

THE IMPACT OF CODES OF CONDUCT ON DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS FOR MINORITY
STUDENTS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK, PSYCHOLOGY & PHILOSOPHY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE

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DENTON, TEXAS

AUGUST 2022

DEDICATION

To my husband, Brian Hammer; my parents, Regina and Carlos Reyna; my siblings, Damian and Alexandria Pitts, Monique and Kevin Willis, and Jasonn Coleman; my nephews, Gabriel, Mitchell, and Aadon Pitts, and last my cat, Obi Hammer and dog, Samson Reyna; thank you for the constant support and love from day one. Words can never express how much you all mean to me and how that has supported me to get to this point in my life. Thank you for pushing me, listening to me, laughing with me, and reminding me of a far greater love than most ever experience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the many individuals who have helped and contributed to my dissertation. I would like to thank my numerous chairs, Drs. Julie Herbstrith, Shannon Scott, Wendi Johnson, and Samuel Kim. Thank you all for always believing me when many times I ran into your office not believing myself. Also, thank you for dealing with my anxiety and sense of humor. I am grateful to my faculty members for their support. I want also to acknowledge two of my clinical supervisors, Drs. Veronica Bordes Edgar and Morgan Sowell for your support and mentorship. Again, I want to thank my husband for constantly supporting me. You have supported me in so many ways to achieve not only my dreams but figuring out who I am as both a person and professional. Words can never describe how much your support means to me. Last, I want to acknowledge my friends and peers in my cohort. Especially, Lynette Carrillo and Carolyn Cassill for the random calls, listening to me, supporting me, and reminding to stop talking and work on my dissertation.

ABSTRACT

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AUGUST 2022

Black and Latinx students are more likely to experience disciplinary actions than their White counterparts despite engaging in less disruptive behaviors. Various students received disciplinary action based on infractions ambiguously outlined in the Codes of Conduct within the school policy. Although the purpose of these policies is to instill order, some of the language used can impact the number of disciplinary actions for students of color. Specifically, the language used can be targeting and impact students of color. This study investigated the impact of school policy on disciplinary actions in Texas Independent School Districts and the role of ethnicity in these actions. The research used correlations to compare the relationships of the various variables. The collected data was secondary data; limitations to the current study were to be expected. The expected results were that the language of Codes of Conduct impact the number of disciplinary actions.

Keywords: Disciplinary Actions, Codes of Conduct, Stereotypes, Punitive Language

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Disciplinary actions are practices that have been used to maintain “law and order” within the school setting. Students from minoritized ethnic groups are more likely than their non-minoritized peers to receive harsh disciplinary actions in the public-school setting (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Specifically, Black and Latinx students are at a higher risk of receiving disciplinary actions than their White counterparts (Fenning & Rose, 2007; George, 2015; Skiba et al., 2002). Students of color, starting from kindergarten, may experience such discrimination within the educational setting, and the gap grows as students continue through grade levels (Gopalan & Nelson, 2019). Given these trends, Black and Latinx students are overrepresented in the number of disciplinary actions compared to their actual population enrollment (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Harry & Klinger, 2006; Howard & Navarro, 2016). Moreover, a substantial body of research reveals that these patterns have been documented since 1975 and continue to be evident to this day (Children’s Defense Fund, 1975; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2019; Skiba & Losen, 2016; Tajalli & Garba, 2014). The dangers inherent in these trends are that students of color are more likely to experience lower academic achievement and an increased likelihood of being a part of the criminal justice system via the school to prison pipeline (Hirschfield, 2018; Pearman et al., 2019; Wald & Losen, 2003; Welch & Payne, 2018). The school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon suggests that harsh disciplinary actions or punitive policies of removing students contribute to the aforementioned trends (Hirschfield, 2018; Wald & Losen, 2003).

The expected behaviors and cultural norms of Black students contribute to the increased likelihood of disciplinary actions of Black students (Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2019). For example,

students of color do not fit the “norm” of their school setting and are perceived as dangerous or troublesome, which impacts how teachers view their behaviors (Chang & Sue, 2003; Fenning & Rose, 2007). Unfortunately, there is a long history of systematic discrimination, which has influenced school personnel’s behavior in the academic setting. School personnel tend to have a negative attitude towards those with marginalized identities. Certain minoritized groups are more likely to experience disciplinary actions due to school personnel using “prejudicial judgment in interpreting misconducts of a minority” (Tajalli & Garba, 2014, p. 629). George (2015) further described behaviors that Black students engage in as being more likely perceived as deficiencies that are criminal and need correction rather than natural behaviors (Fenning & Rose, 2007).

There is a conscious or unconscious comparison of the behaviors and expectations of White students to those in marginalized groups (Brown & Di Tillio, 2013). It is essential to evaluate the different associations with each generalized ethnic group. Whereas some groups experience similar biases based upon their ethnic identity, others have different expectations (Skiba et al., 2011). For example, several studies have shown that teachers perceive Black students as being disruptive, aggressive, or troubled; teachers also display lower expectations and less empathy towards Black students (Devine et al., 2012; Gilliam et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2011; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007; Todd et al., 2016). Additionally, Black male students are more likely to receive a disciplinary action (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Similarly, Latinx students can be perceived as showing negative characteristics as well as biases related to possible language barriers and immigration status (Brown & Di Tillio, 2013). The pattern of stereotypes can result in school personnel making differential judgements about behaviors displayed by a particular individual based on these associated stereotypes, cultural mismatch or students not fitting the expected norms (Skiba et al., 2011).

As it relates to school policy and disciplinary actions, it is vital to consider the implications of how language can influence school personnel's behaviors. Devine et al. (2012) demonstrated that stereotype-relevant words could elicit negative associations compared to neutral primes. When reading school policies, it is possible to produce a schema that is consistent with the expectation and language of the Codes of Conduct (CoC). The CoC refer to a written policy that is made up of rules and regulations of the school and school discipline (Jacob et al., 2016). If the policies mandate students to have hair that does not cause a distraction in the classroom, one may associate hair distraction with Afrocentric hair. Morris (2005) interviewed and observed the disciplinary actions in a school setting related to appearance and found that Black and Latinx students were disproportionately told to change their behavior or dress, despite the lack of evidence of a real distraction to the learning environment.

School policies can be seen as an overarching influence over various school personnel such as teachers, students, and parent involvement (Walsh et al., 2014). There is compelling evidence to suggest that school policy can relate to school climate, defined as norms, values, and expectations that support students and teachers (Cohen et al., 2009). Although there are numerous contributing factors, one of interest is the standards or policies used to enforce discipline within the education system through the CoC. Prior to students experiencing punitive disciplinary consequences, school personnel typically refer to CoC for inquiry about the necessary disciplinary action. CoC are typically found in the respective district's student handbook. Most districts require both parents and students to sign indicating that they have received a copy of the handbook (Jacob et al., 2016).

Although students can be removed from the academic setting due to fighting, involvement with drugs, and possession of a weapon, students are also being removed from the

educational setting due to infractions of CoC as adopted by the school district (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2018b). Thus, not only are suspensions occurring for dangerous behaviors but, students are being removed more often due to defiance and noncompliance that can occur within day-to-day interactions (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Skiba et al., 2014). As a result, it is essential to examine CoC and its impact on the disciplinary actions of Black and Latinx students.

Statement of the Problem

A common theme within the literature is the disproportionate number of Black and Latinx students receiving disciplinary actions compared to their actual enrollment numbers within their school district (Brown & Di Tillio, 2013; Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2019). Additionally, Black and Latinx students do not engage in more disruptive behaviors (Fabelo et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2002). Given this, it is important to consider other factors contributing to the disproportionality that students of color receive. Several studies have demonstrated that a contributing factor of the trends mentioned above can be related to school policies, the structure and supports for handling behaviors, and Zero-Tolerance policies (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Gregory et al., 2010; Skiba, 2004; Skiba & Losen, 2016). The extent to which school policy relates to disciplinary actions has been influenced by Zero-Tolerance Policies and the incorporation of positive behavioral supports within the school setting. However, there is limited research on analyzing the actual language used within CoC that affects the disproportionality of disciplinary actions for students of color. The current study explores and analyzes the language in CoC to identify the implications of specific linguistic patterns that could result in biased treatment or targeting of students of color within the school setting.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the language used in the CoC that could be targeting students of color, specifically students who identify as being Black and Latinx. Given the increased likelihood of Black and Latinx students receiving harsher punishment and disciplinary actions, the focus population is Black and Latinx students (Fenning & Rose, 2007; George, 2015; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba & Losen, 2016; Tajalli & Garba, 2014). The current study focuses on the language of CoC, which is often the basis of the removal of students from the classroom. The study includes the examination of CoC used within Texas school districts and the respective representation and outcome data of Black, Latinx, and White students who receive disciplinary actions. The Linguistic Inquiry Word Count 2015 (LIWC2015) is utilized to examine linguistic patterns in the CoC.

The study's primary goal is to investigate the relationship between CoC policies and disciplinary actions of Black and Latinx students. It is essential to consider the conceptual foundations that identify cultural identities within the educational setting as well as the bidirectional relationships of social cognitive factors that influence perception and behaviors. The important models and frameworks to consider can include social reconstruction, critical race theory (CRT), and behavioral confirmation theory. Secondary models to further depict these relationships can be the school to prison pipeline and new disciplinology (Skiba & Losen, 2016). Furthermore, the use social cognitive perspective lends the value of understanding how one's perception is influenced by biases which can lead to prejudices and discrimination within the school setting. Together the foundations of these various models and frameworks support and allow for further understanding of the relationship between CoC and disciplinary actions towards students of color.

The sample for the study consisted of Texas Independent School Districts that was selected through a random stratified sampling method. The variables of interest are linguistic patterns within CoC and the number of disciplinary actions Black and Latinx students receive compared to their White student counterparts. Specifically, the data collected was district-level CoC linguistic patterns and the outcome data of the disciplinary actions. To measure the language used within the CoC, the LIWC2015 was utilized. To measure linguistic patterns that could be considered targeting, a dictionary from the LICW2013 was used to evaluate the CoC. The newly created dictionary was made based on common stereotypes that can elicit negative associations with students of color.

The disciplinary action data was obtained from the Public Information Management System (PEIMS) from the TEA for each school district. The data collected was the In-School Suspensions (ISS) and Out of School Suspensions (OSS) for Black, Latinx, and White students. The data represents the percentage of the respective ethnicity within the district that receives ISS or OSS. Additionally, the overall representation of each ethnicity was collected, allowing for further analysis of disproportionality or overrepresentation of students who receive disciplinary actions compared to their enrollment.

Definitions of Terms

The following are definitions of relevant terms, which are further explored within Chapter 2.

Disciplinary Actions: The practices that are implemented as consequences within the school setting that are used to manage or provide order in schools in the form of Expulsions, ISS, OSS, and Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP).

Discipline Gap: The tendency of minority students to be overrepresented in discipline relative to their enrollment in their respective campus (Booker & Mitchell, 2014)

In-School Suspensions: The exclusion of a student for 10 days in a separate room on campus that is typically staffed (Jacob et al., 2016).

Out of School Suspensions: The exclusion of students for 10 days or less by completely removing them from campus grounds (Blomberg, 2004).

Black: The ethnic group that encompasses those of African descent (Agyemang et al., 2005). Many government entities and research publications utilize the term African American. However, this study uses the term Black to encompass ancestor backgrounds rather than cultural belongings.

Latinx: The ethnic group that is comprised of decedents of Hispanic and Latin countries. The use of the “x” is in respect of gender identification (de Onis, 2017). This study uses Latinx; however, research and other government entities may use Hispanics to describe this group.

School Policy: As defined by the Texas Education Code, school policy is a required document that outlines an expected behaviors as well as overarching influence over various aspects of the school setting, such as teachers, students, and parent involvement (Jacob et al., 2016).

Codes of Conduct (CoC): The Texas Education Code requires that a district adopt a CoC that will specify the standards for student conduct and outline the types of behavior that might result in discipline (Walsh et al., 2014). The CoC is also included within the school policies; however, some districts have guidelines for conduct outside general school policies.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to further investigate the relationship between the language used within CoC and the disproportionality of minoritized student receive disciplinary action compared to their enrollment in Texas Independent School Districts. The current study investigated the following questions:

1. Is there a discipline gap amongst Black, Latinx, and White students?
2. Does the use of language related to identity predict a discipline gap?
3. Does the use of language emphasizing criminal behavior, daily disruptive behavior, and/or appearance-based behavior predict a discipline gap?
4. Does the tone of language used in COC predict the discipline gap?
5. Does the use of motivational language predict the discipline gap?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to explore the relations between the characteristics of CoC and disciplinary actions toward minority students. It is worth noting that there is limited research in this area; however, studying this relationship can provide a rationale for systematic support and changes for the academic setting. The following sections explore the need to investigate the characteristics of CoC and their relationship to disciplinary actions and the impact on minority students.

The Use of Disciplinary Action in the Educational Setting

Disciplinary actions have been utilized to manage or provide order in schools. Within the school setting, a wide range of practices are used, and it is up to the independent school district to determine the delivery of the practice (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Prior to the 1960s, the primary consequence for students was corporal punishment through the infliction of pain by school personnel for disapproved behaviors (Jacob et al., 2016). The ethics and effectiveness of corporal punishment techniques were neither reasonable nor appropriate to maintain students' behavior; it was not until the late 1960s that attention was brought to the methods of discipline (Sege et al., 2018). These more rehabilitative efforts were favored by most school administrators through the 1980s until the growth of mandatory disciplinary outcomes for disruptive students became the norm (Blumenfeld-Jones 1996). During this time, removing or providing alternative placement for students allowed for both a fast and effective way to manage troubling behavior in the classroom (Adams, 2000).

