e.,

White, Hispanic, and Black) of the students. For each grade level, the dependent variables were the assignment or non-assignment of in-school suspension and the assignment or non-assignment of out-of-school suspension.

### **Participants and Procedures**

Participants in this study were Grade 4 and Grade 5 students in Texas during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Data were obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System database through a Public Information Request. Specific data requested from the Texas Education Agency were: grade level, student ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black), and discipline consequence. These data were then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software program. Subsequently the data file was converted into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software data file and labels were given to relevant variables used in this study.

For purposes of this investigation, *in-school suspension* is defined as the first method of disciplinary consequence for students. An in-school suspension consequence is the removal of a student from the regular classroom as a disciplinary consequence by placing the student into a separate classroom (Texas Education Agency, 2010). *Out-of-school suspension*, for the purposes of this study is defined as, the second method of disciplinary consequence, following in-school suspension. An 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**

To ascertain whether statistically significant differences were present in the assignment of either in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension as a function of ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students, Pearson chi-square procedures were conducted. Field (2009) asserted this statistical procedure is the optimal statistical procedure to use because frequency data were present for ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) and discipline consequences (i.e., students either received a consequence or did not receive a consequence). As such, chi-squares are the statistical procedure of choice when both variables are categorical in nature. In addition, with the large sample size, the available sample size per cell was more than five. The sample size for the 2012-2013 school year for Grade 4 students was 120,120 White students, 213,486 Hispanic students, and 52,533 Black students for a total sample of 386,139 students. With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, the sample size for Grade 4 students was 120,591 White students, 218,023 Hispanic students, and 53,853 Black students for a total sample of 392,467 Grade 4 students. With these large sample sizes present for the two school years, the assumptions for utilizing a chi-square were met (Field, 2009).

### **Research Question One**

For the first research question, the focus was on the extent to which differences might be present in the assignment of in-school suspension by ethnicity/race for Grade 4 students in Texas for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. A statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 4715.94, p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .11, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), as a function of

student ethnicity/race. In regard to the 2013-2014 school year, 20,138 Grade 4 students were assigned an in-school suspension. Grade 4 Black students had more than twice the percentage of in-school suspension assignments than White students and three times the percentage of Hispanic students who received an in-school suspension. The frequencies and percentages of Grade 4 White, Hispanic, and Black students who received an in-school suspension are delineated in Table 2.1.

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 Insert Table 2.1 about here  
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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of in-school suspension for Grade 4 students,  $\chi^2(1) = 4421.65, p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .11, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. Of note was that in-school suspensions were assigned to 19,057 Grade 4 students in the 2014-2015 school year. For Grade 4 students, the assignment of in-school suspension was more than two times higher for Black students than for White students and three times higher for Black students than for Hispanic students.

## **Research Question Two**

For the second research question, the focus was on the extent to which differences were present in the assignment of in-school suspension by ethnicity/race for Texas Grade 5 students for the 2013-2014 and the 2014-2015 school years. The sample size for the 2013-2014 school year was 121,199 White students, 211,294 Hispanic students, and 52,456 Black students ( $N = 384,949$ ). With respect to the 2013-2014 school year, the Pearson chi-square procedure revealed the presence of a statistically significant

difference in the assignment of in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 5323.23$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .12, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. Readers should note that almost 30,000 Grade 5 students in the 2013-2014 school year were assigned an in-school suspension. For Grade 5 students, the rate of Black students who received an in-school suspension was almost twice as high as the in-school suspension rates for White students; and almost three times higher than the in-school suspension rates for Hispanic students. Frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black Grade 5 students who were assigned an in-school suspension are presented in Table 2.2.

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Insert Table 2.2 about here

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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, the sample size for Grade 5 students was 120,324 White students, 215,279 Hispanic students, and 53,231 Black students ( $N = 388,834$ ). The Pearson chi-square procedure yielded a statistically significant difference in the assignment of in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 5066.88$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .11, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. Again, of note here was the almost 30,000 Grade 5 students in the 2014-2015 school year who were assigned an in-school suspension. For Grade 5 students, Black students had more than two times the in-school suspension rate of either White students or Hispanic students. Table 2.2 contains the frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black students who were assigned an in-school suspension.

### Research Question Three

For the third research question, the focus was on the degree to which differences might be present in the assignment of out-of-school suspension by ethnicity/race for Grade 4 students in Texas for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. The sample size for the 2013-2014 school year was 120,120 White students, 213,486 Hispanic students, and 52,533 Black students ( $N = 386,139$ ). For the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of out-of-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 7957.61$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V$  of .14, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. In the 2013-2014 school year, over 10,000 Grade 4 students were assigned an out-of-school suspension. Black students had an out-of-school suspension rate that was more than six times the out-of-school suspension rate of White students and had an out-of-school suspension rate that was more than four times the out-of-school suspension rate of Hispanic students. Frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black students who received an out-of-school suspension in the 2013-2014 school year are presented in Table 2.3.

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 Insert Table 2.3 about here  
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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, the sample size for Grade 4 students was 120,591 White students, 218,023 Hispanic students, and 53,853 Black students ( $N = 392,467$ ). The Pearson chi-square procedure revealed the presence of a statistically significant difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 7945.45$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V$  of .14, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race.



Almost 10,000 Grade 4 students were assigned to an out-of-school suspension in the 2014-2015 school year. The assignment of out-of-school suspension for Black students was more than six times higher than that of White students and more than four times higher than for Hispanic students. Table 2.3 contains the frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black students who received an out-of-school suspension in the 2014-2015 school year.

#### **Research Question Four**

For the fourth research question, the focus was on the degree to which differences existed in the assignment of out-of-school suspension by ethnicity/race for Texas Grade 5 students for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. The sample size for the 2013-2014 school year was 121,199 White students, 211,294 Hispanic students, and 52,456 Black students ( $N = 384,949$ ). The Pearson chi-square procedure revealed the presence of a statistically significant difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 8370.20, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V$  of .15, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. In the 2013-2014 school year, over 14,000 Grade 5 students were assigned an out-of-school suspension. Black students were assigned an out-of-school suspension six times more often than White students and more than three times more often than Hispanic students. Revealed in Table 2.4 are the frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black students who were assigned an out-of-school suspension in the 2013-2014 school year.

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 Insert Table 2.4 about here  
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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, the sample size for Grade 5 students was 120,324 White students, 215,279 Hispanic students, and 53,231 Black students ( $N = 388,834$ ). A statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of out-of-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 7865.81$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .14, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. In the 2014-2015 school year, over 13,000 Grade 5 students were assigned an out-of-school suspension. Black students were assigned to an out-of-school suspension more than five times more often than White students and more than three times more often than Hispanic students. Frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black students who were assigned an out-of-school suspension in the 2014-2015 school year are presented in Table 2.4.

### **Discussion**

In this investigation, two school years of data were analyzed to determine the degree to which inequities occurred in the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension to Grade 4 and Grade 5 students by their ethnicity/race. Inequities were clearly documented in this multiyear investigation. The extent to which the inequities occurred are presented in Figure 2.1. The data for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years were consistent in the apparent discipline gap between Black students and White and Hispanic students.

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Insert Figure 2.1 about here  
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With regard to Grade 4 and Grade 5 students in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, readers should note that Hispanic students had a low in-school suspension

rate although they constituted the largest student enrollment group. The smallest ethnic/racial group in terms of student enrollment, Black students, had the highest rate of in-school suspensions. This ordering of Black, Hispanic, and White students, with respect to in-school suspensions, was consistent for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Depicted in Figure 2.2 are the in-school suspension rates for Black, Hispanic, and White students. These data are consistent with previous researchers (Englehart, 2014; Gregory et al., 2010; Hilberth & Slate, 2014a) who have documented the presence of strong disparities among ethnic/racial groups in the assignment of in-school suspension.

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Insert Figure 2.2 about here

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Furthermore, the degree to which out-of-school suspension was assigned in a disproportional manner to Grade 4 and Grade 5 students by ethnicity/race was determined. The extent to which the inequities occurred are revealed in Figures 2.3 and 2.4. In regard to the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, Black students were assigned the highest rate of out-of-school suspensions, a result that was consistent with other researchers (Hilberth & Slate, 2014b; Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Black students are not only overrepresented in regard to receiving discipline consequences, but are disproportionately overrepresented when compared to White students and Hispanic students. This result was commensurate with the findings of previous researchers (Hilberth & Slate, 2014a, 2014b; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008). Additionally, results of this investigation are congruent with Wallace Jr. et al. (2008) who established that Black students were assigned

exclusionary discipline consequences at a higher rate than other ethnic/racial groups, even though their ethnic/racial group had the lowest percent of student enrollment.

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 Insert Figures 2.3 and 2.4 about here  
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### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

Clear and strong inequities were present in in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension assignments. As a result of the findings from this investigation, school districts are encouraged to conduct audits of their discipline programs to determine whether they have similar inequities occurring. Educational leaders should evaluate their discipline programs to focus on non-exclusionary methods.

In addition to districts auditing their current discipline programs, districts and school campuses should examine discipline methods that positively influence their students. School leaders need an understanding of their student's needs based on student ethnicity/race, gender, and economic status, as well as examine the reasons discipline consequences are being assigned per student group. For in-school and out-of-school suspension to be sharply reduced, multicultural trainings and school discipline training programs may need to be provided to teachers

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Many opportunities are available for future research as a result of the findings from this study. First, an investigation is warranted to determine whether inequities also exist in Discipline Alternative Education Program placements or in a Juvenile Justice Alternative Educational Program placements. Given the high number of discipline

consequences assigned to Grade 4 and Grade 5 students in Texas, extending this research investigation to other grade levels is encouraged. For example, analyzing discipline consequence data at Grades 2 and 3 could provide useful information regarding discipline consequence assignment to young children. Additionally, extending this research to other states would help identify the generalizability of the discipline inequities that were analyzed herein.

Investigations to discover the reasons for the assigned discipline consequences could further help ascertain where the student misbehavior occurs, whether it be inappropriate use (subjective reasons, such as defiance) of discipline consequence assignments by teachers and administrators or a true violation of code of conduct by students (objective reasons, such as fighting). A research study into the relationship of discipline consequences and student academic success could provide useful information.

Additionally, an investigation to determine if a difference exists in discipline consequences assignments for K-12 students based on school grade span configuration is recommended. That is, are discipline consequences assigned differentially between K-8 grade level schools and 6-8 grade level schools? Determining whether a difference exists could help ascertain whether students perform better and have less discipline consequences based on the many factors that are present in different school configuration, such as relationships, resources, and school culture.

### **Conclusion**

In this investigation, the extent to which in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension were differentially to Texas Grade 4 and 5 students by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) was ascertained. Texas statewide data on all Grade 4

and 5 students for two school years were obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System. Statistically significant differences were present in the assignment of in-school suspension and in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students on the basis of their ethnicity/race. Black students were disproportionately assigned to both of these disciplinary consequences in comparison to their White and Hispanic peers.

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Table 2.1

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 4 Students by Ethnicity/Race Who Were Assigned an In-School Suspension*

Ethnicity/Race	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
White	120,120	5.2	120,591	5.0
Hispanic	213,486	3.7	218,023	3.4
Black	52,533	11.2	53,853	10.3

Table 2.2

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 5 Students by Ethnicity/Race Who Were Assigned an In-School Suspension*

Ethnicity/Race	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
White	121,199	7.0	120,324	6.7
Hispanic	211,294	3.7	215,279	5.6
Black	52,456	11.2	53,231	14.4

Table 2.3

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 4 Students by Ethnicity/Race Who Were Assigned an Out-of-School Suspension*

Ethnicity/Race	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
White	120,120	1.4	120,591	1.3
Hispanic	213,486	1.9	218,023	1.8
Black	52,533	8.3	53,853	8.0

Table 2.4

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 5 Students by Ethnicity/Race Who Were Assigned an Out-of-School Suspension*

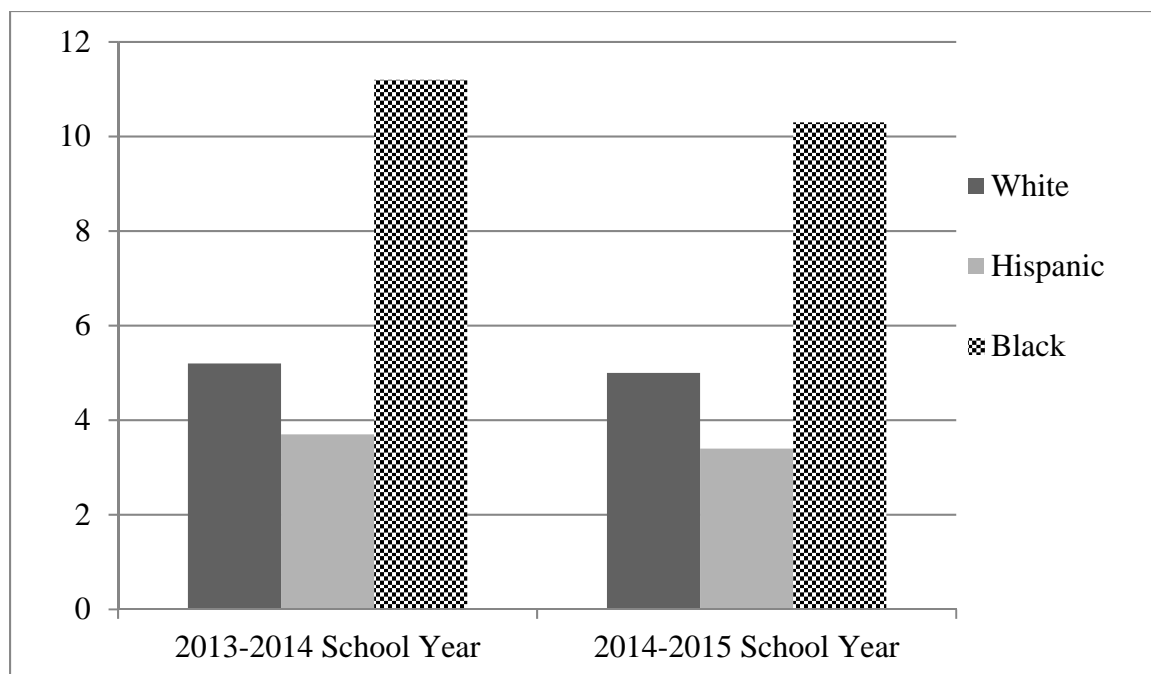
Ethnicity/Race	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
White	121,199	1.8	120,324	1.7
Hispanic	211,294	3.1	215,279	2.8
Black	52,456	10.5	53,231	9.8

Table 2.5

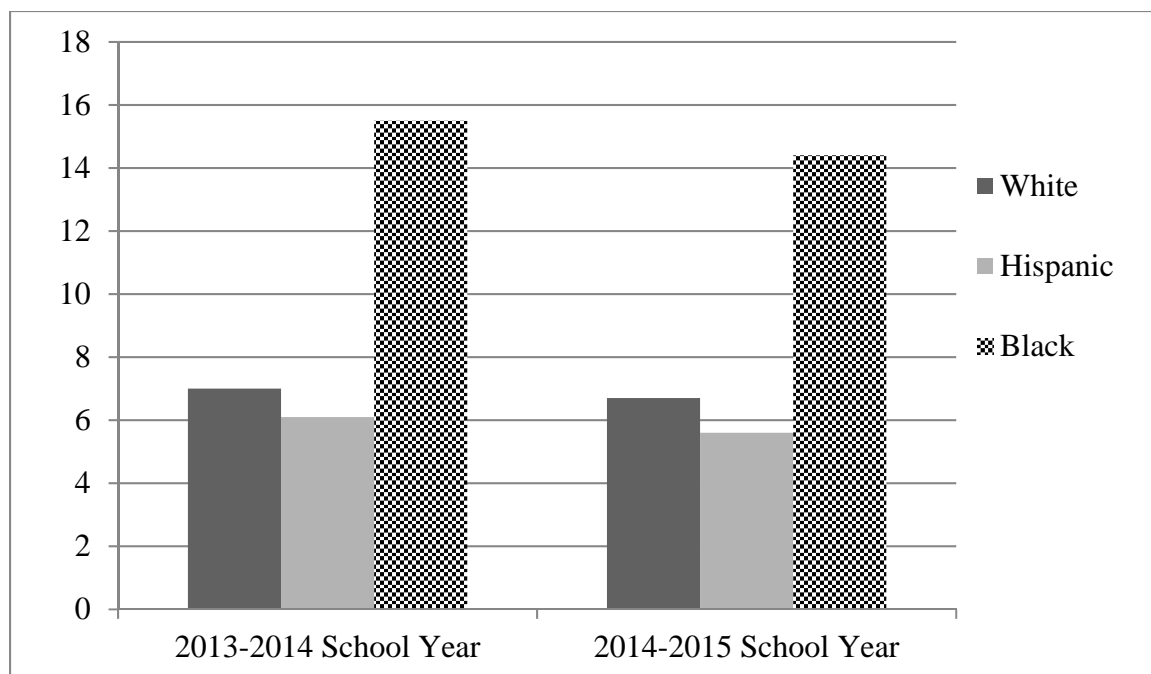
*Cramer's Vs for Statistically Significant Differences in Discipline Assignment Rates as a Function of Ethnicity/Race for Grade 4 and Grade 5 Students*

Grade Level and School Year	In-School	Out-of-School
	Suspension	Suspension
Grade 4		
2013-2014	.11 (Small)	.14 (Small)
2014-2015	.11 (Small)	.14 (Small)
Grade 5		
2013-2014	.12 (Small)	.15 (Small)
2014-2015	.11 (Small)	.14 (Small)

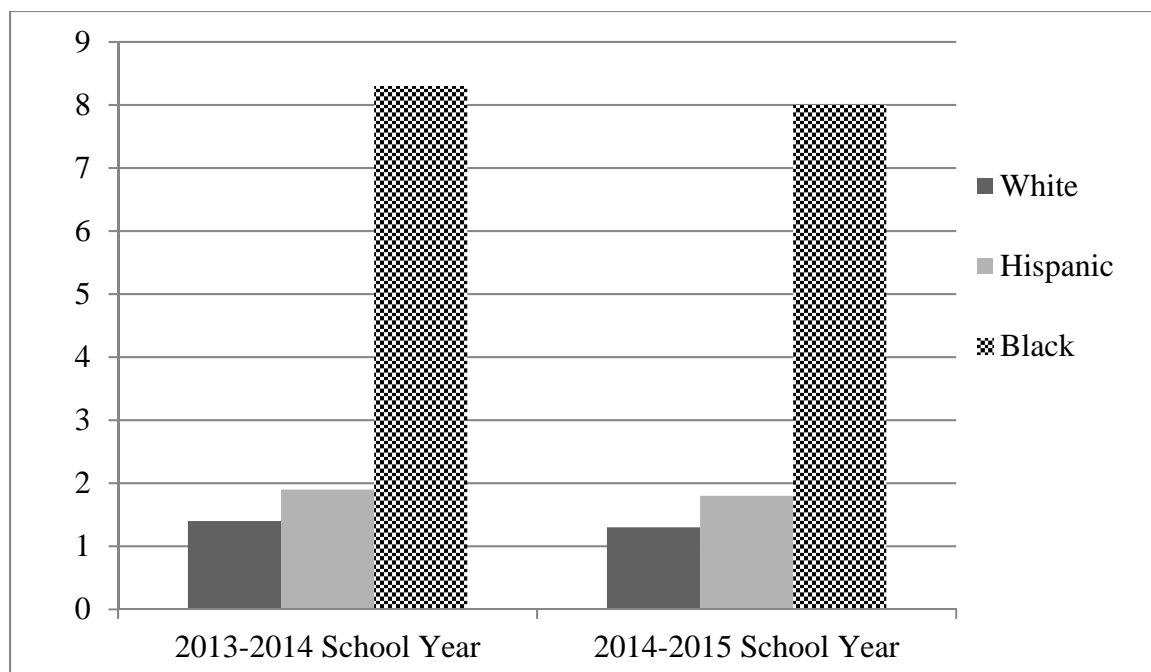




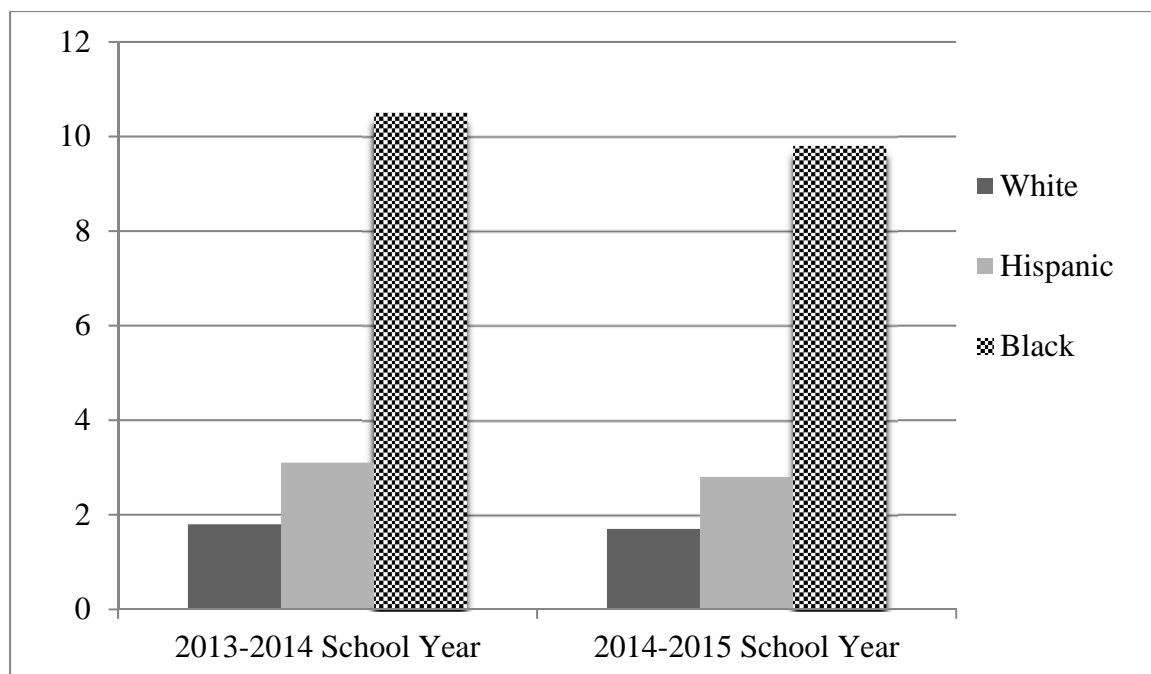
*Figure 2.1.* In-school suspension assignments to Grade 4 students by ethnicity/race for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.



*Figure 2.2.* In-school suspension assignments to Grade 5 students by ethnicity/race for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.



*Figure 2.3.* Out-of-school suspension assignments to Grade 4 students by ethnicity/race for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.



*Figure 2.4.* Out-of-school suspension assignments to Grade 5 students by ethnicity/race for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.

**CHAPTER III**  
DIFFERENCES IN DISCIPLINE CONSEQUENCES BY GENDER  
WITHIN ETHNIC/RACIAL GROUPS

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This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

### **Abstract**

The extent to which differences were present in the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension as a function of ethnicity/race for Texas Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years was determined in this investigation. Statistically significant differences were present between White and Black girls and between Hispanic and Black girls in the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension. Results were similar for Grade 4 and Grade 5 boys. Black boys and girls were assigned in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension at statistically significantly higher rates than either White boys and girls and Hispanic boys and girls. Clear disproportionalities were present in exclusionary discipline assignments. In the smallest ethnic/racial group in terms of student enrollment, Black boys, had the highest rates of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspensions. Implications of results and recommendations for future research were provided.

**Keywords:** White, Hispanic, Black, Gender, In-School-Suspension, Out-of-School Suspension

## DIFFERENCES IN DISCIPLINE CONSEQUENCES BY GENDER WITHIN ETHNIC/RACIAL GROUPS

The single most important predictor of academic success is engagement in academic instruction (Skiba et al., 2011). Unfortunately, a major discipline strategy that school personnel rely upon is removal of students from the classroom setting (Arcia, 2006). Two primary discipline methods used in schools are in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension, both of which remove students from their regular classroom setting. These two methods, along with expulsion and disciplinary alternative education program placement, may be contributing factors to the ethnic/racial gaps in academic achievement gap (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). In addition to exclusionary discipline practices being linked to the academic achievement gap, exclusionary practices have also been determined as moderate predictors of whether students drop out-of-school or do not graduate on time (Gregory et al., 2010). In the United States, Black and White students and Hispanic and White students have strong disparities in regard to their academic achievement and with respect to the rates of discipline consequences they experience (Englehart, 2014; Gregory et al., 2010; Hilberth & Slate, 2014b). For example, in 2014, 2.8 million K-Grade 12 students in the United States were assigned an out-of-school suspension (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Of the 2.8 million out-of-school suspensions assigned in the 2013-2014 school year, 1.1 million were assigned to Black students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), and boys received more than girls.

“In many school districts across the country, considerable controversy has been generated over the disproportionate number of African American and Latino students

who are subjected to various forms of discipline” (Noguera, 2008, p. 101). Not only has the frequency of exclusionary practices increased since the onset of zero- tolerance policies implemented in the 1990s (American Psychological Association, 2008), but discipline inequities associated with exclusionary consequences between students of different ethnic/racial groups have increased as well (Englehart, 2014; Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014). Exclusionary consequences have been overused and misused, while promoting inequities between gender and among different ethnic/racial groups (American Psychological Association, 2008; Casella, 2003). Over the past 30 years, exclusionary discipline assignments assigned to Black and Hispanic students have increased and created negative effects on student outcomes (Skiba, 2014). Empirical evidence is not available that exclusionary discipline assignments reduce disruption or improve the school environment (Skiba, 2014).

The effects of exclusionary discipline practices, documented to have negative influences within the educational environment, are evident in *The School to Prison Pipeline* (George, 2015). The School to Prison Pipeline involves policies, practices, and conditions that facilitate the criminalization within educational environments and the process by which the criminalization results in the incarceration of youth (George, 2015). For instance, Black boys and girls are represented disproportionately in prisons when compared to other racial/ethnic groups, as well as overrepresented in the prison population of the United States (George, 2015; Lopez, 2015). These race and gender discipline disparities are a consequence of the biases and stereotypes rooted in U.S. history (George, 2015). In fact, Skiba et al. (2002) contended that the abuse and misuse of discipline strategies such as zero-tolerance, suspension, and expulsion have fostered



the growth of the School to Prison Pipeline for Black males. For Black and Hispanic students, objectively identifiable transgressions were more likely used when White students were referred for a discipline consequence, such as smoking, leaving without permission, and vandalism (Englehart, 2014; Skiba et al., 2002).

Also documented in the research literature is that boys of all racial and ethnic groups are more likely than are girls to receive disciplinary sanctions (Gregory et al., 2010). White and Black girls are one half as likely as White and Black boys to receive a discipline consequence (Gregory et al., 2010). Gregory (1995) concluded that Black boys were especially at risk, with Black boys being 16 times more likely than White girls to receive a disciplinary sanction. In recent investigations conducted in the state of interest for this investigation, Texas, White students and girls were less likely to experience school disciplinary consequences than were Black and Hispanic boys (Hilberth & Slate, 2014a, 2014b; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008). Similar to Englehart (2014), Blake et al. (2010) investigated differences in discipline consequences with regard to gender. Black girls were twice as likely to receive discipline infractions for objective infractions; such as defiance, improper dress, and fighting than their White and Hispanic counterparts. This nonconformity with traditional feminine behaviors influences the negative experiences that Black girls have with school discipline (Murphy, Acosta, & Kennedy-Lewis, 2013). Although Black boys have garnered national attention in regard to the disparate impact of discriminatory discipline practices (George, 2015), Black girls are suspended at higher rates than any other racial or ethnic group. In fact, Black girls are suspended at a rate six times the rate of White girls for innocuous offenses, such as willful defiance or wearing natural hairstyles (George, 2015).

In a recent Texas study, Curtiss and Slate (2015) analyzed discipline consequence data for boys and girls in Grade 4 and Grade 5 in Texas. Grade 5 boys received 88% of the discipline consequences, with violations of local code of conduct constituting the reason for 99.5% of the consequences. These data were interpreted to mean a more subjective discipline process was present for boys in Grade 5 than for girls. Disciplinary sanctions for girls were for violating a local code of conduct and subjective in nature (Curtiss & Slate, 2015), whereas the reasons that boys were assigned a disciplinary sanction were slightly more violent than that of the girls.

In a recent report, the U.S. Department of Education (2014) analyzed exclusionary practices, suspension, and expulsion rates for students of color in the United States. They documented that Black students were suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than White students. Additionally, boys received more discipline assignments than girls, particularly Black boys. Furthermore, in a national sample, Black students received an office discipline referral twice as often as their White counterparts in elementary school and nearly four times as often in middle school (Skiba et al., 2011). Analyzing the discipline consequence assignments of Black and White students and Hispanic and White students is important because inequities that exist could influence other important aspects of education, such as drop-out rates and academic achievement (Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014). Of importance is that exclusionary discipline consequences are assigned to students who can least afford to be out of the classroom (Arcia, 2007; Butler, Lewis, Moore III, & Scott, 2012).