Individuals who receive numerous disciplinary actions can experience depression, anxiety, and a sense of ostracization (Walter et al., 2008). Removing a student from their

academic arena can interfere with their educational progress. Specifically, it can result in students missing class and impact their educational progress as well as their academic skills. Additionally, the literature suggests that students who receive numerous disciplinary actions are more likely to drop out of school, face academic difficulties, and engage in criminal-like behavior (DeRidder, 1991; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Hirschfield, 2018; Noam et al., 2001; Skiba & Losen, 2016). These behaviors increase the likelihood that students will face challenges with employment or incarceration (Wald & Losen, 2003).

Removing students from the educational setting is often based on the assumption that removing disruptive or dangerous students will ensure that the general population is safe (Adams, 2000). Educational settings have been noted to manage behavior by using techniques similar to those in criminal justice institutions. This is evident in the use of armed Security Resource Officers (SRO), extensive surveillance, regulations on students' whereabouts, and in some settings, metal detectors (Welch & Payne, 2018). The way that school systems attempt to manage behaviors that pose a risk to the school setting can be referred to as the new disciplinology (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Rocque & Snellings, 2018). The new disciplinology is used to describe this universal change in how society addresses behaviors in risk management with little integration of rehabilitation (Rocque & Snellings, 2018). Connections between new disciplinology and disciplinary actions towards students have been linked to the school-to-prison pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline or the prison track indicates the relationship between harsh disciplinary actions and incarceration (Hirschfield, 2018; Wald & Losen, 2003). Specifically, the more disciplinary actions a student receives, the higher the likelihood of incarceration.

Disciplinary Actions in Texas

There are various types of disciplinary actions that students can receive in the educational setting. In most recent years, various disciplinary actions regarding suspensions and expulsions, specifically, expulsions, ISS, OSS, and DAEP have been utilized. Within most districts, the principal typically has the authority to suspend students; however, the school board can be involved with expulsions.

Suspensions are the exclusion of a student for 10 days or less from school or various activities (Jacob et al., 2016). In terms of ISS, there is typically a staffed room on campus where various strategies are put in place to help students avoid engaging in troubling behavior. In comparison, OSS is the complete removal of students from the campus (Blomberg, 2004). Research supports that ISS does not reduce misconduct and is a gateway to OSS, DAEP, and expulsions (Haley & Watson, 2000; Tomczyk, 2000). Blomberg (2004) suggested that OSS is often misapplied, unfair, and does not eliminate or reduce misconduct. The intentions behind OSS are to address behaviors that are perceived to be disruptive, defiant, and non-compliant. Unfortunately, rather than addressing behaviors, OSS is used to remove the student from the school setting (Skiba et al., 2014). In the 2018-2019 academic year in the state of Texas, 5,574,620 students were enrolled in public schools; of these, 8.76% ($n = 488,096$) of students were placed in ISS and 4.13% of students ($n = 230,448$) received OSS (TEA, 2018a).

Expulsions are the “exclusion of [a] student for a period longer than ten consecutive school days or the equivalent determined” by the school (Jacob et al., 2016, p. 260). Expulsions are considered the harshest and most severe response that an educational system can impose on a student (Gilliam et al., 2016). However, a student is less likely to be expelled from school than to receive OSS (Skiba et al., 2014). In the 2018-2019 academic year, 0.02% ($n = 1,344$) of the

students were expelled in Texas (TEA, 2018a). Expulsions are typically used for more criminal or violent behaviors. Additionally, the use of expulsion occurs in fewer than 1 in 1,000 incidents (Skiba & Rausch, 2006).

Last, DAEP is an educational, self-discipline alternative classroom for students removed from their home campus. Initially, DAEP was used as an alternative placement for students who faced criminal offenses, such as drug-related activities or gun violence (Cortez & Cortez, 2009). However, students who have significant behavioral issues or disciplinary problems are also removed from their home campus and placed in an alternative placement, despite the lack of criminality of their behaviors. In other words, many students being placed and referred to DAEP are not committing criminal offenses, which was the initial intent of the Texas law when it was placed into effect in 1995 (Cortez & Cortez, 2009). In the 2018-2019 academic year in Texas, 1.45% ($n = 80,815$) of students were placed in DAEP (TEA, 2018a).

Although disciplinary actions are used to address law and order concerns and ensure school safety, the referral reasons behind disciplinary actions are not addressing those needs (Skiba et al., 2014). Instead, the typical disciplinary actions result from daily interactions deemed defiant or non-compliant (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Skiba et al., 2014). For example, in Texas, the number of violations related to violent crimes such as alcohol violation, controlled substances/drugs, or fighting/mutual combat represents a minority of the reasons for students receiving disciplinary actions; the vast majority of disciplinary actions were referrals due to a violation of local CoC (TEA, 2018b). For example, during the 2018-2019 academic school year, of the 488,515 students who received ISS, 74.59% ($n = 364,412$) of those were due to violations of the CoC. Outside of the CoC violations, ISS was utilized to discipline students who were found with illegal substances (1.02%; $n = 5,005$) and engaged in fighting (4.73%; $n = 23,129$)

(TEA, 2018b). Similarly, of the 230,448 students who received OSS, 54.96% ($n = 126,655$) were solely due to violations of the CoC, while illicit drugs and fighting were substantially less frequent reasons (TEA, 2018b).

Given these patterns, it is important to consider the role of the CoC in school districts in determining students' disciplinary actions. Legally, the purpose of school policy is to maintain law and order (Walsh et al., 2014). School policies are located in the respective district's student handbook, and on an annual basis, most districts require both parents and students to sign an official document or form indicating they have received a copy of the handbook. The Texas Education Code (2004) requires that a district adopts a school policy that will specify the standards for student behavior and outline the types of behavior that constitute misbehavior in the school setting (Walsh et al., 2014). The policy that outlines these rules and regulations is the CoC (Jacob et al., 2016). In addition to providing standards and expected behaviors, it also provides a protocol of consequences for breaking these standards. CoC are understood as an overarching influence over various aspects of the school setting, such as the involvement of teachers, students, and parents (Walsh et al., 2014).

Although there are numerous contributing factors, one of interest is the standards or policies used to enforce discipline within the education system through the CoC. Overall, there is limited research on the impact of policy and disciplinary actions, and the current study examined the language of school policy and associated disciplinary actions.

Minority Students and Disciplinary Actions

Associated Patterns of Ethnicity and Race

Race and ethnicity are commonly used interchangeably. However, there are noted differences and similarities between the two. Race describes more phenotypical traits such as

skin tone, eye shape, and hair type. Within the construct of race, Simson (2013) further elaborated other characteristics such as accents, religion, and education are considered other performative qualities classified within a race. Whereas ethnicity can be referred to as more cultural traits that are taught and learned. Although race and ethnicity are different, it is worth noting that there is overlap between the two. For example, an individual who looks phenotypically Black (skin color, hair texture) can be categorized as Black; however, culturally, they may identify with Afro-Latin cultural identity. The individual in this example would be categorized as African American or Black within a Texas school district.

Given these inconsistencies, it is essential to understand that typically within the educational setting, students' ethnicities are classified based upon their racial qualities rather than their ethnic/cultural identities. Regarding ethnicity classification in Texas, the TEA uses ethnic groups: White, African American, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Asian Americans. TEA collects data from public school districts based on various classifications. Although these are the labels used, they fail to capture the intricacies of each ethnic group. The following section further defines each group and identity along with stereotypical assumptions.

European, Anglo, or German descent identities fall under the label of White (Bhopal & Donaldson, 1998). Students who identify as White or whose presentation aligns with the appearance of being White have a lower likelihood of receiving disciplinary action (Skiba & Losen, 2016). The behaviors often exhibited by a White student are perceived as the norm or standard for behaviors. Within the literature, White students are not facing the same trends of disproportionality in disciplinary actions as other ethnic groups. Given these trends, White students are often used to compare patterns of disciplinary actions within the literature.

For those of African descent (e.g., African, African Caribbean, African American), the most appropriate identification label is Black, which does not indicate the specific culture of the individual but rather captures the classification of those that identify with ethnic groups that are from African ancestors (Agyemang et al., 2005). Students who identify themselves as part of Hispanic and Latin countries and Spanish culture fall into the category of Latinx, with “x” to respect gender identification (de Onís, 2017; Moreno & Segura-Herrera, 2014). However, TEA uses the label of Hispanic/Latino in their data.

Asian Americans ethnicities are comprised as people from far East Asia, Southeast Asia, or of Indian descent. TEA and researchers usually combine sub-Asian cultures under Asian or Asian American (Kodama & Ebreo, 2009). Last, American Indian or Alaska Native Population can be represented by Native American, Guam, Samoa, and other Pacific Island descent (Hammond et al., 2004). Because of small population representation and geographical concentration, there is little research on the relationship between disciplinary actions with those of American Indian and Alaska Native populations. However, American Indian and Alaskan Natives are overrepresented in suspensions (Whitford & Levine-Donnerstein, 2014).

Research suggests that Asian and White students are underrepresented in disciplinary actions, and Asian American students are less likely to receive disciplinary actions than their White counterparts. There is a common misconception that Asian students are the “Model Minority” student. Specifically, Asian students are high achievers academically and behaviorally described as quiet students (Kiang et al., 2016). When further investigating the differences from the regional location of Asian Americans compared to those that identify as South Asian Americans, there were variations in the disciplinary actions. South Asian students were more likely to be suspended than their other Asian and White counterparts (Ruck & Wortley, 2002).

These trends can result from students' resemblance and association with those of color rather than their affiliation with the "Model Minority" notion. Given the contradictory data within the Asian community, this group was not included in the study.

The literature suggests that students who identify with racial traits as Black or Latinx are more likely to receive disciplinary actions. As mentioned above, the patterns of disciplinary actions for those that identify as Asian, American Indian, and Alaskan Natives do not have an explicitly clear pattern of disciplinary actions as those from Black and Latinx groups. Given these trends, the remainder of the chapter discusses trends and concepts for Black and Latinx students.

The Discipline Gap

Similar to the national trends, Black and Latinx students are at higher risk of receiving disciplinary actions in Texas (George, 2015; Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Additionally, students of color are being disciplined at a disproportionate rate to their population representation in Texas compared to their White counterparts (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). In the 2017-2018 academic year in Texas Independent School Districts, Black students represented 61% of disciplinary actions, in stark comparison to their 12.1% representation of the student population. Black students are more likely to be expelled and suspended than any other ethnic group, even though they are not more likely to engage in disruptive or dangerous behavior than their White counterparts (Fabelo et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2002). Similarly, Latinx students are more likely to receive harsher punishment than students who identify as White (Skiba et al., 2002). The likelihood of Latinx students receiving disciplinary actions increases into secondary school (Skiba & Losen, 2016).

As mentioned above, the trends of disciplinary action can be harmful to students of color. It is important to consider the role of ethnic identity and the power imbalance embedded within

the educational system through the lens of multicultural social reconstruction and CRT frameworks, respectively. For each ethnicity, various race-associated assumptions can influence one's perception and interaction with an individual from a social cognitive perspective. The following section further provides support and explanation utilizing these theoretical frameworks.

Multicultural Social Reconstruction and CRT Within Education

Theodore Brameld proposed social reconstruction in response to education changes resulting from World War II (Thomas, 1999). During this time, marginalized groups (i.e., social-economic status) were not receiving appropriate services and consideration within the school setting (Thomas, 1999). Brameld's approach attempted to address the cultural needs of students (Thomas, 1999). Brameld was inspired by previous psychologists and philosophers (e.g., William Stanley, John Dewey, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx) to recognize and integrate valuable factors within the social reconstruction framework (Thomas, 1999). From Dewey and Stanley, Brameld integrated utopianism, the concept that an ideal society would fulfill one's needs. Brameld believed systematic oppression did not allow all students to meet their needs in the academic setting (Reed & Davis, 1999). Once these needs were met, student achievement and behavior began to change in which students engaged in more adaptive and appropriate behaviors (Thomas, 1999). Social reconstruction focused more on social-economic disadvantages within American society, such as providing food and childcare for parents. However, one of the weaknesses of Brameld's model of social reconstructionism is the lack of focus on the barriers those from marginalized groups of ethnicities face (Martin & Van Gunten, 2002).

Multicultural social reconstructionism addresses various cultural identities found within the educational setting (Martin & Van Gunten, 2002). The approach considers “how the production of knowledge must be extended to create pedagogical strategies that are inclusive of voices and histories of ethnically marginalized groups in American society” (Martin & Van Gunten, 2002, p. 45). Specifically, the systemic oppression of segregation, lack of appropriate services, and other biases that students from marginalized groups may face have led to negative outcomes. The multicultural social reconstruction approach addresses these systematic historical oppressions of multiple groups, while CRT addresses the comparison and organic power imbalance for students of color.

CRT is a framework that focuses on the power imbalance between dominant group norms and those of marginalized groups that are embedded within the American society and institution (Brown & Di Tillio, 2013; Simson, 2013). CRT further suggests that power imbalances are fundamental to the structure of society (Anyon et al., 2018). American societies are “organized along racial lines, structured in ways that promote inequality and impose privileged norms of behavior on racial groups” (Anyon et al., 2018, p. 393). CRT framework can be broken down into four major tenets and assumptions; race is a social construct, racism is often found within societies, historical and social context is crucial to understand issues involving race, and the need to understand the realities of racial discrimination to aid in the problems that are created as a result (Simson, 2013).