Henkel (2015) documented that students who are suspended from school struggle academically compared to those students who are not suspended, most likely because

they are missing instructional time (Miles & Stipek, 2006; Pokorski, 2010). In Henkel's (2015) study, discipline consequence data were analyzed for two school years for Texas students in Grades 6, 7, and 8. In her investigation, she examined the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Reading and Mathematics (TAKS) test scores for students who were assigned in school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or a discipline alternative education program placement compared to their peers who were not assigned a discipline consequence. Henkel documented that White, Hispanic, and Black boys and girls who were assigned to in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or to a discipline alternative education program placement had statistically significantly lower TAKS Reading and Mathematics scores than their peers who were not assigned discipline consequences. Similarly, the receipt of a discipline consequence was more negatively related to mathematics performance than to reading performance. In a separate investigation, Henkel, Slate, and Martinez-Garcia (2016) investigated the relationship of in school suspension to reading and mathematics achievement of White, Black, and Hispanic students in Grades 6, 7, and 8. They also examined the academic achievement of boys and girls within each ethnic/racial group. Students who received an in-school suspension had lower reading and mathematics test scores than their peers who did not receive in-school suspension. Similar to the previous study, mathematics scores were more negatively influenced by the in-school suspension than were reading scores.

In another recent investigation, Barnes and Slate (2016) analyzed disciplinary inequities for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students based on ethnicity/race and gender. Similar to previous studies, they established the presence of statistically significant differences in discipline consequences between Black, Hispanic, and White students. For Grade 4 and

Grade 5 students, Black and Hispanic students received many more instances of out-of-school suspension than did White students. Moreover, boys in Grade 5 received statistically significantly more in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions than did Grade 5 girls.

Mendez and Knoff (2003) examined the relationship of exclusionary practices with student gender and ethnicity/race. In their study, they determined that Black girls were more likely than were White boys to be suspended at every grade level. Furthermore, the U.S. Census Bureau (2012) established Black girls to be twice as likely to drop out of high school than were White girls.

Not only have researchers (e.g., Arcia, 2006; Butler et al., 2012; Skiba et al., 2009) documented the presence of inequities in the assignment of discipline consequences for Black boys and girls, but the reason for the assignments can also be considered inequitable and discriminatory. Discipline toward Black girls is more often considered discretionary discipline and related to demeanors, rather than to objective actions, such as fighting (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Morris, 1997). Morris (1997) and Mendez and Knoff (2003) contended the discretionary discipline was due to cultural differences between Black and White cultures; as well as, referrals differing substantially between White and Hispanic girls. Additionally, the lack of emphasis on analyzing data on Black girls may be in part to the perception that girls, in general, pose less risk for behavior problems given their greater academic achievement and gender bias (Blake, Butler, Lewis, & Darensbourg, 2011). With school teachers and school administrators typically being White, cultural differences between Black and White cultures reflect a culture disconnect (Morris, 1997).

Documented in the literature are clear inequities associated with discipline consequences within public schools in the United States (Arcia, 2006; Blake et al., 2011; Butler et al., 2012; Curtiss & Slate, 2015; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2009). The United States Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan declared education as the civil rights issue of our generation (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The current inequities in discipline consequence assignments among ethnic/racial groups (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) and gender constitute civil rights violations. Accordingly, enforcing civil rights laws and providing equity in education is essential for all students to be given a chance at a successful future (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Exclusionary discipline assignments have been linked to low student achievement (Christle et al., 2004; Henkel, 2015; Hilberth & Slate, 2014a; Skiba et al., 2009). Disproportionality of discipline consequences between boys and girls combined with inequities in discipline consequence assignment among different ethnic groups may lead to disproportionate effects on student academic achievement by gender within a racial/ethnic group (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black). The gender and ethnicity/race discipline gap contributes to the academic gaps present in public schools. Academic gaps are apparent between ethnic/racial groups, gender, and students of poverty, and they are widening (George, 2015; Mendez et al., 2002). However, even beyond the declines in academic performance, exclusionary discipline assignments have also been linked to an increase in high school drop-out rates (Fowler et al., 2010; Skiba, 2014). Of importance is that dropouts contribute disproportionately a higher percentage of the nation's prison inmates, have a higher unemployment rate (Fowler et al., 2010), and are reported to have

poorer health than students with a high school diplomas (Cataldi & KewalRamani, 2009; Gregory et al., 2010).

### **Purpose of the Study**

One purpose of this article was to examine the extent to which differences were present in the assignment of discipline consequences to Grade 4 and 5 girls by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black). A second purpose of this article was to determine the degree to which differences were present in the assignment of discipline consequences to Grade 4 and 5 boys by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black). As such, the presence of any inequities in the receipt of disciplinary consequences for girls and boys by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) may be established.

### **Significance of the Study**

Skiba et al. (2009) suggested exclusionary practices provide short-term solutions to school disciplinary problems by separating disruptive students from the educational environment. Christle et al. (2004) and Skiba et al. (2009) established that schools with higher rates of exclusionary practices had poorer achievement outcomes. Only a few researchers (e.g., Barnes & Slate, 2016; Curtiss & Slate, 2015), however, have examined the disproportionality of discipline consequences by ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) separately for boys and girls in elementary school. As such, the presence of any gender inequities in receipt of disciplinary consequences as a function of ethnicity/race will be established in this study. The findings of this study may have practical applications for school administrators and classroom teachers in ensuring their pedagogical practices and disciplinary efforts are equitable for boys and girls among

different ethnic/racial groups in elementary schools. In addition, findings may provide educational leaders with important empirical data for sound policymaking.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in this investigation: (a) What is the difference in the assignment of in-school suspension of Grade 4 girls by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black)?; (b) What is the difference in the assignment of in-school suspension of Grade 4 boys by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black)?; (c) What is the difference in the assignment of in-school suspension of Grade 5 girls by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black)?; (d) What is the difference in the assignment of in-school suspension of Grade 5 boys by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black)?; (e) What is the difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension of Grade 4 girls by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black)?; (f) What is the difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension of Grade 4 boys by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black)?; (g) What is the difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension of Grade 5 girls by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black)?; (h) What is the difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension of Grade 5 boys by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black)?; (i) What consistencies are present in the assignment of in-school suspension to Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys?; and, (j) What consistencies are present in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 4 and 5 girls and boys? The first 8 research questions were repeated for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years whereas the last two research questions involved both years of data.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

For this study, a non-experimental, causal-comparative research design (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012) was utilized. Due to the design of the study, the independent variables had already occurred and extraneous variables were not controlled. The archival data that were analyzed herein represent past events (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The independent variable was student ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) for boys and for girls in Grade 4 and 5. For each grade level, the dependent variables involved in this research article were the receipt or non-receipt of in-school suspension and the receipt or non-receipt of out-of-school suspension.

### **Participants and Procedures**

Participants in this study were Grade 4 and Grade 5 students in Texas who received a discipline consequence in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Data were obtained through submitting a Public Information Request form to the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System. Specific data requested from this agency were: grade level, student ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black), gender, and discipline consequence. Subsequently the data file was converted into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software data file and labels were assigned to relevant variables used in this study.

For purposes of this investigation, in-school suspension is defined as the first method of disciplinary consequence for students. An in-school suspension consequence is the removal of a student from the regular classroom as a disciplinary consequence by placing the student into a separate classroom (Texas Education Agency, 2010). Out-of-



school suspension, for the purposes of this study is defined as, the second method of disciplinary consequence, following in-school suspension. An 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**

To ascertain whether statistically significant differences were present in the assignment of either in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension as a function of ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) for Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys, Pearson chi-square procedures were conducted. Field (2009) asserted this statistical procedure is the optimal statistical procedure to use because frequency data were present for ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black), gender, and discipline consequences (i.e., students either received a consequence or did not receive a consequence). As such, chi-squares are the statistical procedure of choice when both variables are categorical in nature. In addition, with the large sample size, the available sample size per cell was more than five. The sample size for the 2013-2014 school year for Grade 4 students was 120,120 White students, 213,486 Hispanic students, and 52,533 Black students for a total sample of 386,139 students. With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, the sample size for Grade 4 students was 120,591 White students, 218,023 Hispanic students, and 53,853 Black students for a total sample of 392,467 Grade 4 students. With these large sample sizes present for the two school years, the assumptions for utilizing a chi-square were met (Field, 2009).

### Research Question One

For the first research question, the focus was on the extent to which differences might be present in the assignment of in-school suspension by ethnicity/race for Grade 4 girls in Texas for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. A statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 1892.71, p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .10, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), as a function of student ethnicity/race for Grade 4 girls. In regard to the 2013-2014 school year, 4,279 Grade 4 girls were assigned an in-school suspension. Grade 4 Black girls had more than three times the percentage of in-school suspension assignments than White girls and four times the percentage of Hispanic girls who received an in-school suspension. The frequencies and percentages of Grade 4 White, Hispanic, and Black girls who received an in-school suspension are delineated in Table 3.1.

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 Insert Table 3.1 about here  
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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of in-school suspension for Grade 4 girls,  $\chi^2(1) = 1881.58, p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .10, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. Of note was that in-school suspensions were assigned to 19,057 Grade 4 students in the 2014-2015 school year. Of this number, almost 4,000 of them were assigned to girls. For Grade 4 girls, the assignment of in-school suspension was more than two times higher for Black girls than for White girls and more than four times higher for Black girls than for Hispanic girls.

## Research Question Two

In the second research question, the assignment of in-school suspension by ethnicity/race was investigated for Texas Grade 4 boys for the 2013-2014 and the 2014-2015 school years. The sample size for the 2013-2014 school year was 62,016 White boys, 109,035 Hispanic boys, and 26,877 Black boys ( $N = 197,928$ ). With respect to the 2013-2014 school year, the Pearson chi-square procedure revealed the presence of a statistically significant difference in the assignment of in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 3076.10$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V$  of .13, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. Readers should note that almost 16,000 Grade 4 boys in the 2013-2014 school year were assigned an in-school suspension. For Grade 4 boys, the rate of Black boys who received an in-school suspension was almost twice as high as the in-school suspension rate for White boys; and almost three times higher than the in-school suspension rate for Hispanic boys. Frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black Grade 5 boys who were assigned an in-school suspension are revealed in Table 3.2.

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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, the sample size for Grade 4 boys was 62,569 White boys, 111,692 Hispanic boys, and 27,605 Black boys ( $N = 201,866$ ). The Pearson chi-square procedure yielded a statistically significant difference in the assignment of in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 2837.40$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V$  of .12, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. In this school year, almost 19,000 Grade 4 students were assigned an in-school suspension. Of those 19,000 students,

almost 15,000 in-school suspensions were assigned to boys. For Grade 4 boys, Black boys had more than two times the in-school suspension rate of either White boys or Hispanic boys. Table 3.2 contains the frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black boys who were assigned an in-school suspension.

### **Research Question Three**

For the third research question, the assignment of in-school suspension by ethnicity/race for Grade 5 girls in Texas for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years was analyzed. The sample size for the 2013-2014 school year was 58,802 White girls, 103,526 Hispanic girls, and 25,565 Black girls ( $N = 187,893$ ). For the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of in-school suspension for Grade 5 girls,  $\chi^2(1) = 2496.47$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .12, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. In the 2013-2014 school year, approximately 7,000 Grade 5 girls were assigned an in-school suspension. Black girls had an in-school suspension rate that was more than three times the in-school suspension rate of White girls. Black girls had an in-school suspension rate that was more than four times the in-school suspension rate of Hispanic girls. Frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black girls who received an in-school suspension in the 2013-2014 school year are presented in Table 3.3.

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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, the sample size for Grade 5 girls was 58,232 White girls, 105,389 Hispanic girls, and 26,011 Black girls ( $N = 189,632$ ). The

Pearson chi-square procedure revealed the presence of a statistically significant difference in the assignment of in-school suspension for Grade 5 girls,  $\chi^2(1) = 2299.03$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .11, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. Almost 6,500 Grade 5 girls were assigned an in-school suspension in the 2014-2015 school year. The assignment of in-school suspension for Black girls was more than three times higher than for either White girls or Hispanic girls. Table 3.3 contains the frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black girls who received an in-school suspension in the 2014-2015 school year.

#### **Research Question Four**

For the fourth research question, the assignment of in-school suspension by ethnicity/race for Texas Grade 5 boys for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years was addressed. The sample size for the 2013-2014 school year was 62,397 White boys, 107,768 Hispanic boys, and 26,891 Black boys ( $N = 197,056$ ). The Pearson chi-square procedure revealed the presence of a statistically significant difference in the assignment of in-school suspension for Grade 5 boys,  $\chi^2(1) = 3151.83$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .13, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. In the 2013-2014 school year, over 30,000 Grade 5 students were assigned an in-school suspension, and 20,000 of those in-school suspensions were assigned to Grade 5 boys. Black boys were assigned an in-school suspension more than twice as often as White boys and Hispanic boys. Revealed in Table 3.4 are the frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black boys who were assigned an in-school suspension in the 2013-2014 school year.

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 Insert Table 3.4 about here  
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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, the sample size for Grade 5 boys was 62,092 White boys, 109,890 Hispanic boys, and 27,220 Black boys ( $N = 199,202$ ). A statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of in-school suspension for Grade 5 boys,  $\chi^2(1) = 3107.88$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .13, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. In the 2014-2015 school year, over 30,000 Grade 5 students were assigned an in-school suspension, and of those students, almost 20,000 were boys. Black boys were assigned to an in-school suspension more than twice as often than were White boys and almost three times more often than Hispanic boys. Frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black boys who were assigned an in-school suspension in the 2014-2015 school year are presented in Table 3.4.

### **Research Question Five**

For the fifth research question, the assignment of out-of-school suspension was examined by ethnicity/race for Grade 4 girls in Texas for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. A statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of out-of-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 2786.61$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .12, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), as a function of student ethnicity/race for Grade 4 girls. In regard to the 2013-2014 school year, 1,901 Grade 4 girls were assigned an out-of-school suspension. Grade 4 Black girls had more than 10 times the percentage of out-of-school suspension assignments than White girls and seven times the percentage of Hispanic girls who received an in-school suspension. The frequencies and percentages of Grade 4 White,

Hispanic, and Black girls who received an out-of-school suspension are delineated in Table 3.5.

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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 4 girls,  $\chi^2(1) = 3080.91$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .13, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. Of note was that out-of-school suspensions were assigned to approximately 10,000 Grade 4 students in the 2014-2015 school year. Of this number, almost 2,000 of them were assigned to Grade 4 girls. For Grade 4 girls, the assignment of out-of-school suspension was more than 10 times higher for Black girls than for either White girls or Hispanic girls.

### **Research Question Six**

For the sixth research question, the extent to which differences were present in the assignment of out-of-school suspension by ethnicity/race for Texas Grade 4 boys for the 2013-2014 and the 2014-2015 school years was investigated. The sample size for the 2013-2014 school year was 62,016 White boys, 109,035 Hispanic boys, and 26,877 Black boys ( $N = 197,928$ ). With respect to the 2013-2014 school year, the Pearson chi-square procedure revealed the presence of a statistically significant difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 5283.54$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .16, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. Readers should note that almost 10,000 Grade 4 students in the 2013-2014 school year were assigned an out-

school suspension, with over 8,000 being assigned to Grade 4 boys. For Grade 4 boys, the rate of Black boys who received an out-of-school suspension was more than five times as high as the out-of-school suspension rate for White boys; and almost four times higher than the out-of-school suspension rate for Hispanic boys. Frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black Grade 4 boys who were assigned an out-of-school suspension are revealed in Table 3.6.

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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, the sample size for Grade 4 boys was 62,569 White boys, 111,692 Hispanic boys, and 27,605 Black boys ( $N = 201,866$ ). The Pearson chi-square procedure yielded a statistically significant difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 5283.54$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .16, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. Approximately 10,000 Grade 4 students in the 2014-2015 school year were assigned an out-of-school suspension. Of those 10,000 students, boys received approximately 80% of the out-of-school suspensions. For Grade 4 boys, the rate of Black boys who received an out-of-school suspension was more than five times as high as the out-of-school suspension rate for White boys; and almost four times higher than the out-of-school suspension rate for Hispanic boys. Table 3.6 contains the frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black boys who were assigned an out-of-school suspension in the 2014-2015 school year.



### Research Question Seven

For the seventh research question, the assignment of out-of-school suspension by ethnicity/race for Grade 5 girls in Texas for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years was addressed. The sample size for the 2013-2014 school year was 58,802 White girls, 103,526 Hispanic girls, and 25,565 Black girls ( $N = 187,893$ ). For the 2013-2014 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 5 girls,  $\chi^2(1) = 3795.96$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .16, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. In the 2013-2014 school year, over 3,000 Grade 5 girls were assigned an out-of-school suspension. Black girls had an out-of-school suspension rate that was more than 10 times the out-of-school suspension rate of White girls. Black girls had an out-of-school suspension rate that was more than five times the out-of-school suspension rate of Hispanic girls. Frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black girls who received an out-of-school suspension in the 2013-2014 school year are presented in Table 3.7.

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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, the sample size for Grade 5 girls was 58,232 White girls, 105,389 Hispanic girls, and 26,011 Black girls ( $N = 189,632$ ). The Pearson chi-square procedure revealed the presence of a statistically significant difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 5 girls,  $\chi^2(1) = 3141.35$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .13, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. Approximately 3,000 Grade 5 girls were assigned to an out-of-school

suspension in the 2014-2015 school year. The out-of-school suspension rate for Black girls was more than 10 times higher than the out-of-school suspension rate for White girls and almost five times higher than the out-of-school suspension rate for Hispanic girls. Table 3.7 contains the frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black girls who received an out-of-school suspension in the 2014-2015 school year.

### **Research Question Eight**

For the eighth research question, the degree to which differences existed in the assignment of out-of-school suspension by ethnicity/race for Texas Grade 5 boys for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years was determined. The sample size for the 2013-2014 school year was 62,397 White boys, 107,768 Hispanic boys, and 26,891 Black boys ( $N = 197,056$ ). The Pearson chi-square procedure revealed the presence of a statistically significant difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 5 boys,  $\chi^2(1) = 5065.18, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V$  of .16, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. In the 2013-2014 school year, over 14,000 Grade 5 students were assigned an out-of-school suspension, and 11,000 of those out-of-school suspensions were assigned to Grade 5 boys. Black boys were assigned an out-of-school suspension five times more often than White boys and three times more often than Hispanic boys. Revealed in Table 3.8 are the frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black boys who were assigned an out-of-school suspension in the 2013-2014 school year.

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Insert Table 3.8 about here

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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, the sample size for Grade 5 boys was 62,092 White boys, 109,890 Hispanic boys, and 27,220 Black boys ( $N = 199,202$ ). A statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 5 boys,  $\chi^2(1) = 5060.78, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V$  of .16, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student ethnicity/race. In the 2014-2015 school year, over 10,000 Grade 5 boys were assigned an out-of-school suspension. Black boys were assigned an out-of-school suspension more than five times more often than White boys and more than three times more often than Hispanic boys. Frequencies and percentages of White, Hispanic, and Black boys who were assigned an out-of-school suspension in the 2014-2015 school year are presented in Table 3.8.

### **Discussion**

In this investigation, two school years of data were analyzed to determine the degree to which inequities occurred in the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension to Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys by their ethnicity/race. Inequities were clearly documented in this multiyear investigation. The extent to which the inequities occurred for in-school suspension rates for Grade 4 students are presented in Figure 3.1. The data for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years were consistent in the apparent discipline gap for both girls and boys and between Black students and White and Hispanic students. Inequities were consistent for the out-of-school suspension rates between girls and boys and are depicted in Figure 3.2.

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Insert Figure 3.1 about here

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With regard to Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, readers should note that girls had low in-school suspension rates when compared to the in-school suspension rates of boys. In fact, girls were three times less likely to be assigned an in-school suspension consequence than were boys. For each year investigated, for both girls and boys, the smallest ethnic/racial group in terms of student enrollment, Black students, had the highest rate of in-school suspensions. This ordering of Black, Hispanic, and White girls and boys, with respect to in-school suspensions, was consistent for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Depicted in Figure 3.2 are the in-school suspension rates for Black, Hispanic, and White girls and boys. These data are consistent with previous researchers (e.g., American Psychological Association, 2008; Casella, 2003) who have documented the presence of strong disparities among ethnic/racial groups and gender in the receipt of in-school suspension.

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Insert Figure 3.2 about here

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Furthermore, in this investigation, the degree to which out-of-school suspension was assigned in a disproportional manner to Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys by ethnicity/race was determined. The extent to which the inequities occurred is depicted in Figures 3.3 and 3.4. In regard to the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, for both girls and boys, Black students were assigned the highest rate of out-of-school

suspensions, a result that was consistent with other researchers (e.g., Hilberth & Slate, 2014b; Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Black girls and boys are not only overrepresented in regard to receiving discipline consequences, but are disproportionately overrepresented when compared to White girls and boys and Hispanic girls and boys. These results were commensurate with the results of previous researchers (Gregory, 1995; Gregory et al., 2010; Hilberth & Slate, 2014a, 2014b). Results of this investigation are congruent with Wallace Jr. et al. (2008) who established that Black students were assigned exclusionary discipline consequences at a higher rate than other ethnic/racial groups, even though their ethnic/racial group constituted the lowest percent of student enrollment.

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 Insert Figures 3.3 and 3.4 about here  
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### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

Distinct and strong inequities were present in in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension assignments among ethnic/racial groups and between girls and boys. Accordingly, all school districts are encouraged to conduct audits of their discipline programs to determine whether they have similar results in their discipline practices. Non-exclusionary methods should be practiced to increase student classroom time and engagement as well as to eliminate school discipline practices that have yet to demonstrate improvement in student behavior.

In addition to educational leaders of school districts reviewing their current discipline programs, school district administrators and educational leaders should examine discipline methods that enhance student success. Proper assessment of campus

needs and school culture audits are necessary for effective improvement of student discipline and behavior. A thorough understanding of student needs based on student ethnicity/race, gender, and economic status would be beneficial to improve teacher and student relationships. Furthermore, multicultural trainings along with research based effective discipline methods should be provided to teachers in an effort to reduce exclusionary discipline consequences.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Many opportunities are available for future research. First replicating this study in other states will assist in determining the degree to which the inequities that were documented here are generalizable. Additionally, identifying discipline inequities for students who are at risk and/or living in poverty will help ascertain important student data related to the assignment of discipline consequences. Information from such studies may assist educational leaders and policymakers evaluate current discipline policy. Because of the large numbers of exclusionary discipline consequences assigned to Grade 4 and Grade 5 students, expanding the study to incorporate more grade levels may be informative with regard to whether discipline consequence assignments increase in upper grade levels.

Further investigation into the relationship of exclusionary discipline consequences and student academic success could provide useful information. An investigation to determine if a difference exists in discipline consequence assignments for students enrolled in K-8 grade spans compared to students enrolled in traditional middle school settings (i.e., Grades 6, 7, and 8) is recommended. Determining whether a difference exists could help ascertain whether students perform better and have less discipline

consequences based on the many factors that are present in different school configurations, such as relationships, resources, and school culture.

### **Conclusion**

In this investigation, the extent to which in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension were assigned differentially to Texas Grade 4 and 5 girls and boys by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black) by was ascertained. Texas statewide data on all Grade 4 and 5 students for two school years were obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System. Statistically significant differences were present in the assignment of in-school suspension and in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys on the basis of their ethnicity/race. Black students, particularly Black boys, were disproportionately assigned to both of these disciplinary consequences.

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Table 3.1

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 4 Girls by Ethnicity/Race Who Were Assigned an In-School Suspension*

Ethnicity/Race	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
White	58,104	2.0	58,802	3.1
Hispanic	104,451	1.5	103,526	2.9
Black	25,656	6.0	25,565	9.4

Table 3.2

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 4 Boys by Ethnicity/Race Who Were Assigned an In-School Suspension*

Ethnicity/Race	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
White	62,016	8.2	62,569	7.9
Hispanic	109,035	5.9	111,692	5.6
Black	26,877	16.1	27,605	15.0

Table 3.3

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 5 Girls by Ethnicity/Race Who Were Assigned an In-School Suspension*

Ethnicity/Race	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
White	58,802	3.1	58,232	2.7
Hispanic	103,526	2.9	105,389	2.6
Black	25,565	9.4	26,011	8.5



Table 3.4

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 5 Boys by Ethnicity/Race Who Were Assigned an In-School Suspension*

Ethnicity/Race	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
White	62,397	10.7	62,092	10.4
Hispanic	107,768	9.2	109,890	8.5
Black	26,891	21.3	27,220	20.1

Table 3.5

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 4 Girls by Ethnicity/Race Who Were Assigned an Out-of-School Suspension*

Ethnicity/Race	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
White	58,104	0.4	58,022	0.4
Hispanic	104,451	0.6	106,331	0.5
Black	25656	4.1	262,248	4.1

Table 3.6

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 4 Boys by Ethnicity/Race Who Were Assigned an Out-of-School Suspension*

Ethnicity/Race	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
White	62,016	2.3	62,569	2.2
Hispanic	109,035	3.1	111,692	3.0
Black	26,877	12.4	27,605	11.7

Table 3.7

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 5 Girls by Ethnicity/Race Who Were Assigned an Out-of-School Suspension*

Ethnicity/Race	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
White	58,802	0.6	58,232	0.5
Hispanic	103,526	1.2	105,389	1.2
Black	25,565	6.3	26,011	5.5

Table 3.8

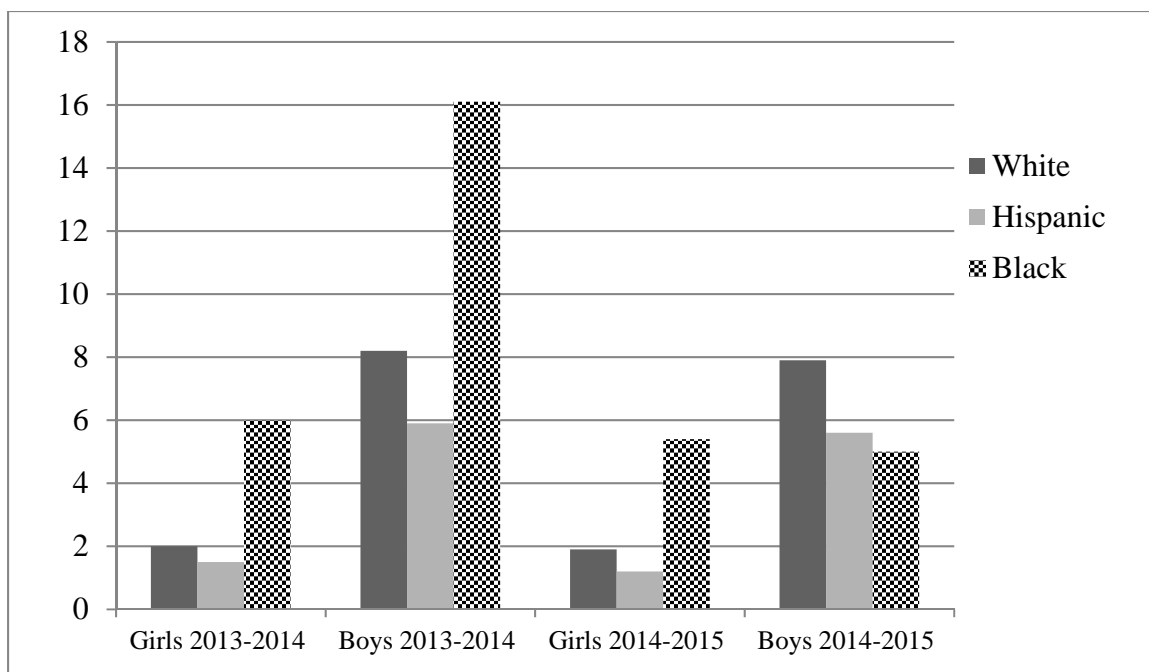
*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 5 Boys by Ethnicity/Race Who Were Assigned an Out-of-School Suspension*

Ethnicity/Race	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
White	62,016	2.3	62,569	2.2
Hispanic	109,035	3.1	111,692	3.0
Black	26,877	12.4	27,605	11.7

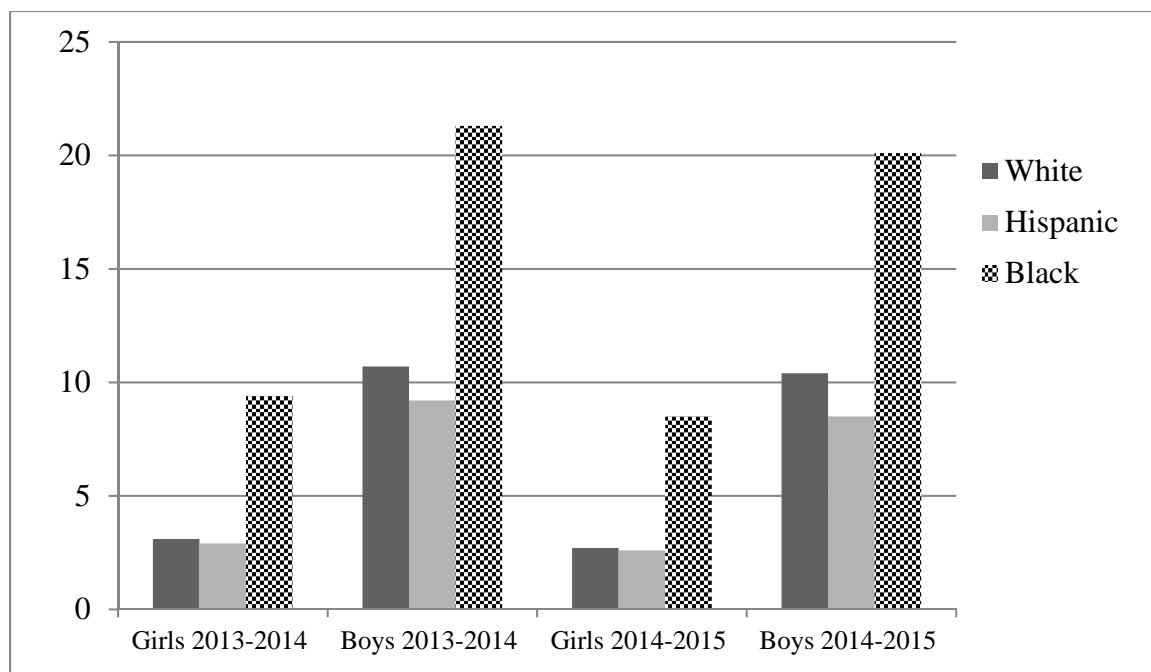
Table 3.9

*Cramer's Vs for Statistically Significant Differences in Discipline Assignment Rates as a Function of Ethnicity/Race for Grade 4 and Grade 5 Girls and Boys*