Within the CRT framework, it is assumed that “institutional policies and resulting practices favor, support, and benefit one racial group over all others” (Anyon et al., 2018, p. 393). The theory brings awareness of the conscious and unconscious comparisons made in the school setting regarding students of color. As it relates to disciplinary actions, students of color

are being compared to their White counterparts and being compared to previous representations or experience an individual has with a group of people. Historically, many school policies and social expectations have been placed to benefit the White majority racial group. These practices have ultimately resulted in inequality in marginalized groups, resulting in disparities in academics and behavioral functioning. For example, certain groups are more likely to experience disciplinary actions due to school personnel using “prejudicial judgment in interpreting minority” students (Tajalli & Garba, 2014, p. 629). George (2015) further argued that individuals may perceive behaviors of students of color as criminal or needing correction. This current study explored these assumptions further to address assumptions and stereotypes that Black and Latinx are likely to experience within the educational setting.

Associated Assumptions of Ethnicities and Race Within the Educational Setting

Stereotypes are biased social judgments about an individual centered on observable traits. Stereotypes allow these traits and characteristics to categorize people into groups based on physical appearance and behaviors (Wheeler & Fiske, 2005). Through these categorizations, stereotypes can often become a set of expectations or expected behaviors associated with each group. For the purpose of this study, race-associated stereotypes were further explored.

As mentioned above, CRT suggests that race is a social construct and there can be associated power imbalances found within society that result in racism (Simson, 2013). Additionally, the patterns of racism are related through a historical context where the majority group or White racial group is favored. Minoritized racial groups have endured negative attributions and systemic oppression as a result. The literature has demonstrated a historical pattern in which negative characteristics are commonly associated with Black and Latinx people. For Black people, this can include but is not limited to the colonization of African people,

periods of enslavement, and trans-Atlantic trafficking (Joseph-Salisbury & Connelly, 2018; Welch, 2007). Those from Latin descent have faced discrimination dating back to the Mexican American War, forced deportations dated to 1920, and segregation within the educational setting (Ryabov & Van Hook, 2007). Although these events and historical context are different, they are embedded in the idea that the majority group has superiority over another group to perpetuate these ideas. In other words, there was a power indifference between the majority group, often those that identify as White, compared to the minority group, which can include Black and Latinx people. Alongside these events, common negative misconceptions of Black and Latinx group were associated to maintain the power imbalances that were associated (Simson, 2013). Many of these misconceptions lead to discrimination for these groups. Furthermore, discrimination embedded into American history has shaped attitudes and perceptions that are parallel with power imbalances commensurate to the historical events (Kent & Jacobs, 2005; Simson, 2013).

Due to these prejudices and discrimination mentioned above, those from minoritized racial groups are often a threat due to these historical contexts (Kent & Jacobs, 2005). The minority threat theoretical framework identifies a link between a threat posed by minority groups and the desire to create law and order to address that threat (Kent & Jacobs, 2005). Research suggests that these decisions are based on a group's perceived threat rather than an isolated individual. Additionally, there are race-specific assumptions that are made for the Black and Latinx community.

There are notions of negative attribution associated with "Blackness." Negative traits that have been associated with Black people are not limited but include disruptive, disobedient, active, and aggressive, with some positive traits such as sociable and athletic (Chang & Demyan,

2007). Many of these negative stereotypes are reinforced through the media portrayal of Black people. These portrayals include policing Black people and criminalizing Black behaviors (i.e., thugs, poor, loud, angry; Joseph-Salisbury & Connelly, 2018). Similarly, race-associated stereotypes also impact the Latinx community. The race-associated stereotypes can be associated with the following characteristics: impoverished, oppositional, violent, lazy, and lower performing academically (Lopez, 2013; Morris, 2005; Priest et al., 2018). Additionally, Latinx groups are targets of xenophobia or the fear of immigrants and negative association based upon accents in their language (Douglas & Sáenz, 2013; Lockwood & Cuevas, 2020; Ryabov & Van Hook, 2007). Comparatively, those from the White community are seen as less problematic and are perceived as the standard of behavior (Morris, 2005).

In the educational setting, students of color are more likely to face disciplinary actions based on these negative race-associated behaviors and characteristics that correspond with Black and Latinx culture. The associated traits extended beyond skin tone but can include the following: voice tone, volume at which one speaks, language used (Ebonics, accent), clothing (i.e., work boots, bandannas, overly baggy clothing, large jewelry, chains), and hairstyle (i.e., dreadlocks, box braids, hair extension/weave, natural hair; Skiba et al., 2011; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007; Todd et al., 2016). Black and Latinx students are associated with stereotypes such as but not limited to lower expectations of academic performance, disruptive, hostile, dangerous, aggressive, and troubled (Chang & Demyan, 2007; Devine, 1989; Gilliam et al., 2016; Morris, 2005; Priest et al., 2018; Skiba et al., 2011). For Black students, it is not uncommon to experience a higher incidence of cultural miscommunication. These incidences can be based on similar behaviors mentioned above, such as tone of voice, type of language used (i.e., Ebonics), and excessive noise (Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2019; Skiba et al., 2002). Similarly, Latinx students

may also experience elevated experiences of bias based upon language characteristics such as accents (Morris, 2005). Comparatively, White students are seen as less problematic, expected academic performance, and are perceived as the standard of behavior (Morris, 2005).

Furthermore, White students' behaviors can be seen as "normal," and anything that deviates from "normal" as problematic (Morris, 2005).

In addition to attribution of race-associated stereotypes, the behavioral confirmation theory states that a certain expectation alters how one behaves towards another. Within the school setting, a teacher expects that a specific student is "trouble" based upon a stereotype; thus, that teacher will interact with the student in a congruent manner with that belief (Cameron & Sheppard, 2006). The teacher may look for behaviors that confirm their belief or avoid the student entirely. Cameron and Sheppard (2006) found that school staff will distance themselves from students perceived as challenging or disruptive. This negative interaction can lead the student to engage in disruptive behaviors due to being ignored or having negative interactions (Cameron & Sheppard, 2006). Although this can be the case, it is worth noting that not all negative/disruptive behaviors result from this phenomenon.

Given the negative stereotypes for Black and Latinx, these students are more likely to receive disciplinary actions than their White counterparts. Although there are associated stereotypes, it is essential to understand why these biases and prejudices occur and consider how schemas and attitude formation arise.

Cognition of Bias and Stereotypes

The following section aims to further examine the processes that contribute to the trends of the discipline gap through a social cognitive perspective and the impact that stereotypes have within the classroom. The cognitive processes utilize existing schemas and prior experiences to

influence how one interprets their environment. However, it is important to note one's environment influences prior experiences and schemas. In other words, the cognitive processes do not occur linearly but rather operate in a bidirectional manner. The following section further specifies and provide application on the role of cognition as it relates to biases.

Schema can be described as a memory framework related to the expectations of a situation or person and can be influenced by previous experiences, emotions, and the availability of these constructs (Ashcraft & Radvansky, 2014; Fiske, 2018). There are four main schemas: person schema, self schema, role schema, and event schema (Fiske, 2018). For the purpose of this study, the types of schemas of focus were person, role, and event. Person schemas are based on expectations about other people and can also be based on stereotypes (Fiske, 2018). While role schemas are the expected behaviors in social situations, and event schema is based upon a script of expectations in a social institution, such as a classroom setting (Fiske, 2018).

Memories, emotion congruency, and attitudes lead to an availability heuristic, which allows one to access a schema with speed and accuracy (Ashcraft & Radvansky, 2014). The specific memories retrieved are highly related to emotional content. When the memory and current mood are congruent, the memory is retrieved more quickly and automatically, strengthening the ability to recall that specific piece of information (Wheeler & Fiske, 2005). Memories often drive one's endogenous attention to a specific stimulus based upon a schema through top-down processing.

As individuals perceive their environment and recall prior experiences, they can process and compare information within working memory (Ashcraft & Radvansky, 2014). Each time one retrieves a memory, it is brought into working memory and is altered by one's current mood and experiences (Ashcraft & Radvansky, 2014). This combination can lead to the development of

implicit (an automatic and spontaneous response) and explicit biases (controlled response; Judd et al., 1991; Wheeler & Fiske, 2005). Given this process, memory and related biases influence the way that one behaves or interacts with others in their environment.

The social cognitive lens can be applied to the classroom setting with students and a teacher. Before the teacher enters the classroom, they already have schemas about how a classroom should operate and race-associated stereotypes based upon previous experiences and knowledge. Once the teacher is in the classroom, they perceptually experience their environment through top-down processing and bottom-up processing with the former being influenced by memory processes. Memory processes guide endogenous attention specifically to stimuli that confirm those previous experiences. This can activate schema resulting in activation of ideas such as how a student should behave and how a classroom should operate. This multi-layered process allows the teacher to understand the classroom dynamic and guides how the teacher interacts within the environment. It is worth noting that this process is automatic and constantly evolving, resulting in negative or positive implicit biases.

If a student engages in behavior inconsistent with a school personnel's event schema, it can lead to an ambivalent perception of the behavior. Fenning and Rose (2007) suggested that in behaviors considered ambiguous, a teacher can rely heavily on their event schemas to make sense of their environment. They are more likely to have their endogenous attention drawn to stimuli that confirm those schemas.

In terms of Black and Latinx students, the discipline gap may be based upon those negative stereotypes of trouble or disruption. Gilliam et al. (2016) conducted an eye-tracking study to determine the duration and specific students that a teacher attended to in a video of a classroom with children. The researchers instructed the teachers to press a key when they saw a

problem behavior and specifically used the word “disruptive.” However, none engaged in any problem behavior. The study found that teachers’ attention was drawn to the Black male students more frequently and for a longer duration (Gilliam et al., 2016). The findings demonstrate how one’s attention can direct endogenous attention to certain stimuli in the environment to confirm memories and expectations.

As it relates to emotions, it is important to understand how these negative stereotypes may manifest outside of sociocultural context but rather in the lens of stress and high cognitive loads. “Situation or context is not simply a backdrop for the implementing agent’s sense-making, but a constituting element in that process” (Spillane et al., 2002, p. 389). Teachers are under immense stress in the classroom. Not only are teachers implementing a lesson plan, but they are also attending to the needs and behaviors of students (Feldon, 2007). The immense stress of teaching can result in unconscious biases occurring due to the high cognitive load teachers already have. As cognitive load increases, working memory resources decrease, which leads to a stronger reliance on schemas, biases, and heuristics.

The literature supports various theoretical frameworks that can contribute to and explain the discipline gap. Multicultural reconstruction provides a framework that can be utilized to support the needs of students of color (Martin & Van Gunten, 2002). CRT provides structure to understand the systemic oppression of prejudice that lends itself to race-associated stereotypes (Brown & Di Tillio, 2013; Simson, 2013). A social cognitive perspective demonstrates how race-associated stereotypes can result in misperceptions of behavior, ultimately harming students of color (Skiba et al., 2011). Specifically, this harm can increase the likelihood for Black and Latinx students to receive disciplinary actions especially in the high cognitive demand context of teaching (Feldon, 2007).

Codes of Conduct and Disciplinary Actions

Stereotypes and schemas play a critical role in understanding the discipline gap for Black and Latinx students, specifically how expected behaviors and biases can draw attention to various students within the classroom. Understanding the rules or policies typically referenced when a student receives a disciplinary action is crucial to understand the discipline gap. These overarching expectations are referred to as the CoC. The Texas Education Code (2004) requires that a district adopts a CoC that will specify the standards for students' behavior and outline the types of behaviors constituted as misbehavior in the school setting (Walsh et al., 2014).

Literature has provided data supporting the notion that school policy relates to school climate, as defined as norms, values, and expectations that support students and teachers (Cohen et al., 2009; Voight & Nation, 2016). It is essential to investigate the language used within these policies and how they can elicit specific biases through race-associated stereotypes and punitive language within policies. It is worth noting that there is limited research on the connection between CoC and disciplinary actions; however, other various theoretical frameworks can provide support and insight into this relationship (Fenning & Rose, 2007).

Stereotypical Language Within Codes of Conduct

As mentioned above, the social cognitive processes of stereotypes can include the various types of schemas (i.e., role, event, person), memories, endogenous attention, and working memory (Fiske, 2018). Through this framework, one can provide insight into the manifestation of implicit biases within the educational setting. The language used in policies can be considered ambiguous or directed towards certain racial groups regarding a person or role schema. The term "classroom disruption" does not indicate an exact behavior to reference and allows for more interpretation of these policies based on schemas (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Additionally, the

word disruptive has been associated with Black and Latinx stereotypes, which can be seen as a schema or expectation. Similarly, “aggressive,” “loud,” “threat,” and “suspicious” are words that are often associated with racial stereotypes and are used within CoC (Devine et al., 2012; Gilliam et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2011). As mentioned above, Gilliam et al.’s (2016) study indicated one’s attention could be altered based on priming or using a word to direct one’s attention to confirm that schema or expectation. These processes can also be seen within the dress code. Aghasaleh (2018) described that policies and dress codes are centered upon taboos or expectations of how students behave and dress. These taboos are often associated with minoritized groups and their perception as a threat or as failing to meet expected norms. Specifically, these behaviors, such as wearing baggy clothes or golden chains or having distracting hairstyles, are associated with Black and Latinx cultures.