Gender, Grade Level, and School Year	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension
<b>Girls</b>		
<b>Grade 4</b>		
2013-2014	.06 (Trivial)	.06 (Trivial)
2014-2015	.06 (Trivial)	.05 (Trivial)
<b>Grade 5</b>		
2013-2014	.09 (Trivial)	.07 (Trivial)
2014-2015	.08 (Trivial)	.07 (Trivial)
<b>Boys</b>		
<b>Grade 4</b>		
2013-2014	.10 (Small)	.10 (Small)
2014-2015	.09 (Trivial)	.09 (Trivial)
<b>Grade 5</b>		
2013-2014	.12 (Small)	.12 (Small)
2014-2015	.11 (Small)	.11 (Small)

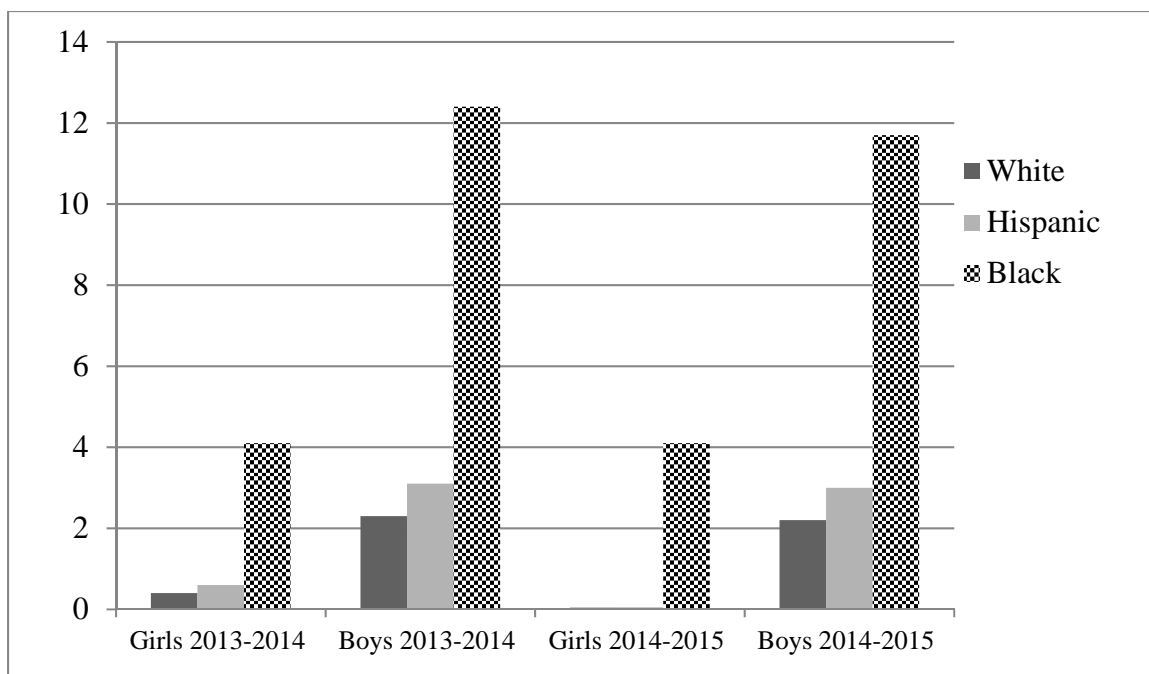


*Figure 3.1.* In-school suspension assignments to Grade 4 girls and boys by ethnicity/race for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.

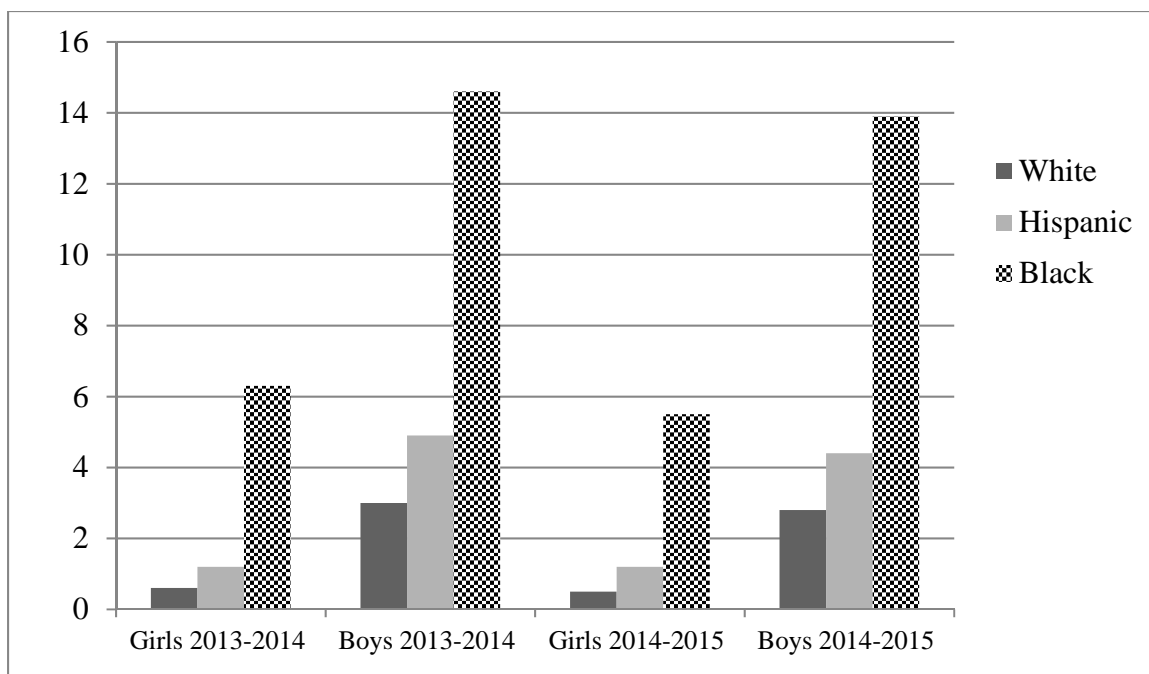


*Figure 3.2.* In-school suspension assignments to Grade 5 girls and boys by ethnicity/race for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.





*Figure 3.3.* Out-of-school suspension assignments to Grade 4 girls and boys by ethnicity/race for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.



*Figure 3.4.* Out-of-school suspension assignments to Grade 5 girls and boys by ethnicity/race for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.

**CHAPTER IV**  
DIFFERENCES IN DISCIPLINE CONSEQUENCES AS A FUNCTION OF  
ECONOMIC STATUS BY GENDER

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This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

### **Abstract**

The extent to which differences were present in the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension as a function of economic status for Texas Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years was determined in this investigation. Statistically significant differences were present between boys and girls and by poverty status in the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension for both school years. For girls and boys, students who were Extremely Poor were assigned in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension at statistically significantly higher rates than both Moderately Poor and Not Economically Disadvantaged in Grade 4 and Grade 5. Of importance were clear disproportionalities in exclusionary discipline assignments for students who were economically disadvantaged. Implications of results and recommendations for future research were provided.

**Keywords:** Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, Extremely Poor, In-School-Suspension, Out-of-School Suspension

## DIFFERENCES IN DISCIPLINE CONSEQUENCES AS A FUNCTION OF ECONOMIC STATUS BY GENDER

“Children growing up in poverty have a higher likelihood of exposure to multiple forms of adversity that jeopardize their chances of academic success” (Friedman-Krauss & Raver, 2015, p. 1). In addition to jeopardizing their chances of academic success, children with higher levels of poverty perform more poorly on measures of emotion and cognitive deregulation when compared to their more advantaged peers (Friedman-Krauss & Raver, 2015). Heberle and Carter (2015) determined that students who are economically disadvantaged have higher than average rates of externalizing behavior problems in addition to lower cognitive and academic performance than their peers who are not economically disadvantaged. Many factors contribute to their lower academic, emotional, and cognitive success. Children from poverty are more likely to attend lower quality schools, have less qualified teachers, have less access to cognitive enriching materials, and experience disruptions in their home environments (Friedman-Krauss & Raver, 2015).

According to The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2016), “Large and persistent poverty-based disparities continue to characterize the nation’s academic achievement” (p. 10). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2016) documented a gap in proficiency exists between low income students and students of higher income increased by about four points. Of note, the percentage of students who were enrolled in the free or reduced price lunch program increased from 39.7% in 2003 to 51.5% in 2015 (Student Achievement in the Era of Accountability, 2016). In 2010, the United States Census reported that 22% of all children in the United States were under

the Federal poverty line (Heberle & Carter, 2015). Therefore, not only does a poverty-based disparity in academic achievement exist in the United States, but the gap is widening and the poverty population is growing.

The U.S. Department of Education (2001) declared, in the federal mandate, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, all students are to have an equal opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. Skiba (2014) described academic engagement as the number one variable for student academic achievement, however when students are disciplined in an exclusionary manner, such as suspension or expulsion the academic engagement is lost, and so is the equality, equity, and goals of our nation's education legislation. Furthermore, exclusionary discipline practices have not been recognized to improve student behavior (Noguera, 2003). In the 2011-2012 school year, the U.S. Department of Education documented 3.45 million students received an out-of-school suspension (Skiba, 2014), thus contributing to a loss in academic engagement. More recently, in 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act was passed. Focused on in this new legislation is the importance of equality for every child regardless of race/ethnicity, income, background, or zip code (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The Federal Gun Free School Act of 1994 originated zero tolerance policies within public schools in the United States. Zero-tolerance policies implemented in the 1990s included exclusionary practices that have been used with increased frequency (American Psychological Association, 2008). Since the implementation of zero-tolerance policies, discipline inequities associated with exclusionary consequences among students of different ethnic/racial backgrounds have increased (Englehart, 2014; Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014). Under the zero-tolerance policy, circumstance or context of an incident are

not considered when an assignment of predetermined exclusionary consequences are given to students (Englehart, 2014).

Zero-tolerance policies were created to provide a safe school climate by using exclusionary practices when responding to serious behavior. The expected effects of the implementation of zero-tolerance policies have not been seen (Englehart, 2014). However, unexpectedly an overuse and misuse of exclusionary discipline has occurred. These policies have promoted inequities between boys and girls, different ethnic/racial groups, and students from different economic backgrounds. Unfortunately, over time the policies developed have been used to respond to minor offenses (Casella, 2003). In the end, exclusionary punishments promote more negative behaviors than they do positive behaviors (Noguera, 2003; Skiba, 2014). Over the past 30 years, negative effects such as poor academics, increased negative behavior, and school drop outs for Black and Hispanic students have increased due to the assignment of exclusionary measures (Skiba, 2014). Even though exclusionary assignments have been connected to negative effects for Black and Hispanic students, evidence is not available to show that zero tolerance policies have influenced discipline in schools in a positive way (Englehart, 2014), or shown evidence of exclusionary practices reducing disruption or improvement of the school environment (Skiba, 2014).

In a recent investigation in the state of interest, Texas, for this study, Khan and Slate (2016) analyzed differences in the percentage of Grade 6 Black students, Hispanic students, and White students who assigned to in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and discipline alternative education program as a function of their economic status. All of their analyses yielded statistically significant results. In every instance,

Grade 6 Black, Hispanic, and White students who were economically disadvantaged received more instances of in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and discipline alternative education program placement than their ethnic/racial peers who were not economically disadvantaged. Although not addressed in their study, a clear lack of equity in discipline consequence assignment by student ethnicity/race was also demonstrated in these results. Regardless of economic status, Grade 6 Black and Hispanic students received more discipline consequences than did their Grade 6 White peers. In their study, Khan and Slate (2016) documented that Black students enrolled in middle school were two times more likely to be suspended and expelled than their White peers.

Ethnic/racial gaps in the administration of discipline consequences have been extensively documented. However, an economic disproportionality of school disciplinary assignments also exists. Over the past 25 years, an economic and racial disproportionality has been documented consistently in the administration of school discipline (Skiba et al., 2002). A frequently documented fact in school discipline literature is that students of color, particularly Black males from low income populations, are at an increased risk of receiving exclusionary discipline sanctions (Butler, Lewis, Moore III, & Scott, 2012). More specifically, academic success is greater for White students who typically have a higher economic status than for students of different races/ethnicities and economic status (Cheem & Galluzzo, 2013; Hilberth & Slate, 2014a, 2014b; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008). Additionally, students are at an increased risk for school suspension if they are economically disadvantaged (Skiba et al., 2002).



To investigate further the relationship between school suspension and students who were economically disadvantaged, McElderry and Cheng (2014) analyzed exclusionary discipline practices and the relationships with student characteristics, mother characteristics, parental involvement, school location, and service provision. Analyzing a national dataset of Grade 7 through Grade 12 students, they determined that students had an increased risk of school exclusion if the students' mothers received public assistance or were employed full-time. The emotional and financial stress of providing resources for family survival was surmised to prohibit these parents from active parental involvement.

In another recent investigation in Texas, Lopez and Slate (2016) investigated the extent to which differences might be present in disciplinary alternative education program placements for Grade 7 and Grade 8 White students based on their economic status. Grade 7 and Grade 8 White students who were economically disadvantaged were placed in disciplinary alternative education program placements statistically significantly more often than were their counterparts who were not economically disadvantaged. Student economic status was statistically significantly related to higher rates of discipline (Lopez & Slate, 2016).

Although inequities in discipline between boys and girls and ethnic/racial groups have been documented, Henkel (2015) investigated the consequences of the discipline inequities received by students. Henkel examined the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Reading and Mathematics test scores of White, Hispanic, and Black boys and girls assigned in-school suspension and their peers who were not assigned in-school suspension. Those students who were assigned in-school suspension had

statistically significant lower TAKS Reading and Mathematics scores, with the mathematics scores being more adversely influenced than were the reading scores.

Henkel concluded that students who were suspended from school struggled more academically compared to students who were not suspended. Instructional time missed contributes to the student's academic struggles (Miles & Stipek, 2006; Pokorski, 2010)

Another consequence associated with the inequities of public school discipline are the effects it has on student graduation rates in high school and a student's future involvement in the juvenile justice system. More than 80% of Texas adult prison inmates are school drop outs (Fowler et al., 2010). The single most important predictor of student future involvement in the juvenile justice system is a prior history of disciplinary referrals at school (Fowler et al., 2010). Additionally, where students attend school is the greatest predictor of whether or not students will be assigned a discretionary in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or a disciplinary alternative education placement (Fowler et al., 2010).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Low student achievement and higher student dropout rates have been linked to exclusionary discipline assignments (Christle et al., 2004; Henkel, 2015; Hilberth & Slate, 2014a; Skiba et al., 2009). Disproportionality of discipline consequences between boys and girls combined with inequities in discipline consequence assignment among different economic status groups (i.e., Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor) may lead to disproportionate effects on student academic achievement by gender within an economic status group. Gender and economic discipline gaps contributes to the academic gaps present in public schools. Academic

gaps are apparent between students who are not economically disadvantaged and students who are economically disadvantaged and these achievement gaps are widening (George, 2015; Mendez et al., 2002). Important to note is that exclusionary discipline assignments have also been linked to an increase in high school drop-out rates (Fowler et al., 2010; Skiba, 2014), contributing a disproportionately higher percentage of the nation's prison inmates and a higher unemployment rate (Fowler et al., 2010).

### **Purpose of the Study**

One purpose of this article was to examine the degree to which differences were present in the assignment of discipline consequences to Grade 4 and 5 girls as a function of their economic status. A second purpose of this article was to examine the extent to which differences were present in the assignment of discipline consequences to Grade 4 and 5 boys as a function of their economic status. As such, the presence of any inequities in the receipt of disciplinary consequences for boys and girls by their economic status will be established.

### **Significance of the Study**

Substantial research literature (e.g., Arcia, 2007; Gregory et al., 2010; Hilberth & Slate, 2014a, 2014b; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008) exists in which student discipline consequences and student demographic characteristics such as ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black), gender, and economic status are directly connected. Additionally, Skiba et al. (2009) suggested the school discipline consequences being used, such as exclusionary practices, appear to provide short-term solutions to school disciplinary problems by separating disruptive students from the educational environment. Of importance is that Christle et al. (2004) and Skiba et al. (2009) have determined that

schools with higher rates of exclusionary practices had poorer achievement outcomes. Many researchers (e.g., Fowler et al., 2010; Henkel, 2015; McElderry & Cheng, 2014) have established that school discipline efforts lead to, not only poorer achievement outcomes, but lower student graduation rates and a high percentage of students involved in the juvenile justice system. Few researchers, however, have examined the disproportionality of discipline consequences separately for boys and girls as a function of their economic status for students in elementary school. As such, the presence of any inequities in receipt of disciplinary consequences for boys and girls as a function of their economic status will be established. The findings of this study may have practical applications for school administrators and classroom teachers in ensuring their pedagogical practices and disciplinary efforts are equitable for elementary school boys and girls regardless of their economic status. In addition, findings may provide educational institutions important empirical data for sound policymaking.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (a) What is the difference in the assignment of in-school suspension for Grade 4 girls as a function of their economic status (i.e., Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor)?; (b) What is the difference in the assignment of in-school suspension for Grade 4 boys as a function of their economic status?; (c) What is the difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 4 girls as a function of economic status?; (d) What is the difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 4 boys as a function of economic status?; (e) What is the difference in the assignment of in-school suspension of Grade 5 girls as a function of economic status?; (f)

What is the difference in the assignment of in-school suspension for Grade 5 boys as a function of economic status?; (g) What is the difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 5 girls as a function of economic status?; (h) What is the difference in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 5 boys as a function of economic status?; (i) What consistencies are present in the assignment of in-school suspension to Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys?; and, (j) What consistencies are present in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 4 and 5 girls and boys? The first 8 research questions were repeated for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years whereas the last two research questions involved both years of data.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

A non-experimental, causal-comparative research design (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012) was used for this study. In this investigation, the independent variable could not be manipulated. Due to the design of the study, the independent and dependent variables had already occurred and extraneous variables were not controlled. The archival data that were utilized herein represented past events (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The independent variable in this article was student economic status (i.e., Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor). For each grade level, the dependent variables involved in this research article were the receipt or non-receipt of in-school suspension and the receipt or non-receipt of out-of-school suspension.

## **Participants**

Participants in this study were Grade 4 and Grade 5 students in Texas who received a discipline consequence in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Data were obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System through completion and submission of a Public Information Request form. Specific data requested from the Texas Education Agency were: grade level, student gender, economic status, and discipline consequence. These data after being obtained were then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software program. Subsequently the data file was converted into a SPSS data file and labels were assigned to relevant variables used in this study.

For this investigation the following definitions will be used. In-school suspension is defined as the first method of disciplinary consequence for students. An in-school suspension consequence is the removal of a student from the regular classroom as a disciplinary consequence by placing the student into a separate classroom (Texas Education Agency, 2010). An 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).

For the purpose of this article the following definitions will be used to describe the degrees of economic disadvantage: Not Economically Disadvantaged (i.e., students who did not qualify for the free/reduced price lunch program); Moderately Poor (i.e., students who qualified for the reduced price lunch program); and Extremely Poor (i.e., students who qualified for the free price lunch program). A family's income must be of

131% to 185% of the federal poverty line to be eligible for the reduced price lunch. However, to be eligible for free price lunch program a family's income must be at or below 130% of the federal poverty line (Federal Register, 2016).

### **Results**

To ascertain whether statistically significant differences were present in the assignment of either in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension as a function of economic status (i.e., Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor) for Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys, Pearson chi-square procedures were conducted. This statistical procedure is the optimal statistical procedure to use because frequency data were present for economic (i.e., Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor), gender, and discipline consequences (i.e., students either received a consequence or did not receive a consequence). Therefore, chi-squares are the statistical procedure of choice when both variables are categorical in nature (Field, 2009). In addition, with the large sample size, the available sample size per cell was more than five. The sample size for the 2013-2014 school year for Grade 4 students was 181,211 girls and 190,658 boys for a total of 371,869 students. With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, the sample size for Grade 4 students was 183,993 girls and 194,889 boys for a total sample of 378,882 Grade 4 students. With these large sample sizes present for the two school years, the assumptions for utilizing a chi-square were met (Field, 2009).

### **Research Question One**

For the first research question, the focus was on the extent to which differences were present in the assignment of in-school suspension by economic status (i.e., Not

Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor) for Grade 4 girls in Texas for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. A statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 738.77, p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .06, a trivial effect size (Cohen, 1988), as a function of economic status for Grade 4 girls. In the 2013-2014 school year, over 4,000 Grade 4 girls were assigned an in-school suspension. Grade 4 girls who were Extremely Poor were almost three times more likely to be assigned in-school suspension than were Grade 4 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Grade 4 girls who were Moderately Poor were more than twice likely to be assigned an in-school suspension than were Grade 4 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Frequencies and percentages of Grade 4 girls by economic status who received an in-school suspension are delineated in Table 4.1.

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Insert Table 4.1 about here

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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of in-school suspension for Grade 4 girls,  $\chi^2(1) = 612.14, p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .06, a trivial effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student economic status. In the 2014-2015 school year, almost 4,000 in-school suspensions were assigned to girls. The assignment of in-school suspension was more than two times higher for Grade 4 girls who were Extremely Poor and almost twice the rate for Grade 4 girls who were Moderately Poor than for Grade 4 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged.



## Research Question Two

In the second research question the assignment of in-school suspension by economic status was investigated for Grade 4 boys in Texas for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. A statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 1748.78, p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .10, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), as a function of economic status for Grade 4 boys. In regard to the 2013-2014 school year, over 15,000 Grade 4 boys were assigned an in-school suspension. Grade 4 boys who were Extremely Poor were more than twice as likely to be assigned an in-school suspension than were Grade 4 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Grade 4 boys who were Moderately Poor were almost twice likely to be assigned an in-school suspension than were Grade 4 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Frequencies and percentages of Grade 4 boys by economic status who received an in-school suspension are revealed in Table 4.2.

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Insert Table 4.2 about here

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Regarding the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of in-school suspension for Grade 4 boys,  $\chi^2(1) = 1435.70, p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .09, a trivial effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student economic status. In the 2014-2015 school year, about 15,000 in-school suspensions were assigned to Grade 4 boys. Grade 4 boys who were Extremely Poor had an in-school suspension rate that was almost two times the in-school suspension rate of Grade 4 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Grade 4 boys who were Moderately Poor were assigned

in-school suspensions almost twice the rate as Grade 4 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged.

### **Research Question Three**

For the third research question, the assignment of out-of-school suspension by economic status was addressed for Grade 4 girls in Texas for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. A statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of out-of-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 575.90, p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .06, a trivial effect size (Cohen, 1988), as a function of economic status for Grade 4 girls. In the 2013-2014 school year, almost 2,000 Grade 4 girls were assigned an out-of-school suspension. Grade 4 girls who were Extremely Poor were almost five times more likely to be assigned an out-of-school suspension than were Grade 4 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Grade 4 girls who were Moderately Poor were more than twice likely to be assigned an out-of-school suspension than were Grade 4 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Table 4.3 contains the frequencies and percentages of Grade 4 girls by economic status who received an out-of-school suspension.

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 Insert Table 4.3 about here  
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Regarding the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of an out-of-school suspension for Grade 4 girls,  $\chi^2(1) = 500.97, p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .05, a trivial effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student economic status. In the 2014-2015 school year, almost 1,300 out-of-school suspensions were assigned to girls. Grade 4 girls who were Extremely Poor had an out-of-school

suspension rate that was more than three times higher than the out-of-school suspension rate of Grade 4 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Grade 4 girls who were Moderately poor were less likely to receive an out-of-school suspension than were Grade 4 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged.

#### **Research Question Four**

In the fourth research question, the degree to which differences were present in the assignment of out-of-school suspension by economic status for Grade 4 boys in Texas for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years was determined. A statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of out-of-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 11831.26$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .10, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), as a function of economic status for Grade 4 boys. In regard to the 2013-2014 school year, over 7,000 Grade 4 boys were assigned an out-of-school suspension. Grade 4 boys who were Extremely Poor were more than three times more likely to be assigned an out-of-school suspension than were Grade 4 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Grade 4 boys who were Moderately Poor were almost twice likely to be assigned an out-of-school suspension than were Grade 4 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Revealed in Table 4.4 are the frequencies and percentages of Grade 4 boys by economic status who received an out-of-school suspension.

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 Insert Table 4.4 about here  
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Concerning the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 4 boys,  $\chi^2(1) = 1512.98$ ,

$p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .09, a trivial effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student economic status. In the 2014-2015 school year, over 7,000 out-of-school suspensions were assigned to boys. Grade 4 boys who were Extremely Poor had an out-of-school suspension rate that was more than twice as high as the out-of-school suspension rate for Grade 4 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Grade 4 boys who were Moderately Poor had an out-of-school suspension rate that was almost twice as high as the out-of-school suspension rate of Grade 4 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged.

### **Research Question Five**

For the fifth research question, the assignment of in-school suspension by economic status for Grade 5 girls in Texas for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years was determined. A statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 1460.06$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .09, a trivial effect size (Cohen, 1988), as a function of economic status for Grade 5 girls. In the 2013-2014 school year, almost 7,000 Grade 5 girls were assigned an in-school suspension. The in-school suspension rate for Grade 5 girls who were Extremely Poor were almost three times as high as the in-school suspension rate of Grade 5 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Grade 5 girls who were Moderately Poor were almost twice likely to be assigned to in-school suspension than were Grade 5 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Presented in Table 4.5 are the frequencies and percentages of Grade 5 girls by economic status who received an in-school suspension.

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Insert Table 4.5 about here  
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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of in-school suspension for Grade 5 girls,  $\chi^2(1) = 1242.80$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .08, a trivial effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student economic status. In the 2014-2015 school year, more than 6,000 in-school suspensions were assigned to girls. The in-school suspension rate for Grade 5 girls who were Extremely Poor was more than twice as high as the in-school suspension rate for Grade 5 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Grade 5 girls who were Moderately Poor were assigned an in-school suspension about twice as often as Grade 5 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged.

### **Research Question Six**

In the sixth research question, the degree to which differences were present in the assignment of in-school suspension by economic status for Grade 5 boys in Texas for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years was investigated. A statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 2691.80$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .12, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), as a function of economic status for Grade 5 boys. In the 2013-2014 school year, over 20,000 Grade 5 boys were assigned an in-school suspension. Grade 5 boys who were Extremely Poor were more than twice as likely to be assigned an in-school suspension than were Grade 5 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Grade 5 boys who were Moderately Poor were almost twice likely to be assigned an in-school suspension than were Grade 5 boys who

were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Contained in Table 4.6 are the frequencies and percentages of Grade 5 boys by economic status who received an in-school suspension.

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 Insert Table 4.6 about here  
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Regarding the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of in-school suspension for Grade 5 boys,  $\chi^2(1) = 2187.41, p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .11, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student economic status. In the 2014-2015 school year, almost 15,000 in-school suspensions were assigned to boys. For Grade 5 boys who were Extremely Poor, their in-school suspension rate was almost twice the in-school suspension rate for Grade 5 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Grade 5 boys who were Moderately Poor had an in-school suspension rate that was almost twice as high as the in-school suspension rate of Grade 5 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged.

### **Research Question Seven**

For the seventh research question, the assignment of out-of-school suspension by economic status was examined for Grade 5 girls in Texas for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. A statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of out-of-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 919.58, p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .07, a trivial effect size (Cohen, 1988), as a function of economic status for Grade 5 girls. In the 2013-2014 school year, almost 1,700 Grade 5 girls were assigned an out-of-school suspension. Grade 5 girls who were Extremely Poor were four times more likely to be assigned an out-of-school suspension than were Grade 5 girls who were Not Economically

Disadvantaged. Grade 5 girls who were Moderately Poor were more than twice likely to be assigned an out-of-school suspension than were Grade 5 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Delineated in Table 4.7 are the frequencies and percentages of Grade 5 girls who received an out-of-school suspension.

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Insert Table 4.7 about here

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Concerning the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 5 girls,  $\chi^2(1) = 879.54$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .07, a trivial effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student economic status. In the 2014-2015 school year, approximately 2,600 out-of-school suspensions were assigned to girls. For Grade 5 girls who were Extremely Poor, their out-of-school suspension rate was more than three times as high as the out-of-school suspension rate for Grade 5 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. However, Grade 5 girls who were Moderately Poor were assigned out-of-school suspension only slightly more often than were Grade 5 girls who were Not Economically Disadvantaged.

### **Research Question Eight**

In the eighth research question, the focus was on the degree to which differences were present in the assignment of out-of-school suspension by economic status for Grade 5 boys in Texas for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. A statistically significant difference was revealed in the assignment of out-of-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 2776.15$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .12, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), as a function of economic status for Grade 5 boys. In the 2013-2014 school year, over 10,000 Grade 5

boys were assigned an out-of-school suspension. Grade 5 boys who were Extremely Poor were more than three times as likely to be assigned an out-of-school suspension than were Grade 5 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Grade 5 boys who were Moderately Poor were almost twice likely to be assigned an out-of-school suspension than were Grade 5 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. The frequencies and percentages of Grade 5 boys by economic status who received an out-of-school suspension are revealed in Table 4.8.