Given the ambiguity and race-associated language used within CoC, there should be a consideration to the impact on students within the academic setting. The language used in CoC can guide and influence schemas and stereotypes that school personnel unconsciously reference, which then impacts the student’s experiences. Overall, the investigation of the language related to stereotypes can be valuable in understanding the discipline gap for Black and Latinx students.

Punitive Language in Codes of Conduct

In addition to investigating the stereotypical language used in CoC, it can be beneficial to examine the impact of punitive language within the CoC as it relates to the discipline gap. The American Psychological Association (APA) created a task force investigating the efficacy of the school policies, specifically zero-tolerance policies. The nature of the zero-tolerance policy and the history of disciplinary actions has reinforced the concept of controlling behavior through punitive measures. Zero-tolerance policies were developed to address school safety concerns

such as drugs and gun violence and was signed through the Clinton Administration as part of the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (Skiba, 2000). The act mandated that schools remove students in possession of a weapon, in addition to a referral to the criminal justice system (Skiba, 2000). The use of zero-tolerance policies has expanded to control behavior that does not threaten school safety (Skiba, 2000). For example, these policies extended beyond gun and drug safety and include behavioral disruptions, such as fighting, alcohol, and swearing.

The standards found within CoC are often based upon norms and expectations that correspond with the majority or White culture based upon an event schema. Students who are perceived as not meeting that norm or expectation are often described as dangerous or troublesome (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Casella (2003) suggested that students of color are perceived as not fitting into the norms or expected behaviors. Many of these perceptions lend themselves to the race-associated stereotypes for Black and Latinx students. They are often already perceived as a threat, as suggested by the minority threat theoretical framework (Kent & Jacobs, 2005). Given the nature of the perceived threat, one way of managing these behaviors is by removing the student from the public, which follows a similar ideology of the criminal justice system, also known as new disciplinology (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Rocque & Snellings, 2018). As mentioned above, harsh punishment does not manage or rehabilitate the behaviors but instead increases the likelihood of students being incarcerated. APA Task Force for Zero Tolerance Policies (2008) found that punitive policies remove students from school rather than provide constructive interventions to reduce misconduct or restorative practices. Research recommends school districts focus on more positively driven school policies to effectively support students and maintain law and order in the school setting, rather than engaging in punitive disciplinary actions that remove students (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008;

Cohen et al., 2009; Devine et al., 2012; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Lassen et al., 2006).

The Present Study

Within the past 25 years, the literature has supported the increased likelihood that Black and Latinx students will receive a disciplinary action greater than their White counterparts (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Skiba et al., 2002; Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Students of color are more likely to face harsher punishment for their behaviors despite the actual magnitude of the displayed negative behaviors. When comparing the number of Black and Latinx students separately, the proportion of students who receive disciplinary actions is greater than their enrollment in school settings, referred to as the discipline gap (Fenning & Rose, 2007; George, 2015; Gilliam et al., 2016). Additionally, these trends are found to occur in Texas school districts (Booker & Mitchell, 2014). The CoC outline appropriate and inappropriate behavior within the school setting (Walsh et al., 2014). The CoC further indicates the appropriate steps in response to a student not conforming to the expectations of the policies through the implementation of ISS, OSS, and DAEP.

Given the pattern of disciplinary actions toward minority students, it is essential to evaluate the role of Codes of Conduct. Specifically, it is necessary to determine the extent to which language in the CoC is associated with race-associated stereotypes, which could thereby lead to discriminatory actions that remove students from the educational setting. For behaviors, such as the zero-tolerance policy (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). The patterns of Black and Latinx students receiving more disciplinary actions can be evaluated using a social cognitive lens that employs stereotypes and schemas. The social-cognitive framework also provides

support into the value of evaluating the CoC and how they target students of color and the use of punitive languages within CoC.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between CoC and the discipline gap. Specifically, this study examined (a) does a discipline gap exist within the data; (b) whether or not stereotypical language in CoC (i.e., appearance, identity, and behavior-based language) and other underlying cognitive processes (i.e., motivation and tone of language) relates to the disproportionality of disciplinary action. Specifically, the study addressed the following questions with the associated hypotheses:

Research Question 1: Is there a discipline gap amongst Black, Latinx, and White students?

Hypothesis 1: A discipline gap will exist between minoritized groups (Black and Latinx students) compared to their White peers within Texas Independent School Districts.

Research Question 2: Does the use of language related to identity predict a discipline gap?

Hypothesis 2: Identity-based language will have positive impact on the discipline gap within the sample.

Research Question 3: Does the use of language emphasizing criminal behavior, daily disruptive behavior, and/or appearance-based behavior predict a discipline gap?

Hypothesis 3: The language that relates to criminal behavior, daily disruptive behaviors and appearance will have a positive impact on the discipline gap.

Research Question 4: Does the tone of language used in COC predict the discipline gap?

Hypothesis 4: The tone or summary variables within the CoC will vary in the impact on the discipline gap. The use of analytic, clout, and emotional tone linguistic patterns will

positively impact the discipline gap, whereas authenticity patterns of language will negatively impact the discipline gap.

Research Question 5: Does the use of motivational language predict the discipline gap?

Hypothesis 5: The impact of motivation-based language will vary. The linguistic patterns that are associated with positive behavior supports (reward and achievement) will have a negative impact on the discipline gap. In contrast, linguistic patterns of more punitive actions (risk, power, and affiliation) will have positive impact on the discipline gap.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between the type of language used in Texas Independent School Districts' CoC and the disproportionality of Black and Latinx students receiving disciplinary actions, also known as the discipline gap. The present study examined the relationship between the language of CoC and the number of disciplinary actions in Texas Independent School Districts by asking the following questions:

1. Is there a discipline gap amongst Black, Latinx, and White students?
2. Does the use of language related to identity predict a discipline gap?
3. Does the use of language emphasizing criminal behavior, daily disruptive behavior, and/or appearance-based behavior predict a discipline gap?
4. Does the tone of language used in COC predict the discipline gap?
5. Does the use of motivational language predict the discipline gap?

Data and Data Processing

Variables

The predictor variables were scores generated based on the specific language used in the CoC policies, as measured by linguistic analysis software, and the racial/ethnic proportions of the district. The criterion variables were of the disciplinary actions that Black Latinx students receive. The following section further describes each variable, how it was measured, and relevant psychometrics.

Data Selection

Initially, a sample of 400 Texas Independent School Districts were selected. As of August 2014, TEA oversees 1,247 school districts. The pool of schools included both public and open-enrollment charter schools. A random stratified sampling method was utilized to select school districts. The stratifications consisted of the 20 Education Service Center (ESC) regions that are within the state of Texas. Within each region, corresponding districts were collected, organized in alphabetical order, and assigned numbers starting with 1. A random number generator selected 20 districts from each region for a total of 400 districts.

The data consisted of the collection of CoC and disciplinary actions from TEA. Specifically, CoC and disciplinary action data from 2017-2018 were previously collected through online searches of each school district's website. It was anticipated that not all school districts would reach the final sample due to inaccessibility or unavailability of the district's policy online or failure to update school policies appropriately. School districts with policies before the 2014-2015 academic year did not make the final sample. Last, school districts that have campus-specific policies rather than district-wide policies were omitted. Thus, the criteria for school policies were that they be available online, be published since 2014-2015, and be a district-wide policy. Based on these criteria, the final sample consisted of 319 school districts.

Data and Data Pre-Processing

Language

The LIWC2015 was utilized to investigate the language of CoC. The LIWC2015 software evaluates written language through the use of identifying target words within a text, that correspond with an internal dictionary. A target word can be defined as a word that the software flags or identifies as having an underlying cognitive meaning. The LIWC2015 relies on the

internal dictionary containing 6,400 words, stem words, and select emoticons. The software reads one target word at a time and searches the dictionary for a match. Then, it provides a numeric weight to represent the usage of the category of words. The LIWC2015 summary variables that were utilized in the current study are indicated as percentages (Pennebaker, Booth et al., 2015). Each category is composed of a list of dictionary words that define a specific scale. With each dictionary entry, additional word categories or sub-dictionaries allow for similar word meanings to be filtered into the categories. These categories are then filtered or associated with a corresponding psychological group (Pennebaker, Booth et al., 2015).

The variables to measure the research questions pertain to four different categories: identity-based language, behavior and appearance behavior, tone of language, and motivation of language. The study included indices from the LIWC2015 as well as a researcher generated dictionary, School Policy and Minority Student Experiences - Disciplinary Actions (SPMSE-DA). Table 1 provides descriptions, composites of language and their respective dictionary. Further psychometric properties for each dictionary are discussed below.

Table 1*Dictionaries, Variable Information, and Internal Reliability*

Composites of Language	Descriptions	Dictionary
Identity-Based Language	Identity-based language is used to evaluate language often associated with race/ethnicity and gender-oriented language.	
Race/Ethnicity	Evaluate language that is associated with race/ethnicity.	SPMSE-DA
Female	Evaluate words that are often associated with feminine language.	LIWC 2015
Male	Evaluate words that are often associated with masculine language.	LIWC2015
Behavior and Appearance	Behavior and appearance-based language focus on more observable qualities of a student, such as their appearance and behaviors.	
Criminal Behaviors	Evaluates language associated with criminal behavior, such as fighting	SPMSE-DA
Disruptive Behaviors	Evaluate language that is considered behaviors that occur daily that are disruptive but do not harm others.	SPMSE-DA
Appearance	Evaluate language associated with outward appearances, such as dress and hair.	SPMSE-DA
Summary Variables	Evaluate overall linguistic patterns across multiple categories of linguistic characteristics	
Analytic	Evaluates the use of formal, logical language. High scores indicate formal thinking; low scores are informal.	LIWC2015
Clout	Evaluates the level of confidence and expertise utilized. High numbers indicate higher levels of expertise. Lower numbers indicate more tentative or anxious styles.	LIWC2015

Composites of Language	Descriptions	Dictionary
Emotional Tone	Evaluates the emotional valence of language used. Higher numbers indicate a more positive affective tone; low numbers are negative affective tone.	LIWC2015
Authentic	Evaluates the level of disclosure and honesty indicated by language usage. High numbers suggest more honest and personal language, whereas lower numbers are more guarded or distant.	LIWC2015
Motivational Language	Overarching dimensions that are to capture needs, motives, and entities.	
Risk	Focuses on danger and things to avoid	LIWC2015
Reward	Focuses on reward, incentives, and positive goals.	LIWC2015
Power	References status or social hierarchies	LIWC2015
Achievement	References success and/or failure	LIWC2015
Affiliation	References to others and need to connect with others	LIWC2015

Note. Data on LIWC2015 are from the Psychometric Manual (Pennebaker, Booth et al., 2015).

Dictionaries from the LIWC. To measure various aspects of language such as the tone and motivational aspects of CoC, an already established dictionary was used. It is worth noting that throughout this paper, tone-based language refers to the summary variable categories (clout, analytic, authenticity, and emotional tone). The use of more positive driven school policies that support students is more likely to benefit students (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Cohen et al. 2009; Devine et al., 2012; Fenning & Rose, 2007). While the use of more punitive and harsh punishments can be more harmful to students (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Rocque & Snelling, 2018). The four summary variables as well as motivational variables were used to measure how school policy reflected an emphasis on positive versus punitive school discipline.

It is essential to recognize the development of the LIWC2015 to appreciate and understand the psychometrics of the measure. It is worth noting that with the rigorous development of the LIWC2015, reliability and validity should not be assessed based on the usual standards of a standardized questionnaire (Pennebaker, Boyd et al., 2015; Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). The LIWC2015 is not a questionnaire measuring a latent construct but rather an algorithm that computes a number to measure various cognitive qualities to written language (Pennebaker, Boyd et al., 2015; Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). Furthermore, the reliability and validity statistics are lower than traditional self-report questionnaires and typical of this type of assessment (Pennebaker, Booth et al., 2015).

Reliability was measured by the developers who calculated the number of times a target word was used across a group of text and then calculated the intercorrelation of the word use. This process was conducted by measuring each word as a percentage of total words per text, and then evaluating each word as an item to produce Cronbach's alpha (Pennebaker, Booth et al.,

2015). Both the uncorrected and corrected alphas are available (Pennebaker, Booth et al., 2015). For this study, the corrected alphas provide a more accurate estimation of the actual internal consistency of each category.

To assess validity, a group of judges assessed their own general moods about each word through a questionnaire and had the judges then wrote an essay with the specific category as the topic to confirm the type of language. For example, participants would rate the words of anger and write an essay about anger before analyzing the words used. Through this process, the words within the dictionary ensure that the appropriate words correspond with the specific cognitive categories.

Dictionaries from the SPMSE-DA. To measure stereotypical language, the researcher created a dictionary based upon language and words associated with race-associated stereotypes for Black and Latinx titled SPMSE (Carrillo, et al., 2021). The dictionary was created to evaluate the experience of minoritized groups within school policy. The dictionary underwent the following steps: word collection, judge rating, and candidate word list generation. The judges of the SPSME dictionary consisted of a panel of school psychology graduate students in the southwestern portion of the United States. For the purpose of this study, the dictionary was further modified and underwent appropriate psychometric refinement to correspond with more race-associated language that is often associated with disciplinary actions. Given the modification, the dictionary used was titled SPMSE-DA. This process is further discussed below within the procedures section.

Creation and Modification of the SPMSE-DA Dictionary. The newly created dictionary measured new constructs that were not already a part of the LIWC2015 dictionary. As mentioned above, the psychometrics of the LIWC2015 do not always fall under the same criteria or

expectations as other measures (Pennebaker, Boyd et al., 2015; Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). The SPMSE dictionary underwent refinement and steps that address the psychometric integrity of the dictionary.

In terms of the refinement phase of the dictionary, the words within the original SPMSE dictionary (Carrillo et al., 2021) were modified to address areas of race-associated stereotypes that are often associated with disciplinary action. The dictionary was evaluated and modified in terms of adding relevant words and removing irrelevant words as recommended by Tausczik and Pennebaker (2010). The dictionary further measured the following: racial/ethnic identity, appearance/dress, criminal behavior, daily disruptive behaviors, words of legality, and citizenship. The words within the SPMSE were then judged by based on the relationship to each of those constructs, which is also referred to as a context-free process to address concerns with validity (Donohue et al., 2014; Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010).

Each target word was modified to capture the appropriate derivative of the same word measured within the CoC. This step is crucial to ensure that the LIWC2015 identifies each targeted word, but also the words were formulated as indicated within the LIWC2015 psychometric manual (Pennebaker, Booth et al., 2015). For example, the word Volume was modified to Volum* to ensure that derivatives of the word volume (i.e., Volumes, and Volume) were identified and correspond with the target word of Volume. Next, the words were categorized into summary variables by common themes. The following are the indicated themes and summary groups with the dictionary: Citizenship, Appearance, Race/Ethnicity, Criminal Behaviors, Disruptive Behaviors, and Systematic/Legalistic based words.

Last, the SPMSE-DA dictionary was refined based upon psychometric properties, such as inter-item reliability. As mentioned above, there were seven different scales; however, after

refinement, the final study used five scales (see Table 2). The SPMSE-DA dictionary was uploaded into the LIWC2015 software system and then used to analyze the collected CoCs.

Reliability for SPME-DA. As recommended within the LIWC2015 Psychometric Manual (Pennebaker, Booth et al., 2015), the researcher followed the prescribed steps to determine internal reliability within each scale. Each word within the scale was entered as an item to complete a Cronbach's alpha calculation (see Table 2). The final dictionary can also be referenced in Appendix A.

Initially, seven different scales were created to measure language that pertained to Appearance, Citizenship, Race/Ethnicity, Criminal Behaviors, Daily Disruptive Behaviors, and Legalistic Words. The seven scales were created as a dictionary and then used to analyze the collected CoC. During this process some words were removed from the dictionary because they were not found within the policies. Based upon Pennebaker, Booth et al. (2015), the internal reliability scales should not be interpreted like traditional scales due to the ambiguous nature of language. Furthermore, they indicated that alphas ranging from 0.3 to 0.6 are appropriate for the LIWC Dictionaries (Pennebaker, Booth et al., 2015). As a result, the Legalistic Word ($\alpha = -.105$) scales were removed due to the lack of reliability. Although the Citizenship Scale ($\alpha = .506$) did demonstrate appropriate reliability, it was removed for theoretical reasons. Specifically, the words within the Race/Ethnicity Scale and Citizenship Scale significantly overlapped in terms of words and concepts. A single revised Race/Ethnicity Scale was utilized to more accurately reflect the relevant study concept. The final scales within the sample are as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2*Initial Internal Reliability for the SPSME-DA*

Scale	No. Words	Cronbach's Alpha
Appearance*	25	.729
Citizenship	6	.506
Race/Ethnicity*	7	.630
Criminal Behaviors*	9	.543
Daily Disruptive Behaviors*	14	.521
Legalistic Words	10	-.105

*Note. Used within the final dictionary

Procedures for Analyzing CoC Using the LIWC2015. The next phase was to convert the school policy files to Microsoft Word documents using Adobe software. As the current study focused on the CoC, all other content was removed. The documents were uploaded into the LIWC2015 to analyze the language. The software created a data output sheet that consists of 90 variables. The output was in a Microsoft Excel file with the variables for each district. The data output included: the school district, word count, the four summary language variables, three general descriptors categories, 21 standard linguistic dimensions, 41 word categories tapping psychological constructs, six personal concern categories, five informal language markers, and twelve punctuation categories (Pennebaker, Boyd et al., 2015). The SPMSE-DA dictionary created was also added to the LIWC software and included in the Microsoft Excel file. Finally, the Microsoft Excel sheet file was consolidated to only the variables of interest. Specifically, disciplinary data, community type, general population, and racial/ethnic enrollment population. The data were then imported into SPSS. The steps indicated within the LIWC2015 operator manual were followed (Pennebaker, Boyd et al., 2015).

Disciplinary Actions and Ethnicity

Disciplinary actions were measured by the number of ISS and OSS as provided from each school district to the TEA. Although disciplinary actions can include exclusions and DAEP, these techniques are typically used appropriately, and the occurrence of these techniques is low (Skiba & Rausch, 2006).

Various biases are assumed in students of color, such as perceiving their behaviors as more negative or harmful (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Given the discipline gap for students of color, the study investigated disciplinary actions for students of color, specifically Black and Latinx students. Although students from various ethnic backgrounds (i.e., Asian Americans, American Indian, Middle Eastern, and Northern Africa) can also be discriminated against in the school setting, various confounding variables play a role in other ethnicities. In other words, the ethnicity classification from TEA does not allow for the breakdown of complexion. Although other ethnicities can face discrimination, Black and Latinx communities were used for this study. Similarly, this data was collected from the TEA data from the respective academic school year of the CoC.

The study used disciplinary actions of ISS and OSS for Black, Latinx, and White students as reported in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) as requested by the TEA from each school district at the end of each academic year. To ensure that there is already an established discipline gap, Black, Latinx, and White disciplinary actions percentage based on counts of disciplinary actions and their enrollment population were used to calculate and establish a discipline gap. Additionally, the groups were compared to establish this relationship, which is further discussed later.

Before the research questions were addressed, the preliminary analysis was required to compute a discipline gap variable and the computation and coding of ethnic/racial majority districts.

Pre-Processing Computations Related to Discipline Gap. The disciplinary data was obtained from the PEIMS data that TEA collected from each district annually. Districts with low populations of specific ethnic group, did not report the percentage of disciplinary actions due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) to ensure that data did not potentially reveal the identity of the individual. Within the dataset, the data was considered to be missing data and exclude from the final analysis.

The ratio consists of the corresponding racial/ethnic students who received disciplinary actions and the actual representation of that respective racial/ethnic group within the respective district. The percentages were collected for Black, Latinx, and White students. Secondary information collected was the total percentage of representation of each ethnicity. First, the computation of the relative discipline rate (RDR) was established for Black, Latinx, and White students for both ISS and OSS actions. The RDR consisted of the percentage of racial group disciplinary actions from the total percentage of students within the school district identified as belonging to the racial/ethnic group (i.e., Total Percentage of Racial groups – Percentage of Racial group disciplinary actions = RDR). For example, the percentage of Black students who received ISS was subtracted from the total percentage of Black students within that school district (e.g., Percentage of Total Black enrollment – Percentage of Black disciplinary actions). This was completed for each ethnic group (i.e., Black, Latinx, and White) and corresponding disciplinary action (i.e., ISS and OSS).

After computing the disciplinary rate for each group for each type of disciplinary actions, the disciplinary gap variable (DG) was created by subtracting the RDRs of each ethnic group from each other (i.e., $\text{RDR Racial Group} - \text{RDR Minoritized Racial Group} = \text{Discipline Gap}$). For example, the RDR of Black ISS was subtracted from the RDR of White ISS to establish a DG variable representing the discipline gap between Black and White student who received ISS (e.g., $\text{RDR White ISS} - \text{RDR Black ISS} = \text{DG Black and White ISS}$). The process was completed to create six DG variables: Black and White ISS; Black and White OSS; Latinx and White ISS; Latinx and White OSS; Black and Latinx ISS; and Black and Latinx OSS.

In addition to the DG variables, each school district was coded based on the relative rates of racial/ethnic representations. The racial/ethnic majority districts variable was defined as districts with more than 50% of a certain racial/ethnic group as their student enrollment population. To create this variable, each school district was coded as either Latinx, White, Black or no majority based on the percentage of the largest racial/ethnic student group. If an racial/ethnic group represented more than 50% of the entire student population, then the district was classified as that racial/ethnic group majority. If no racial/ethnic group represented 50% of the entire student population, then the district was coded as a no majority school district.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

As indicated in Chapter 2, students from minoritized groups are more likely to receive disciplinary actions than their White counterparts. This study investigated the impact of the CoC on discipline gaps for Black and White students in Texas Independent School Districts. The following chapter includes relevant descriptive statistics of the school districts in the sample and preliminary analyses of the CoC. Primary analyses to evaluate the research questions are then presented as well as post-hoc analyses related to the racial/ethnic majority status of the school district are presented.

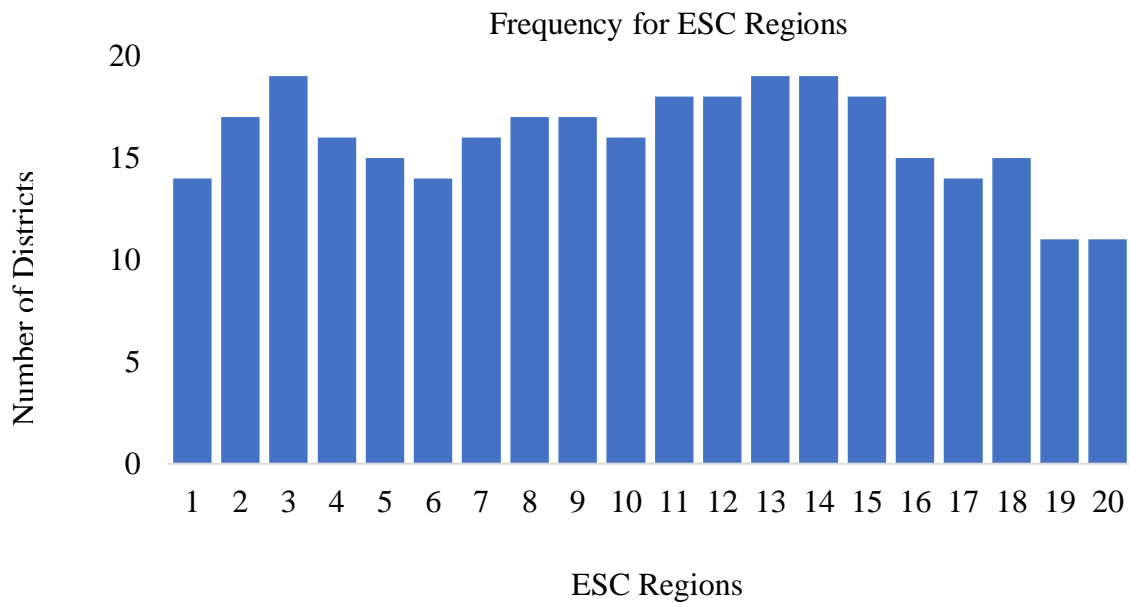
Preliminary Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Originally, a sample of 400 Texas Independent School districts was selected through random stratified sampling methods. Seventy-nine school districts either did not have an online version of their CoC, or the policy was dated before 2014-2015, which resulted in those districts being removed from the sample. As a result, the study consisted of 319 Texas Independent School Districts from the 20 ESC (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Frequency for ESC Regions



For each school district the following demographic data was collected: district size, community type, and racial/ethnic majority population, which is further defined and indicated below.

Community Type and District Size

Community type is based upon the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which classifies districts based upon enrollment, population size and proximity to an urban area. The TEA classifies districts into nine categories that are defined as the following in Table 3. In addition to the Community type, Table 4 provides the frequency of the size of the districts for their respective year as indicated.

Table 3*Frequency of Community Type for Texas Independent School Districts Within the Sample*

Community Type	Descriptions	Total in Texas	Total in the Sample	% Included in the Sample
Charter	Charter school districts are open-enrolled districts that receive funding from the State Board of Education. Charter schools typically abide by state and federal laws, but not instructional methods (TEA, 2018b).	177	11	6.21
Major Urban	These districts are located within a county with a population of 985,000, their enrollment is the largest in the county, and 35% of students are enrolled as economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2018b).	11	4	36.3
Major Suburban	A major suburban district does not meet the criteria of a major urban; however, they are often adjacent or located in the same county as a major urban. They consist of the enrollment of at least three to fifteen percent or 4,500 students of the contiguous urban district (TEA, 2018b).	79	21	26.6
Other Central City Suburban	Other central city suburban are located within a county of population between 100,000 and 984,99 with the enrollment of at least 15% of the county's population (TEA, 2018b).	163	48	29.4
Other Central City	These districts are often located in a county with a population of between 100,000 and 984,999. They are not contiguous to a major urban district, but they make up at least 75% of the largest district enrollment within a county (TEA, 2018b).	39	15	38.5

Community Type	Descriptions	Total in Texas	Total in the Sample	% Included in the Sample
Non- Metropolitan Fast Growing	The district has an enrollment of at least 300 students, and the enrollment has increased by at least 20% within the past 5 years (TEA, 2018b).	33	12	36.4
Non-Metropolitan Stable	These districts often do not meet the criteria of any other classifications, and the enrollment is equal or more than the median district enrollment for Texas (TEA, 2018b).	168	48	28.6
Rural	A district is classified as rural if it either has between 300 enrollment and the enrollment rate over the past 5 years is similar to the median district enrollment or an enrollment of less than 300 students (TEA, 2018b).	462	137	29.6
Independent Town	Independent towns do not meet criteria under any other classifications. They are typically found in counties with a population of 25,000 to 99,999 (TEA, 2018b).	68	23	33.8

Note. Total in state as of 2018

Table 4*Frequency of District Size for Texas Independent School Districts Utilized in the Study*

District Size	Total in the Sample
Under 500	95
500 to 999	64
1000 to 1599	42
1,600 to 2,999	36
3,000 to 4,999	25
5,000 to 9,999	13
10,000 to 24,999	27
25,000 to 49,999	12
50,000 and over	5

Racial/Ethnic Majority Schools

Table 5 presents each district's racial/ethnic majority makeup. Each classification is based upon the majority racial/ethnic population. Racial/Ethnic Majority Schools are referred to as Latinx Majority Districts (LMD), Black Majority Districts (BMD), and White Majority Districts (WMD). Districts that do not have a 50% majority ethnic group were coded as No Majority Districts (NMD).