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 Insert Table 4.8 about here  
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With respect to the 2014-2015 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 5 boys,  $\chi^2(1) = 2187.41, p < .001$ , Cramer's V of .11, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), by student economic status. In the 2014-2015 school year, over 9,000 out-of-school suspensions were assigned to boys. For Grade 5 boys who were Extremely Poor, their out-of-school suspension rate was almost twice as high as the out-of-school suspension rate for Grade 5 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Grade 5 boys who were Moderately Poor had an out-of-school suspension rate that was almost twice as high as the out-of-school suspension rate of Grade 5 boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged. Table 4.8 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

### **Discussion**

In this investigation, two school years of data were analyzed to determine the degree to which inequities occurred in the assignment of in-school suspension and out-of-



school suspension by the economic status of Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys.

Inequities were clearly documented in this multiyear investigation. The extent to which the inequities occurred for in-school suspension rates as a function of economic status for Grade 4 girls and boys are presented in Figure 4.1. The data for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years were consistent in the apparent discipline gap for both girls and boys and by poverty status. Clear inequities were evident in the out-of-school suspension rates between girls and boys and are depicted in Figure 4.2.

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 Insert Figures 4.1 and 4.2 about here  
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With regard to Grade 4 girls and boys in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, readers should note that Grade 4 girls and boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged had a low in-school suspension rate in comparison to the in-school suspension rates of Grade 4 girls and boys who were either Moderately Poor or Extremely Poor. Grade 4 boys regardless of economic status were more than three times more likely to be assigned an in-school suspension consequence than were Grade 4 girls. For each year investigated, for both girls and boys, the highest rates of in-school suspensions occurred for the Extremely Poor group of students. The ordering of Extremely Poor, Moderately Poor, and Not Economically Disadvantaged girls and boys, with respect to the rate of in-school suspension rates, was consistent for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Depicted in Figure 4.2 are the in-school suspension rates for these three groups of students. These data are consistent with previous researchers (e.g., Lopez & Slate, 2016; National Assessment of Education Progress, 2016) who have

documented the presence of strong disparities among students by their economic status in the receipt of exclusionary discipline consequences.

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Insert Figure 4.2 about here

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Furthermore, in this investigation, the degree to which out-of-school suspension was assigned in a disproportional manner to Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys by economic status was determined. The extent to which the inequities occurred are revealed in Figures 4.3 and 4.4. For the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, for both girls and boys, the highest rates of out-of-school suspension occurred for the Extremely Poor group of students. This result was consistent with other researchers (e.g., McElderry & Cheng, 2014; Skiba, 2002). Grade 4 and Grade 5 students who were Extremely Poor were not only overrepresented in regard to receiving discipline consequences, but Grade 4 and Grade 5 boys were disproportionately overrepresented when compared to Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls who were Extremely Poor. Results of this investigation are congruent with Lopez and Slate (2016) who established that student economic status was statistically significantly related to higher rates of discipline.

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Insert Figures 4.3 and 4.4 about here

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### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

Distinct and strong inequities were present in the rates of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension by student economic status. As a result, school district and

school campus leaders are encouraged to conduct audits of their discipline programs and practices. In these audits, they should analyze the demographic characteristics of students who have received discipline consequences and compare those characteristics to the student enrollment characteristics of their schools. To the degree that disparities are present in the demographic characteristics of students who receive discipline consequences from the demographic characteristics of student enrollment, then inequities would be present. Discipline practices that improve student behavior should be practiced instead of exclusionary methods that have yet to demonstrate improvement in student behavior.

In addition to educational leaders of school districts reviewing their current discipline programs, school district administrators and educational leaders should examine discipline methods, student engagement, and cultural relevant practices that enhance student success. To assess and conclude how to improve student behavior, student needs assessments and school culture audits are necessary. Additionally, a thorough understanding of student needs based on student gender and economic status would be beneficial to improve teacher and student relationships. Lastly, community engagement and research based student discipline trainings should be provided to teachers in an effort to reduce exclusionary discipline consequences.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Several recommendations for future research can be generated from this empirical investigation. First, researchers are recommended to investigate whether discipline inequities exist for students from low income and poverty in Grade 4 and Grade 5 in other states. Such studies could provide information regarding the generalizability of the

results delineated in this article. Secondly, because of the large numbers of exclusionary discipline consequences assigned to Grade 4 and Grade 5 students, expanding the study to incorporate more grade levels would be helpful.

Further research focused on following individual students over a multiyear period to study whether the assignment of in-school suspensions leads to the assignment of out-of-school suspension, Disciplinary Alternative Education Program, and/or Juvenile Alternative Education Program is suggested. Additionally, an investigation to follow individual students to study the relationship of their discipline consequences to their academic achievement over a multiyear period is also recommended. Both these studies, if they yield statistically significant results, would add to current discipline literature giving policymakers, district leaders, and teachers more data to improve upon current discipline policy and practice. Additionally, determining the reasons for exclusionary discipline assignments by economic status can help school leaders ascertain whether difference exists and could help establish whether students perform better and have less discipline consequences based on different discipline practices.

## **Conclusion**

In this investigation, the extent to which in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension were assigned differentially by economic status to Texas Grade 4 and 5 girls and boys was ascertained. Texas statewide data on all Grade 4 and 5 students for two school years were obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System. Statistically significant differences were present in the assignment of in-school suspension and in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys on the basis of their economic status. Boys, particularly boys who were Extremely Poor, were disproportionately assigned to both of these disciplinary consequences.

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Table 4.1

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 4 Girls Who Were Assigned an In-School  
Suspension by Economic Status*

Economic Status	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely Poor	95,012	3.2	95,472	2.8
Moderately Poor	13,087	2.1	12,464	1.8
Not Poor	73,112	1.2	76,057	1.1

Table 4.2

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 4 Boys by Who Were Assigned an In-School Suspension by Economic Status*

Economic Status	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely Poor	100,009	10.5	100,752	9.8
Moderately Poor	13,829	7.8	13,483	7.3
Not Poor	76,820	5.0	80,654	5.0

Table 4.3

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 4 Girls by Who Were Assigned an Out-of-School Suspension by Economic Status*

Economic Status	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely Poor	95,012	1.4	95,472	1.4
Moderately Poor	13,087	0.6	12,464	0.5
Not Poor	73,112	0.3	76,057	0.4

Table 4.4

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 4 Boys by Who Were Assigned an Out-of-School Suspension by Economic Status*

Economic Status	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely Poor	100,009	5.6	100,752	5.2
Moderately Poor	13,829	3.0	13,483	2.6
Not Poor	76,820	1.7	80,654	1.8

Table 4.5

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 5 Girls by Who Were Assigned an In-School Suspension Economic Status*

Economic Status	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely Poor	58,104	5.5	93,012	4.9
Moderately Poor	13,451	3.5	12,688	2.9
Not Poor	74,315	1.9	77,325	1.8

Table 4.6

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 5 Boys Who Were Assigned an In-School  
Suspension by Economic Status*

Economic Status	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely Poor	98,183	15.1	97,498	13.8
Moderately Poor	14,399	11.2	13,458	10.4
Not Poor	77,287	7.1	81,357	7.0

Table 4.7

*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 5 Girls Who Were Assigned an Out-of-School Suspension by Economic Status*

Economic Status	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely Poor	93,495	2.4	97,498	2.2
Moderately Poor	13,451	1.3	13,458	0.8
Not Poor	74,315	0.6	81,357	0.6



Table 4.8

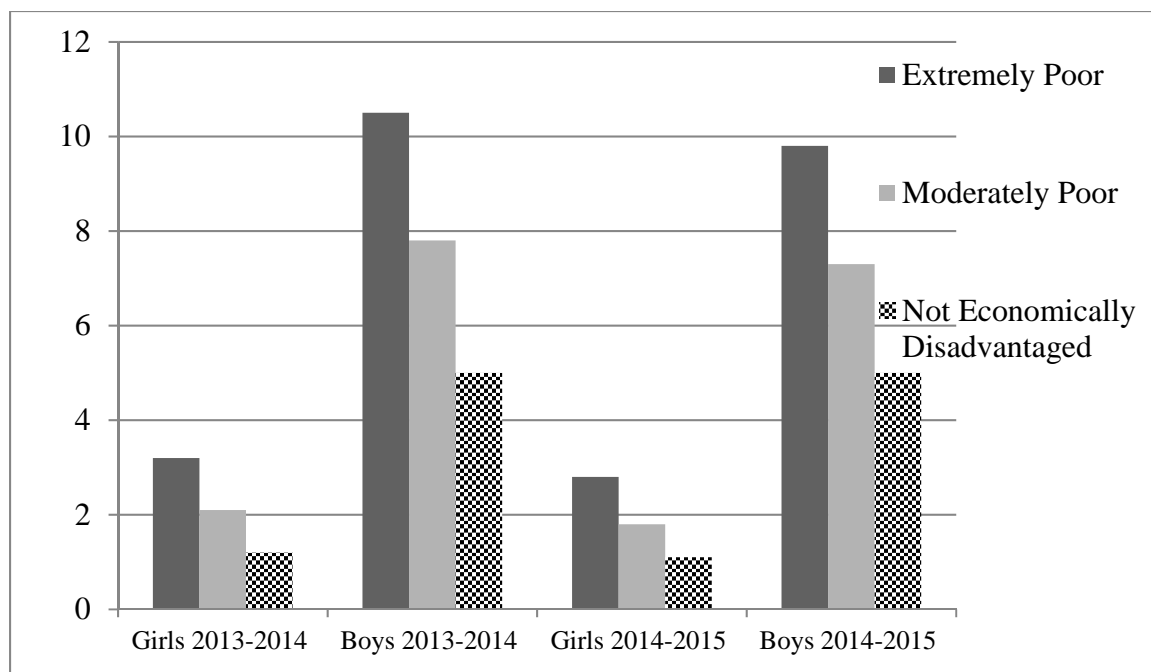
*Percentages and Frequencies of Grade 5 Boys Who Were Assigned an Out-of-School Suspension by Economic Status*

Economic Status	2013-2014		2014-2015	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Extremely Poor	98,183	7.8	97,498	7.1
Moderately Poor	14,399	4.2	13,458	3.7
Not Poor	77,287	2.2	81,357	2.4

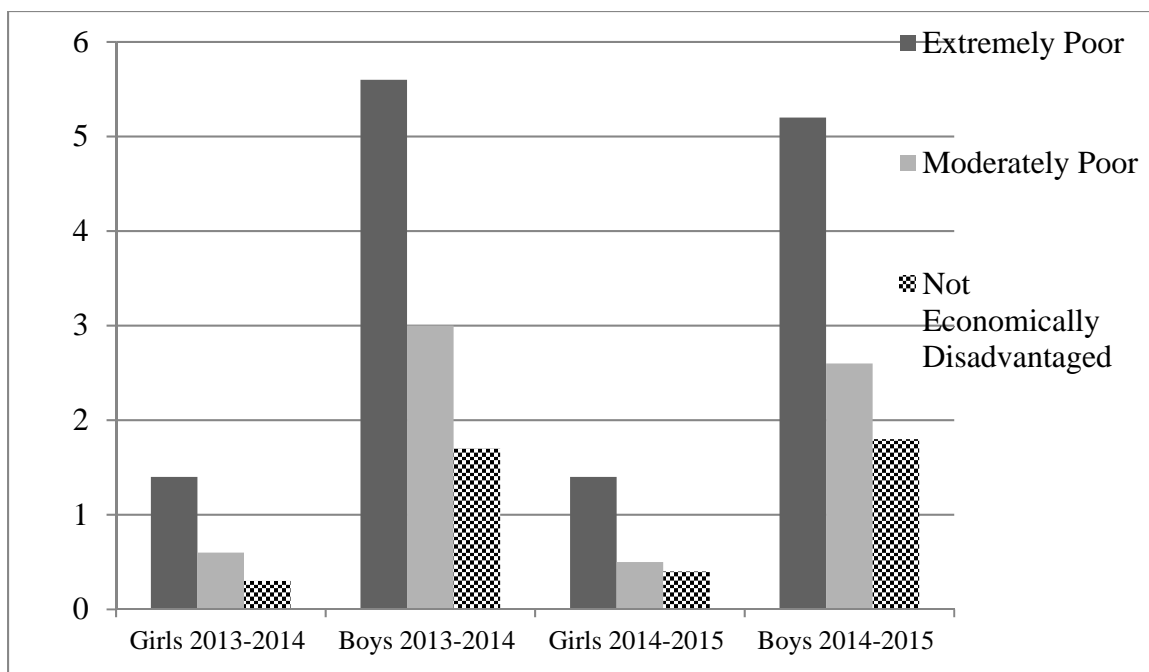
Table 4.9

*Cramer's Vs for Statistically Significant Differences in Discipline Assignment Rates as a Function of Economic Status for Grade 4 and Grade 5 Girls and Boys*

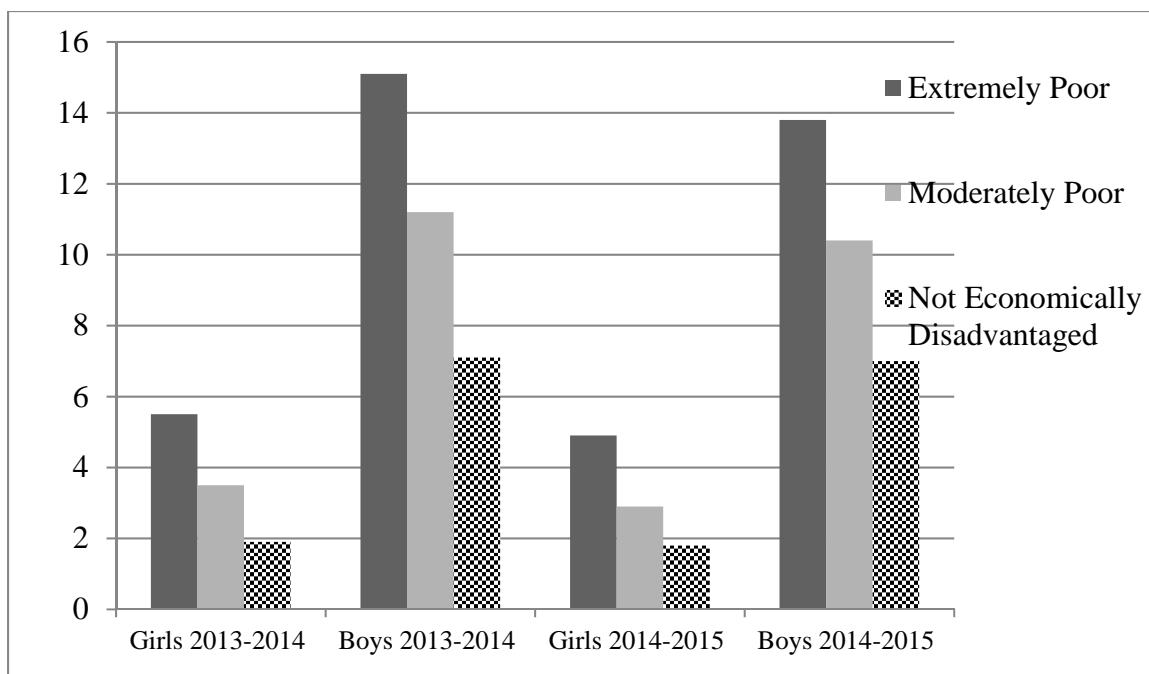
Gender, Grade Level, and School Year	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension
<b>Girls</b>		
<b>Grade 4</b>		
2013-2014	.10 (Small)	.13 (Small)
2014-2015	.10 (Small)	.13 (Small)
<b>Grade 5</b>		
2013-2014	.12 (Small)	.14 (Small)
2014-2015	.13 (Small)	.13 (Small)
<b>Boys</b>		
<b>Grade 4</b>		
2013-2014	.13 (Small)	.17 (Small)
2014-2015	.12 (Small)	.16 (Small)
<b>Grade 5</b>		
2013-2014	.13 (Small)	.16 (Small)
2014-2015	.13 (Small)	.16 (Small)