Table 5

Frequency of Racial/Ethnic Majority for the 319 Texas Independent School Districts Utilized in the Study

Racial/Ethnic Majority Population of Districts	<i>n</i>	%
Latinx Majority Districts	109	34.2
Black Majority Districts	5	1.6
White Majority Districts	151	47.3
No Majority Districts	54	16.9

Codes of Conduct

Table 6 presents the means of the LIWC2015 data. The variables are not based upon a percentage and instead are based upon a continuous range calculated by a LIWC algorithm.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of the LIWC2015 and SPMSE-DA Variables

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Upper	Lower
Race/Ethnicity	.02	.01	.09	.00
Female	.13	.03	.43	.05
Male	.11	.05	.55	.04
Appearance	.04	.57	.68	.02
Disruptive Behaviors	.28	.06	.59	.15
Criminal Behaviors	.27	.50	.67	.12
Risk	.95	.13	1.44	.69
Reward	.41	.07	.68	.02

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Upper	Lower
Power	7.54	.33	10.48	6.24
Achievement	.18	.87	2.22	.59
Affiliation	.96	.18	2.78	.66

The summary variables (e.g., analytic, emotional tone, authenticity, and clout) are reported as percentages (Pennebaker, Booth et al., 2015). Examination of the summary variables reveal that CoCs utilized a high percentage of analytic language ($M = 98.02$), was generally negative in emotional tone ($M = 6.94$), and neutral to low in terms of clout ($M = 33.62$) and authenticity ($M = 31.97$). Refer to Table 7.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of the Summary Variables from the LIWC2015

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Upper	Lower
Analytic	98.02	.55	98.93	93.30
Clout	33.62	2.99	51.78	28.42
Authentic	49.08	5.84	58.05	21.88
Emotional Tone	6.94	2.74	31.97	1.83

Note. The mean expressed as percentage of total words used within the CoC

Primary Analysis

Question One: Discipline Gap

Research Question 1: Is there a discipline gap amongst Black, Latinx, and White students?

To determine whether there is a discipline gap, descriptive statistics were used to compare the discipline gap between minoritized groups and their White counterparts. The rates between Black and Latinx students were also calculated. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the discipline gap was derived from the comparison of the rates of discipline for each ethnicity. Table 7 presents the means for the discipline gap. Positive central tendencies indicate that discipline rates are above the representation rates in relation to the comparison group.

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviation for the Discipline Gap in the Overall Sample

	White				Latinx			
	ISS		OSS		ISS		OSS	
Racial Ethnicity	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Black	38.46	28.95	35.21	30.30	37.01	28.82	36.88	29.82
Latinx	-2.34	47.66	-5.29	50.07				

Note. *M* and *SD* represent Means and Standard Deviation, respectively. The top row is considered the reference group. For example, Black compared to White.

The results revealed that Black students compared to White and Latinx students does demonstrate a discipline gap. Black students receive ISS and OSS at a rate above their representation rate compared to their White (ISS *M* = 36.46; OSS *M* = 35.21) and Latinx (ISS *M* = 37.01; OSS *M* = 36.88) counterparts. However, there was not a discipline gap between Latinx and White students (ISS *M* = -2.34; OSS *M* = -5.29). Latinx students does not show a discipline gap compared to White students. Based upon the findings, the subsequent questions focused on the disciplinary gap for Black students compared to their White and Latinx counterparts.

Discipline Gap Within Various Majority Population Districts

As mentioned above, a discipline gap does not exist between Latinx and White students within the overall sample. Secondary analyses were calculated to further depict the relationship between the language used in CoC and the discipline gap. To further investigate this relationship, the existing data file was split by group based upon their Majority Population. As indicated in Chapter 3, the four groups are the following: WMD, LMD, BMD, and NMD.

The discipline gaps for each majority district can be referenced in Table 9. Within WMD, a discipline gap existed between Black students and both their White (ISS $M = 66.24$; OSS $M = 64.41$) and Latinx (ISS $M = 18.65$; OSS $M = 19.24$) counterparts. Additionally, there was a discipline gap between Latinx and White students (ISS $M = 44.20$; OSS $M = 43.58$). It is worth noting that prior to splitting the data and within the entire sample, there was no discipline gap between Latinx and White students. Within WMD, Latinx students receive more disciplinary actions compared to their population representation than their White counterparts.

In terms of LMD, Black students continue to exhibit a discipline gap as compared to White (ISS $M = 18.54$; OSS $M = 11.21$) and Latinx students (ISS $M = 68.61$; OSS $M = 70.45$). However, White students exhibited a discipline gap (ISS $M = -52.86$; OSS $M = -58.13$) compared to their Latinx counterparts. In other words, White and Black students are more likely to receive rates of disciplinary actions that are higher than their representation as compared to Latinx students when the school district consisted of more than 50% Latinx students.

Within NMD, a discipline gap existed for Black students in comparison to White (ISS $M = 29.54$; OSS $M = 21.16$) and Latinx students (ISS $M = 31.33$; OSS $M = 26.88$). However, when there was no majority population, White students showed slightly higher discipline rates

compared to their representation as compared to Latinx students (ISS $M = -1.14$; OSS $M = -2.37$).

Although there appears to be a discipline gap for Black students in BMD, the sample of BMD is limited ($n = 5$) and should be interpreted with caution.

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviation for the Discipline Gap in the Majority Population Districts Sample

Racial Ethnicity	White				Latinx			
	ISS		OSS		ISS		OSS	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
WMD								
Black	66.24	10.31	64.41	13.23	18.65	13.06	19.24	12.68
Latinx	44.20	18.66	43.58	23.93				
LMD								
Black	18.54	14.15	11.21	14.13	68.61	18.67	70.45	19.74
Latinx	-52.86	29.41	-58.13	27.62				
BMD								
Black	-31.40	10.66	-32.25	.66	-19.00	8.40	-25.95	7.19
Latinx	-12.40	11.37	-6.29	7.85				
NMD								
Black	29.54	21.16	20.97	21.73	31.33	18.12	26.88	17.47
Latinx	-1.14	14.59	-2.37	18.11				

Note. Positive numbers indicate a discipline gap.

Assumptions of the Data

Data from this study varied in terms of the assumptions of a linear model (i.e., linearity, homoscedastic, normally disturbed) were met. Given the large sample size, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was calculated to further compare the scores within the samples to a normally distributed set of scores with the same mean and standard deviations (Fields, 2017). Within the

entire sample, the data does not deviate from a normal distribution ($D(67) = .200$). Parametric tests were used to investigate the research questions of this study.

In terms of majority population districts, data from WMD meet the assumptions of a linear model. Within the LMD, Black and Latinx ISS and Black and White ISS/OSS meet assumptions of the data. Within NMD, Latinx and White ISS/OSS and White OSS did meet assumptions of the data. However, data from LMD for the discipline gap for Latinx and White ISS ($D(70) = .001$); Latinx and White OSS ($D(17) = .010$); and Black and Latinx OSS ($D(44) = .081$) do not meet the assumption of normality. Similarly, for NMD, the discipline gap for Black and White ISS ($D(40) = <.001$); Black and White OSS ($D(31) = .004$); and Black and Latinx ISS ($D(40) = .046$) does not meet the assumption of normality. In other words, data were found to be significantly non-normal.

The sample for White and Black ISS, White and Black OSS, and Latinx and Black OSS within LMD and the White and Black ISS, White and Black OSS and Latinx and Black ISS within NMD does not meet the assumptions of a linear regression. As a result, robust methods of bootstrapping were utilized for the aforementioned samples. The data utilized a 95% bias corrected bootstrap method for the discipline gap (Fields, 2017). The robust methods of bootstrapping addressed the lack of normal distribution by estimating the properties of the sampling distribution (Fields, 2017). The bootstrap was at a 95% percentile confidence interval. The bootstrap analysis was completed through SPSS. Although the process of bootstrapping data addresses the violation of the assumptions of a linear model within the sample, limitations can include the valuable exclusion of outlying data within the sample (Fields, 2017).

Within the sample, only five districts were BMD. As a result, BMD data is not reported due to the limited sample size and the lack of ability to generalize results. The following section describes the relationship between discipline gap and CoC in terms of Majority Population.

The Impact of Language on the Discipline Gap

There appears to be a consistent discipline gap between Black students and their other ethnic counterparts. There appears to be different patterns of the discipline gaps depending on majority racial/ethnicity population of the district. Within WMD, Latinx students were more likely to receive a disciplinary action than White students. In contrast, White students were more likely to receive a disciplinary action compared to their Latinx in LMD. Further analyses were calculated to determine whether various components of language predict the discipline gaps within each majority population districts.

Question Two: Identity-Based Language

Research Question 2: Does the use of language related to identity predict a discipline gap?

Overall

A forced entry multiple regression was calculated to predict the discipline gap based on the identity-based language used within the CoC. A forced entry method was used as opposed to other methods due to no known relationship between the factors. The results indicate that when all three variables of identity-based language (race/ethnicity, female, and male) are used in the model together, there was no significant predictive power of discipline gap for Black students who receive ISS and OSS compared to their White and Latinx counterparts, all $ps > .05$ (see Table 10).

Table 10*Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap for Identity-Based Language*

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS				.63	3,141	.59	.11	.01
Race/Ethnicity	-.83	.41	-.07					
Female	-.49	.62	-.08					
Male	-.01	.96	-.01					
Black and White OSS				.36	3,118	.78	.10	.01
Race/Ethnicity	-.01	.92	-.01					
Female	.19	.85	.02					
Male	-.83	.41	-.11					
Black and Latinx ISS				.63	3,143	.60	.11	.01
Race/Ethnicity	.56	.58	.05					
Female	.91	.37	.14					
Male	-.28	.78	-.04					
Black and Latinx OSS				.23	3,127	.88	.07	.01
Race/Ethnicity	.64	.52	.06					
Female	.38	.70	.05					
Male	.07	.94	.01					

Note. The dependent variable for all regressions is the disciplinary gap.***Identity-Based Language in WMD***

In WMD, identity-based language (race/ethnicity, female, male) does not predict the discipline gap for Black students compared to their White and Latinx counterparts, nor does it predict the discipline gap for Latinx students compared to their White counterparts (all *ps* > .05; see Table 11).

Table 11*Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap for Identity-Based Language in WMD*

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS				.317	3,52	.81	.13	.02
Race/Ethnicity	-.52	.60	-.10					
Female	-.80	.43	-.26					
Male	.96	.34	.287					

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White OSS				.510	3,47	.68	.18	.03
Race/Ethnicity	1.12	.27	.169					
Female	.81	.43	.133					
Male	-.09	.59	-.090					
Black and Latinx ISS				.239	3,50	.87	.12	.01
Race/Ethnicity	.70	.49	.148					
Female	.21	.83	.102					
Male	-.29	.77	-.139					
Black and Latinx OSS				1.319	3,48	.28	.28	.08
Race/Ethnicity	1.33	.19	.208					
Female	-.28	.78	-.046					
Male	.99	.33	.161					
Latinx and White ISS				.096	3,72	.96	.06	.00
Race/Ethnicity	-.40	.69	-.065					
Female	-.52	.61	-.173					
Male	.43	.67	.133					
Latinx and White OSS				.235	3,34	.87	.14	.02
Race/Ethnicity	.74	.46	.115					
Female	-.24	.81	-.036					
Male	-1.52	.14	-.222					

Note. The dependent variable for all regression was the disciplinary gap.

Identity-Based Language in LMD

Identity-based language (e.g., race/ethnicity, female, and male) does not predict the discipline gap for Black students compared to their White and Latinx counterparts or the discipline gap for White students in LMD, all *ps* > .05 (See Table 12).

Table 12

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap for Identity-Based Language in LMD

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS				2.30	3,40	.09	.38	.15
Race/Ethnicity	-2.39	.02	-.40					
Female	-1.55	.13	-.59					
Male	1.61	.12	.65					
Black and White OSS				.23	3,34	.87	.14	.02
Race/Ethnicity	-.23	.82	-.05					

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Female		-.389	.70	-.08				
Male		-.18	.86	-.04				
Black and Latinx ISS ^a					1.10	3,44	.36	.26
Race/Ethnicity		1.80	.08	.28				
Female		.53	.60	.19				
Male		-.65	.52	-.25				
Black and Latinx OSS					1.11	3,40	.36	.28
Race/Ethnicity		-2.52	.02	-.47				
Female		1.80	.08	.50				
Male		-.51	.61	-.14				
Latinx and White ISS ^a					1.82	3,66	.15	.28
Race/Ethnicity		-1.92	.06	-.24				
Female		.93	.36	.17				
Male		-.80	.42	-.15				
Latinx and White OSS ^a					2.69	3,43	.06	.40
Race/Ethnicity		-2.512	.02	-.47				
Female		1.797	.08	.50				
Male		-.510	.61	-.14				

Note. The dependent variables for all regression were the disciplinary gap

^a Robust Methods were utilized, bootstrap a 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval

Identity-Based Language in NMD

Within schools without an ethnic/racial majority, identity-based language (e.g., race/ethnicity, female, and male) does not predict the discipline gaps for Black students as compared to their White and Latinx counterparts, all *ps* > .05 (see Table 13). In summary, identity-based language does not predict the discipline gap for Black students, despite the majority population of the district.