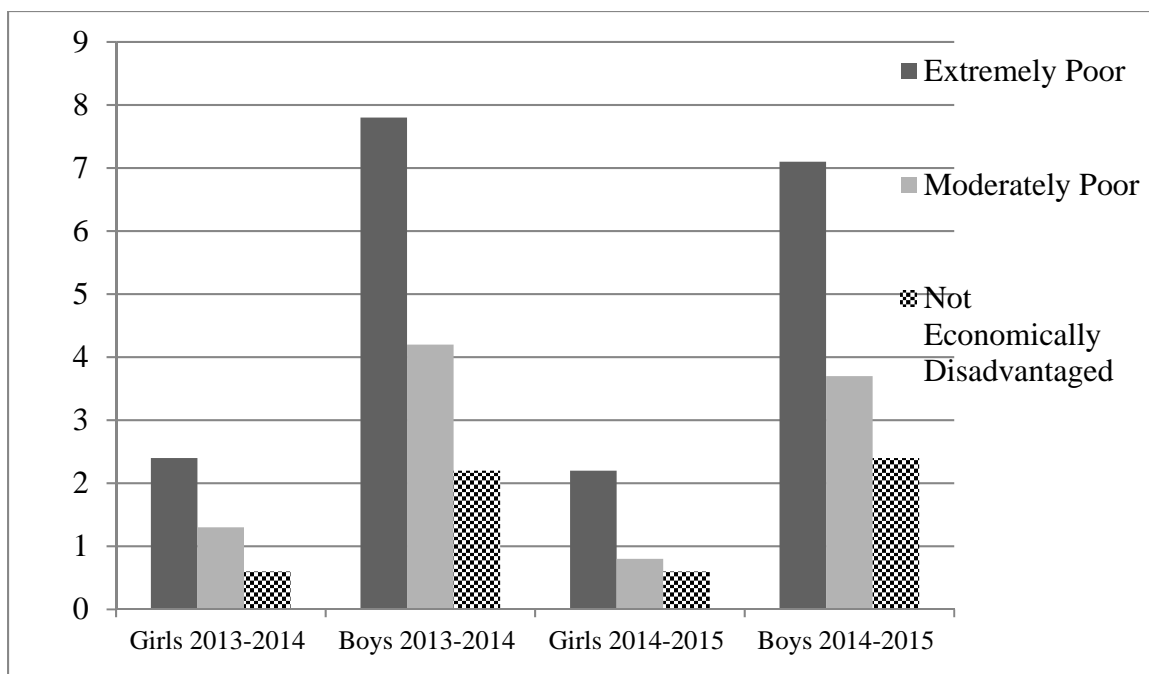
*Figure 4.1.* In-school suspension assignments by economic status to Grade 4 girls and boys for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.



*Figure 4.2.* Out-of-school suspension assignments by economic status to Grade 4 girls and boys for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.



*Figure 4.3.* In-school suspension assignments by economic status to Grade 5 girls and boys for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.



*Figure 4.4.* Out-of-school suspension assignments by economic status to Grade 5 girls and boys for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

The first purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to investigate the extent to which differences were present in discipline consequences for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students as a function of ethnicity/race. A second purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to ascertain the extent to which differences were present in discipline consequences for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students as a function of ethnicity/race by gender. The third purpose of this journal-ready dissertation was to determine the extent to which differences were present in discipline consequences for Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys as a function of their economic status (i.e., Not Economically Disadvantaged, Moderately Poor, and Extremely Poor). Finally, the extent to which these differences in discipline assignment rates by ethnicity/race, gender, and economic status remained consistent for the two years studied was ascertained.

In this chapter, a summary of the results of each of the three articles previously discussed will be provided. Implications for policy will be provided. Lastly, recommendations for future research will be discussed.

#### **Discussion of Results for Students by Ethnicity/Race**

In the first research study of this journal-ready dissertation, the in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension rates for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students by ethnicity/race were analyzed using individual level Public Education Information Management System data from the Texas Education Agency for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Each analysis for each year and for each research question yielded statistically significant differences in the rate of exclusionary discipline

assignments for White, Hispanic, and Black students. Although the effect sizes were small, readers should note that inequities were clearly documented in this multiyear investigation.

For Grade 4 and Grade 5 students in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, Hispanic students had the lowest in-school suspension rate although they constituted the largest student enrollment group. Black students, the smallest ethnic/racial group in terms of student enrollment, had the highest rate of in-school suspensions. With respect to in-school suspensions, this ordering of Black, Hispanic, and White students, was consistent for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. These data are consistent with previous researchers (Englehart, 2014; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Hilberth & Slate, 2014a) who documented the strong disparities are present among ethnic/racial groups in exclusionary discipline assignments.

Also determined in the first study was the degree to which out-of-school suspension was assigned in a disproportional manner to Grade 4 and Grade 5 students by ethnicity/race. For both school years, Black students were assigned the highest rate of out-of-school suspensions, a result that was consistent with previous researchers (Hilberth & Slate, 2014b; Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Commensurate with the findings of (Hilberth & Slate, 2014a, 2014b; Wallace Jr. et al., 2008), Black students are overrepresented in regard to receiving discipline consequences and are disproportionately overrepresented when compared to White students and Hispanic students.

### **Discussion of Results for Boys and Girls by Ethnicity/Race**

For the second research study of this journal-ready dissertation, in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension rates for Grade 4 and Grade 5 boys and girls by



their ethnicity/race were investigated using individual level Public Education Information Management System data from the Texas Education Agency for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Each analysis for each year and for each research question yielded statistically significant differences in the rate of exclusionary discipline assignments for boys and girls within each ethnic/racial group. Effect sizes for the statistically significant results ranged from trivial to small. Readers are directed to Table 3.9 for these effect size values.

For Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, boys had higher in-school and out of school suspension rates than girls. In fact, boys were three times more likely to be assigned an in-school suspension consequence than were girls. For each year investigated, the smallest ethnic/racial group in terms of student enrollment, Black students, had the highest rate of in-school and out-of-school suspensions. White students had the lowest rate of in-school and out-of-school suspensions. Consistent for both school years investigated was this ordering of Black, Hispanic, and White girls and boys, with respect to in-school suspensions. Similar results were documented by previous researchers (e.g., American Psychological Association, 2008; Casella, 2003) depicting the presence of strong disparities among ethnic/racial groups and gender in the assignment of exclusionary discipline. Results were also congruent also with Wallace Jr. et al. (2008) who established that Black students were assigned exclusionary discipline consequences at a higher rate than other ethnic/racial groups, even though their ethnic/racial group constituted the lowest percent of student enrollment. Black students, particularly Black boys, were assigned the highest rate of exclusionary discipline.

### **Discussion of Results for Boys and Girls by Their Economic Status**

In the third research study of this journal-ready dissertation, the in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension rates for Grade 4 and Grade 5 girls and boys by their economic status were analyzed using individual level Public Education Information Management System data from the Texas Education Agency for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. Each analysis for each year and for each research question yielded statistically significant differences in the rate of exclusionary discipline assignments for girls and boys by their economic status. For each statistically significant result, the effect size was small.

For both girls and boys, the data for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years were consistent in the apparent discipline gap by poverty status. Inequities were clearly documented in this third investigation. Grade 4 girls and boys who were Not Economically Disadvantaged had statistically significantly lower in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension rates than did girls and boys who were either Moderately Poor or Extremely Poor. For each year investigated, for both girls and boys, the highest rates of in-school suspensions occurred for the Extremely Poor group of students. This ordering of Extremely Poor, Moderately Poor, and Not Economically Disadvantaged girls and boys, with respect to the rate of in-school and out-of-school suspension rates, was consistent for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. For both grade levels investigated, students who were Extremely Poor were overrepresented in regard to receiving discipline consequences. This presence of discipline inequities and disparities among students from different economic levels is consistent with previous researchers (e.g., National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2016) who established that student

economic status was statistically significantly related to higher rates of discipline (Lopez & Slate, 2016).

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

For all investigations in this journal ready dissertation, clear and strong inequities were present in in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension assignments for students by ethnicity/race, gender, and economic status. It is essential for school leaders to examine the reasons discipline consequences are being assigned per student group. All school districts are encouraged to conduct audits of their discipline programs to determine whether they have similar inequities occurring. School leaders should also audit their current discipline programs, to examine discipline methods that positively influence their students.

To increase student engagement and eliminate school discipline practices that have yet to demonstrate improvement in student behavior, non-exclusionary methods should be practiced. A thorough understanding of student needs based on student ethnicity/race, gender, and economic status will be vital to improve teacher and student relationships. Furthermore, school leaders should provide multicultural trainings along with research based effective discipline methods for teachers in an effort to reduce exclusionary discipline.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Many opportunities are available for future research based on the results of the three empirical studies conducted in this journal ready dissertation. First, an investigation is encouraged to determine whether inequities also exist in other forms of exclusionary discipline such as Discipline Alternative Education Program placements or in a Juvenile

Justice Alternative Educational Program placements. Secondly, because of the large numbers of discipline consequences assigned to Grade 4 and Grade 5 students in Texas, investigating discipline consequences at other grade levels is encouraged to determine the degree to which results at the Grade 4 and 5 levels might be generalizable to other grade levels. Additionally, extending this research to other states would help ascertain the generalizability of the discipline inequities documented herein.

Furthermore, research studies are encouraged into the reasons why students are assigned discipline consequences. That is, are discipline consequences being assigned to subjective reasons such as defiance or for objective reasons such as fighting? Are student misbehaviors consistent across racial/ethnic groups? Studies into the frequencies and types of student misbehavior are encouraged. Moreover, an investigation into teacher ethnicity/race and whether it is related to the assignment of discipline consequences for K-12 students is recommended. To what degree does the current mismatch of teacher ethnicity/race with student ethnicity/race relate to inequities in student discipline? Additionally, studies are recommended regarding whether discipline consequence assignments differ for students based upon their school grade span configuration. That is, are exclusionary discipline consequences assigned differentially between K-8 grade level schools and 6-8 grade level schools?

### **Conclusion**

In these investigations, the extent to which in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension were differentially assigned to Texas Grade 4 and 5 students by their ethnicity/race (i.e., White, Hispanic, and Black), gender, and economic status was ascertained. Texas statewide data on all Grade 4 and 5 students for two school years

were obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System. Inferential statistical procedures revealed the presence of statistically significant differences in the assignment of in-school suspension and in the assignment of out-of-school suspension for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students on the basis of their ethnicity/race, gender, and economic status.

For each study and for both school years, Black students, particularly Black boys, were disproportionately assigned to in-school and out-of-school suspension in comparison to their White and Hispanic peers. Boys were assigned to in-school and out-of-school suspension at higher rates than girls. Additionally, boys, particularly boys who were Extremely Poor, were disproportionately assigned to both of these disciplinary consequences. Students who were Black, boys, or who were Extremely Poor were assigned more discipline consequences than White or Hispanic, girls, who were Moderately Poor, or Not Economically Disadvantaged.

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## Appendix



<p><b>Institutional Review Board</b>  <b>Office of Research and Sponsored Programs</b>          903 Bowers Blvd, Huntsville, TX 77341-2448          Phone: 936.294.4875          Fax: 936.294.3622  <a href="mailto:irb@shsu.edu">irb@shsu.edu</a>  <a href="http://www.shsu.edu/~rgs_www/irb/">www.shsu.edu/~rgs_www/irb/</a></p>
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DATE: August 11, 2016

TO: Kristin Curtiss [Faculty Sponsor: Dr. John Slate]

FROM: Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: *Inequities in Disciplinary Consequence Assignment to Elementary Students: A Texas Statewide Investigation [T/D]*

PROTOCOL #: 2016-08-31267

SUBMISSION TYPE: INITIAL REVIEW

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: August 11, 2016

REVIEW CATEGORY: Category 4—research involving existing, publicly available data usually has little, if any, associated risk, particularly if subject identifiers are removed from the data or specimens.

Thank you for your submission of Initial Review materials for this project. The Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

**\* What should investigators do when considering changes to an exempt study that could make it nonexempt?**

It is the PI's responsibility to consult with the IRB whenever questions arise about whether planned changes to an exempt study might make that study nonexempt human subjects research. In this case, please make available sufficient information to the IRB so it can make a correct determination.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 936-294-4875 or [irb@shsu.edu](mailto:irb@shsu.edu). Please include your project title and protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Donna Desforjes  
 IRB Chair, PHSC  
 PHSC-IRB

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Sam Houston State University IRB's records

## VITA

**Kristin N. Curtiss**

### ***Educational History***

Doctorate of Education – Educational Leadership, December 2016

*Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX*

Dissertation: Inequities in Disciplinary Consequence Assignment to Elementary Students:  
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Master of Education – Curriculum and Instruction, May 2010

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### ***Professional Experience***

Education –

Teacher, Montgomery Independent School District – Montgomery, 2010-2016

Teacher, Conroe Independent School District – Conroe, 2009-2010

Teacher, Spring Independent School District – Spring, 2005-2009

### ***Recognitions***

Jenkins Elementary School's Teacher of the Year 2008

### ***Scholarly Research Activity***

Curtiss, K., & Slate, J. R. (2015). Differences in disciplinary consequences and reasons for Texas elementary students by gender. *Private and public schools: International perspectives, management and educational efficiency* (pp. 11-18). Hauppauge, NY: Nova Publishers.

### ***Presentations***

Curtiss, K., & Slate, J. R. (2015, January). *Differences in disciplinary consequences and reasons for Texas elementary students by gender*. Poster presented at the Hawaii International Conference on Education, Honolulu, HI.