Table 13

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap for Identity-Based Language in NMD

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS ^a				1.05	3,27	.39	.32	.10
Race/Ethnicity	-1.35	.19	-.27					
Female	.50	.62	.17					
Male	-.31	.76	-.10					
Black and White OSS ^a				1.05	3,27	.39	.32	.10
Race/Ethnicity	-1.35	.19	-.27					
Female	.50	.62	.17					
Male	-.31	.76	-.10					
Black and Latinx ISS ^a				2.04	3,36	.13	.38	.14
Race/Ethnicity	-1.95	.06	-.33					
Female	-1.68	.10	-.46					
Male	1.18	.25	.32					
Black and Latinx OSS				1.61	3,29	.21	.38	.14
Race/Ethnicity	-.34	.74	-.051					
Female	-.24	.81	-.034					
Male	1.95	.06	.29					

Note. The dependent variable for all regression was the disciplinary gap.

^aRobust Methods were utilized, bootstrap a 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval

Question Three: Behavior- and Appearance-Based Language

Research Question 3: Does the use of language emphasizing criminal behavior, daily disruptive behavior, and/or appearance-based behavior predict a discipline gap?

Overall

A forced entry multiple regression was calculated to predict the discipline gap based on behavior and appearance-based language used within the CoC. Results revealed that the discipline gap for Black and White ISS ($F(3,141) = .2181; p = .093; R^2 = .044$), Black and White OSS ($F(3,118) = 1.677; p = .176; R^2 = .041$), Black and Latinx ISS ($F(3,143) = 1.699; p = .170; R^2 = .034$), and Black and Latinx OSS ($F(3,127) = .812; p = .490; R^2 = .019$) does not indicate a significant predictive relationship (see Table 14).

Although the overall regression model with appearance, disruptive behaviors, and criminal behaviors does not indicate significant predictive relationship for White and Black ISS. The appearance-based language does indicate a significant contribution to the model. As a result, a linear regression was calculated to determine whether appearance by itself predicts the discipline gap between White and Black students who receive ISS. The model indicated that appearance does predict the discipline gap between White and Black students who receive ISS ($F(1,143) = 4.307; p = .040$). Appearance predicts approximately 2.9% of the variance of the discipline gap for White and Black ISS ($R^2 = .029$). Based on the beta coefficient, the relationship between appearance and the discipline gap is negative. Thus, as appearance-based language increases, the disciplinary gap between White and Black students decreases.

Table 14

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap for Behavioral- and Appearance-Based Language

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS				2.18	3,141	.09	.21	.04
Appearance	-2.46	.01	-.23					
Disruptive Behaviors	-.33	.74	-.03					
Criminal Behaviors	1.47	.14	.15					
Black and White OSS				1.68	3,118	.18	.20	.04
Appearance	-1.77	.08	-.16					
Disruptive Behaviors	-.72	.47	-.07					
Criminal Behaviors	1.44	.15	.14					
Black and Latinx ISS				1.70	3,143	.17	.19	.03
Appearance	.93	.35	.09					
Disruptive Behaviors	1.95	.05	.18					
Criminal Behaviors	-1.25	.21	-.13					
Black and Latinx OSS				.81	3,127	.49	.14	.02
Appearance	.89	.38	.08					
Disruptive Behaviors	.73	.47	.07					
Criminal Behaviors	.40	.69	.04					

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS ^a				4.307	1,143	.04	.17	.03
Appearance	-2.07	.04	-.17					

Note. The dependent variables for all regressions are the disciplinary gap.

^a A linear regression was completed with appearance as an independent variable

Behavior- and Appearance-Based Language in WMD

As indicated within Table 15, behavior- and appearance-based language does not predict any of the disciplinary gaps between any groups within WMD, all *ps* > .05.

Table 15

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap for Behavioral- and Appearance-Based Language in WMD

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS				.29	3,52	.83	.13	.02
Appearance	.44	.66	.06					
Disruptive Behaviors	.86	.40	.14					
Criminal Behaviors	-.52	.60	-.09					
Black and White OSS				.49	3,47	.69	.17	.03
Appearance	.64	.52	.10					
Disruptive Behaviors	.95	.35	.16					
Criminal Behaviors	-.75	.46	-.13					
Black and Latinx ISS				.54	3,50	.65	.18	.03
Appearance	1.14	.26	.21					
Disruptive Behaviors	-.06	.95	-.01					
Criminal Behaviors	-.65	.51	-.14					
Black and Latinx OSS				1.59	3,40	.20	.33	.11
Appearance	1.58	.12	.24					
Disruptive Behaviors	-.87	.39	-.16					
Criminal Behaviors	1.43	.16	.26					
Latinx and White ISS				.41	3,75	.75	.13	.02
Appearance	.20	.84	.03					
Disruptive Behaviors	-.31	.76	-.04					
Criminal Behaviors	.88	.38	.13					

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Latinx and White OSS				.14	3,45	.93	.10	.01
Appearance	.59	.56	.09					
Disruptive Behaviors	-.26	.80	-.05					
Criminal Behaviors	.13	.90	.02					

Note. The dependent variable for all regression was the disciplinary gap

Behavior- and Appearance-Based Language in LMD

Table 16 revealed that behavior- and appearance-based language does not predict any discipline gaps in LMD, all *ps* > .05.

Table 16

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap for Behavioral- and Appearance-Based Language in LMD

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS				.15	3,40	.92	.11	.01
Appearance	-.47	.64	-.09					
Disruptive Behaviors	-.39	.70	-.07					
Criminal Behaviors	.55	.60	.11					
Black and White OSS				.48	3,34	.70	.20	.04
Appearance	.28	.78	.05					
Disruptive Behaviors	.96	.34	.18					
Criminal Behaviors	-.92	.36	-.17					
Black and Latinx ISS ^a				.90	3,44	.45	.24	.06
Appearance	.86	.39	.16					
Disruptive Behaviors	.99	.32	.18					
Criminal Behaviors	-1.54	.13	-.13					
Black and Latinx OSS				1.59	3,40	.20	.33	.11
Appearance	-.18	.85	-.03					
Disruptive Behaviors	.26	.80	.04					
Criminal Behaviors	.13	.90	.02					
Latinx and White ISS ^a				1.68	3,66	.18	.27	.07
Appearance	-2.01	.05	-.29					
Disruptive Behaviors	-.64	.52	-.09					
Criminal Behaviors	1.04	.30	.17					

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Latinx and White OSS ^a				.63	3,43	.60	.21	.04
Appearance	-.97	.34	-.17					
Disruptive Behaviors	-.04	.97	-.01					
Criminal Behaviors	-.30	.77	-.05					

Note. The dependent variable for all regression was the disciplinary gap

^a Robust Methods were utilized, bootstrap a 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval

Behavior- and Appearance-Based Language in NMD

As indicated within Table 17, behavior- and appearance-based language predict the discipline gap between Black and White ISS, $F(3,36) = 3.321$; $p = .030$. The model explained approximately 21.7% of the variance ($R^2 = .217$). Appearance does significantly predict the discipline gap; specifically, as the type of appearance-based language increases, the discipline gap decreases between Black and White students.

Table 17

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap for Behavior- and Appearance-Based Language in NMD

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS ^a				3.32	3,36	.03	.47	.22
Appearance	-3.11	.00	-.47					
Disruptive	.44	.66	.07					
Criminal	.88	.38	.13					
Black and White OSS ^a				2.50	3,27	.08	.47	.22
Appearance	-2.69	.01	-.46					
Disruptive	.33	.74	.06					
Criminal	.64	.53	.11					
Black and Latinx ISS ^a				1.76	3,36	.17	.36	.13
Appearance	-1.57	.12	-.25					
Disruptive	-.61	.54	.27					
Criminal	1.70	.10	-.10					

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and Latinx OSS				.05	3,48	.99	.05	.01
Appearance	-.18	.85	-.03					
Disruptive	.26	.80	.04					
Criminal	.13	.90	.02					

Note. The dependent variable for all regression was the disciplinary gap

^a A bootstrapped 95% bias corrected, accelerated confidence interval was used.

In terms of behavior and appearance-based language, together they do not predict the discipline gap for Black students despite the majority population. However, appearance-based language negatively predicted the discipline gap between Black and White students in no racial/ethnic majority districts.

Question Four: Tone of Language

Research Question 4: Does the tone of language used in COC predict the discipline gap?

Overall

A forced entry multiple regression was calculated to predict the discipline gap based on the LIWC2015 summary variables: analytic, clout, authentic, and emotional tone. A forced entry method was used due to there not being a known relationship between the factors at the start of this study. When all four variables were analyzed together, the model predicted the discipline gap for Black and Latinx students for ISS ($F(2,124) = 2.644$; $p = .036$) and explained approximately 6.9% of the variance in the discipline gap ($R^2 = .069$). However, as analytic, clout, and tone increased within the model, the discipline gap between Latinx and Black ISS increased. Whereas as authentic language increases, the discipline gap decreases. The analysis does not indicate that the summary variables predicted the discipline gap between Black and Latinx ISS, $p > .05$ (see Table 18).

LIWC2015 summary variables do not significantly predict the discipline gap for Black and White ISS or OSS, Latinx and White ISS or OSS, or Black and Latinx OSS, all $ps > .05$. Therefore, the discipline gap between Black and Latinx students for ISS was the only variable predicted by the LIWC2015 summary variables.

Table 18

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap and LIWC2015 Summary Variables

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS				1.16	4,140	.33	.17	.03
Analytic	.17	.91	.01					
Clout	-1.24	.21	-.22					
Authentic	-.02	.98	-.01					
Tone	.47	.63	.06					
Black and White OSS				1.08	4,117	.37	.19	.03
Analytic	.61	.55	.09					
Clout	-.16	.87	-.03					
Authentic	-.15	.88	-.03					
Tone	-.89	.38	-.13					
Black and Latinx ISS				2.64	2,142	.04	.26	.07
Analytic	1.40	.16	.18					
Clout	.04	.97	.01					
Authentic	-1.60	.11	-.32					
Tone	.48	.63	.05					
Black and Latinx OSS				1.25	4,126	.29	.19	.04
Analytic	.89	.37	.12					
Clout	-1.01	.31	-.16					
Authentic	-1.50	.14	-.29					
Tone	.88	.38	.11					

Note. The dependent variables for all regression are the disciplinary gap

LIWC2015 Summary Variables in WMD

The four LIWC2015 summary variables do not predict any of the disciplinary gaps between any groups within WMD, all $ps > .05$ (see Table 19).

Table 19*Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap Tone-Based Language in WMD*

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS				.50	4,51	.74	.19	.04
Analytic	1.11	.27	.19					
Clout	-.87	.39	-.18					
Authentic	-1.27	.21	-.32					
Tone	-.06	.95	-.01					
Black and White OSS				.89	4,39	.48	.29	.08
Analytic	1.40	.17	.25					
Clout	.81	.42	.15					
Authentic	-.69	.49	-.16					
Tone	.72	.48	.10					
Black and Latinx ISS				.98	4,49	.43	.27	.07
Analytic	-1.93	.06	-.34					
Clout	.91	.37	.16					
Authentic	1.51	.14	.36					
Tone	.49	.63	.08					
Black and Latinx OSS				1.81	4,44	.14	.38	.14
Analytic	-1.95	.06	-.35					
Clout	1.61	.11	.28					
Authentic	1.09	.28	.24					
Tone	-1.52	.13	-.21					
Latinx and White ISS				.53	4,71	.71	.17	.03
Analytic	1.24	.22	.19					
Clout	-.73	.47	-.10					
Authentic	-1.11	.27	-.18					
Tone	.33	.74	.04					
Latinx and White OSS				1.81	4,44	.14	.38	.14
Analytic	2.45	.11	.46					
Clout	-1.28	.21	-.25					
Authentic	-1.83	.07	-.43					
Tone	-.13	.90	-.02					

Note. The dependent variable for all regression was the disciplinary gap

LIWC2015 Summary Variables in LMD

None of the LIWC2015 summary variables (e.g., analytic, clout, authentic, and emotional tone) predict any discipline gap in LMDs, all *ps* > .05 (see Table 20).

Table 20*Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap Tone-Based Language in LMD*

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS				.31	4,39	.87	.17	.03
Analytic	-.69	.49	-.18					
Clout	.58	.56	.24					
Authentic	.83	.41	.33					
Tone	-.63	.53	-.17					
Black and White OSS				.24	4,33	.98	.17	.03
Analytic	-.45	.65	-.15					
Clout	.45	.65	-.24					
Authentic	.10	.92	.04					
Tone	.46	.65	.22					
Black and Latinx ISS ^a				1.60	4,43	.19	.36	.13
Analytic	1.58	.12	.36					
Clout	-1.83	.07	-.60					
Authentic	-2.09	.04	-.79					
Tone	.91	.37	.20					
Black and Latinx OSS				.89	4,39	.48	.29	.08
Analytic	-1.95	.06	-.35					
Clout	1.61	.11	.28					
Authentic	1.09	.28	.24					
Tone	-1.52	.13	-.21					
Latinx and White ISS ^a				2.40	4,65	.06	.36	.13
Analytic	-1.17	.25	-.21					
Clout	2.18	.03	.53					
Authentic	2.38	.02	.70					
Tone	-1.26	.21	-.21					
Latinx and White OSS ^a				.30	4,42	.88	.17	.03
Analytic	-.41	.68	-.10					
Clout	.71	.48	.23					
Authentic	1.07	.29	.35					
Tone	.28	.77	.06					

Note. The dependent variable for all regression was the disciplinary gap^a A bootstrapped 95% bias corrected, accelerated confidence interval was used.***LIWC2015 Summary Variables in WMD***

The LIWC2015 summary variables (e.g., clout, authenticity, emotional tone, and analytic language) do not predict any discipline gaps within NMD, all *ps* > .05 (see Table 21).

Table 21*Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap Tone-Based Language in WMD*

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS ^a				.31	4,35	.87	.18	.03
Analytic	1.10	.28	.34					
Clout	.00	1.01	.00					
Authentic	-.69	.49	-.28					
Tone	.07	.94	.02					
Black and White OSS ^a				.19	4,26	.94	.17	.03
Analytic	.86	.39	.30					
Clout	-.07	.94	-.03					
Authentic	-.57	.57	-.30					
Tone	.03	.98	.01					
Black and Latinx ISS ^a				.12	4,35	.97	.12	.01
Analytic	.14	.89	.00					
Clout	.58	.56	.21					
Authentic	.20	.84	.21					
Tone	.01	.99	.00					
Black and Latinx OSS				.38	4,28	.82	.23	.05
Analytic	-.42	.68	.18					
Clout	-.85	.40	.00					
Authentic	.03	.98	-.32					
Tone	.72	.48	.05					

Note. The dependent variable for all regression was the disciplinary gap

^a A bootstrapped 95% bias corrected, accelerated confidence interval was used.

Overall, the summary variables of analytic, clout, authenticity and emotional tone were negatively associated with the discipline gap between Black and Latinx ISS students within the entire sample. There were not any differences indicated with a specific majority population.

Question Five: Motivation-Based Language

Research Question 5: Does the use of motivational language predict the discipline gap?

Overall

A forced entry multiple regression was calculated to predict the discipline gap based on the motivation-based language used within the CoC. Results indicate that when all five variables of motivation-based language (risk, reward, power, achievement, and affiliation) are used within

the model together, the model does not predict the relationship of discipline gap for Black students who receive ISS and OSS compared to their White and Latinx counterparts (all $ps > .05$; see Table 22).

Although the model with five independent variables was not significant for Latinx and Black ISS, affiliation did indicate a significant contribution to the model ($p = .034$). As a result, further analysis were completed to investigate this relationship. Linear regression was completed to determine whether affiliation language predicts the discipline gap between Latinx and Black ISS. Results indicated that affiliation does significantly predict the Latinx and Black ISS discipline gap ($F(1,145) = 7.999$; $p = .005$), which explained approximately 5.2% of the variance in the discipline gap ($R^2 = .052$). Furthermore, as the language that is associated with affiliation increases, the discipline gap increases as well.

Table 22

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap Motivation-Based Language

Discipline Gap	t	p	β	F	df	p	R	R^2
Black and White ISS				.26	5,139	.93	.10	.01
Risk	-.11	.91	-.01					
Reward	-.47	.64	-.06					
Power	.32	.75	.03					
Achievement	.54	.59	.11					
Affiliation	-.91	.36	-.13					
Black and White OSS				1.04	5,116	.40	.21	.04
Risk	-.28	.78	-.04					
Reward	-1.43	.16	-.20					
Power	.84	.40	.08					
Achievement	.90	.37	.17					
Affiliation	.94	.35	-.14					
Black and Latinx ISS				1.90	5,141	.10	.25	.06
Risk	.36	.72	.05					
Reward	.21	.83	.02					
Power	.99	.34	.08					
Achievement	-.63	.53	-.10					

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Affiliation ^a	2.14	.03	.27					
Black and Latinx OSS				.37	5,125	.86	.12	.01
Risk	-.48	.63	-.06					
Reward	-.37	.71	-.05					
Power	.35	.72	.03					
Achievement	.70	.49	.12					
Affiliation	.27	.79	.04					
Black and Latinx ISS ^a				7.99	1,145	.01	.23	.05
Affiliation	2.82	.23	.00					

Note. The dependent variables for all regression are the disciplinary gap

^a A linear regression was completed with just affiliation as an independent variable

Motivation-Based Language in WMD

Motivation-based language (reward, risk, affiliation, achievement, and power) does not predict any discipline gaps between groups in WMD, all *ps* > .05 (see Table 23).

Table 23

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap Motivation-Based Language in WMD

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS				.86	5,50	.51	.28	.08
Risk	.84	.41	.20					
Reward	-.23	.81	-.05					
Power	1.84	.07	.31					
Achievement	-.22	.82	-.07					
Affiliation	.20	.84	.05					
Black and White OSS				.10	5,45	.10	.42	.18
Risk	.13	.89	.03					
Reward	-1.61	.11	-.31					
Power	1.97	.05	.31					
Achievement	.69	.49	.15					
Affiliation	-.69	.49	-.14					
Black and Latinx ISS				.87	5,48	.50	.29	.08
Risk	.69	.49	.15					
Reward	.50	.62	.09					
Power	.01	.99	.00					
Achievement	-1.03	.30	-.24					

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Affiliation	.55	.58	.10					
Black and Latinx OSS				.79	5,43	.56	.29	.08
Risk	.45	.66	.11					
Reward	-.21	.83	-.05					
Power	1.65	.11	.31					
Achievement	-.08	.93	-.02					
Affiliation	-.09	.93	-.02					
Latinx and White ISS				.37	5,64	.87	.17	.03
Risk	-1.03	.31	-.30					
Reward	.62	.54	.16					
Power	-.68	.50	-.12					
Achievement	.90	.37	.26					
Affiliation	-.14	.89	-.04					
Latinx and White OSS				.79	5,43	.56	.29	.08
Risk	-.46	.65	-.10					
Reward	.23	.82	.04					
Power	-.96	.34	-.16					
Achievement	.20	.84	.05					
Affiliation	.80	.43	.19					

Note. The dependent variable for all regression was the disciplinary gap

Therefore, within districts in which 50% or more of students are identified as White, selected language variables do not predict any disciplinary gaps in ISS or OSS.

Motivation-Based Language in LMD

Multiple regression analyses revealed that motivation-based language (e.g., risk, reward, power, achievement, and affiliation) does not predict any discipline gap, all *ps* > .05, (see Table 24).

Table 24

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap Motivation-Based Language in LMD

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS				.50	5,38	.77	.25	.06
Risk	-1.16	.25	-.20					
Reward	.71	.48	.24					
Power	-.44	.66	-.08					
Achievement	-.13	.89	-.06					
Affiliation	-.44	.66	-.14					
Black and White OSS				.84	5,32	.53	.34	.12
Risk	-.80	.43	-.16					
Reward	.36	.72	.16					
Power	-1.32	.20	-.28					
Achievement	-.33	.75	-.16					
Affiliation	.42	.67	.18					
Black and Latinx ISS				.28	5,42	.92	.18	.03
Risk	.72	.47	.14					
Reward	-.81	.42	-.20					
Power	.06	.95	.01					
Achievement	-.13	.90	-.04					
Affiliation	.64	.52	.18					
Black and Latinx OSS ^a				.72	5,38	.61	.34	.11
Risk	-.73	.46	-.31					
Reward	.76	.46	.22					
Power	.91	.37	.21					
Achievement	.32	.75	.13					
Affiliation	-.91	.37	-.27					
Latinx and White ISS ^a								
Risk	.36	.72	.05	.37	5,64	.87	.21	.05
Reward	.37	.71	.07					
Power	-.19	.85	-.03					
Achievement	-1.03	.30	-.27					
Affiliation	.31	.76	.06					
Latinx and White OSS ^a				1.66	5,41	.17	.41	.17
Risk	-1.94	.06	-.40					
Reward	1.99	.05	.54					
Power	-1.04	.30	-.17					
Achievement	-1.03	.31	-.32					
Affiliation	.84	.40	.20					

Note. The dependent variable for all regression was the disciplinary gap

^a A bootstrapped 95% bias corrected, accelerated confidence interval was used.

In conclusion, within LMD, language utilized in CoC does not predict disciplinary gaps between Black, Latinx, and White students.

Motivation-Based Language in NMD

Motivation-based language does not predict any discipline gaps within NMD, all $ps > .05$ (see Table 25).

Table 25

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis by Discipline Gap Motivation-Based Language in NMD

Discipline Gap	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Black and White ISS ^a				1.12	5,34	.36	.38	.14
Risk	-.44	.66	-.14					
Reward	1.63	.11	.41					
Power	1.34	.19	.27					
Achievement	-.75	.46	-.27					
Affiliation	.24	.81	.06					
Black and White OSS ^a				.61	5,25	.69	.33	.11
Risk	.24	.56	-.24					
Reward	.97	.34	.29					
Power	1.05	.30	.24					
Achievement	-.16	.88	-.06					
Affiliation	-.10	.92	-.00					
Black and Latinx ISS ^a				2.14	5,34	.08	.49	.24
Risk	-.34	.73	-.10					
Reward	1.54	.13	.37					
Power	1.98	.07	.35					
Achievement	-1.08	.27	-.38					
Affiliation	1.05	.30	.25					
Black and Latinx OSS				.70	5,27	.63	.34	.11
Risk	-.75	.46	-.31					
Reward	.76	.46	.22					
Power	.91	.37	.21					
Achievement	.32	.75	.13					
Affiliation	-.91	.37	-.27					

Note. The dependent variable for all regression was the disciplinary gap

^a A bootstrapped 95% bias corrected, accelerated confidence interval was used.

In terms of motivational-based language only affiliation linguistic patterns were associated with the discipline gap between Latinx and Black students receiving ISS within the entire sample. There were no noted differences within racial/ethnic majority populations.

Summary of Findings

The results revealed a discipline gap between Black students and their White and Latinx counterparts when receiving ISS and OSS. While there does not appear to be a significant discipline gap between White and Latinx students within the entire sample, further analyses revealed that White students were more likely to receive a disciplinary action of ISS and OSS in LMD compared to their White counterparts and Latinx student were more likely to show a discipline gap in WMD compared to White students. Regardless of the specific racial/ethnic makeup of the district, Black students continue to receive disciplinary actions at a higher rate than their Latinx and White counterparts.

Linguistic analyses predicted some patterns in disciplinary gaps. Appearance-based language negatively predicted the discipline gap between Black and White discipline gaps in ISS within the entire sample and in schools in which there is no racial/ethnic majority. The Black and Latinx discipline gap for ISS in the entire sample was positively predicted by analytic, clout authenticity, and emotional tone negatively predicted by authentic linguistic patterns. Affiliation linguistic patterns within CoC in the entire sample positively predicted the disciplinary gap between Latinx and Black students' ISS. No other regression analyses were significant.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Literature suggests that students with identities and traits consistent with Black and Latinx groups are more likely to receive disciplinary action than their White counterparts (Fenning & Rose, 2007; George, 2015; Skiba et al., 2002). Furthermore, minoritized groups receive disciplinary actions at a higher rate than their population representation. Many reasons may underlie this disproportionality, include stereotypes that are often associated with students of color that can result in behaviors that are perceived to not fit the school norms. Although students of color are not more likely to engage in disruptive or criminal behaviors than their White peers, they are perceived to do so (Chang & Sue, 2003; Fenning & Rose, 2007; George, 2015). Often, students of color are associated with negative stereotypes because of a long history of systemic discrimination and oppression, as described in the CRT framework (Brown & Di Tillio, 2013; Simson, 2013; Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Stereotypes about expected and cultural norms of Black and Latinx students appear to increase the likelihood of disciplinary actions (Gilliam et al., 2016). In other words, there are prejudicial judgments in the interpretation of behaviors for minority students that are associated with disciplinary actions (Tajalli & Garba, 2014).

The literature suggests that harsh disciplinary actions and punitive policies of removing students can increase the discipline gap (Hirschfield, 2018; Wald & Losen, 2003). School policies are in place to ensure “law and order” within the educational setting. The CoC outline behaviors and expectations for students to follow at school within the school policies. The CoC also outlines behaviors that indicate or result in removing a student from the classroom through disciplinary actions. The impact of the discipline gap can result in missed valuable academic

instruction, lower academic achievements, decreased self-esteem, lack of motivation to engage in schoolwork, and increased likelihood of being a part of the criminal justice system, also known as the school-to-prison pipeline (Hirschfield, 2018; Pearman et al., 2019; Wald & Losen, 2003; Welch & Payne, 2018).

Given the trends of disciplinary actions against Black and Latinx students, it is important to evaluate various processes that contribute to the discipline gap. Limited research has been conducted to analyze the CoC to understand this relationship. The present study was conducted to further investigate the relationship between CoC and the discipline gap for Black and Latinx students compared to their White counterparts. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to investigate the language associated with stereotypes and punitive language in CoC.

Findings and Implications of the Study

Is There a Discipline Gap?

The discipline gap is the tendency for minority students to be overrepresented in discipline relative to their enrollment in their respective campus population (Booker & Mitchell, 2014). Both national and Texas trends indicate that Black and Latinx students are more likely to receive disciplinary actions than their White counterparts (George, 2015; Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Consistent with the current literature, the study results indicated a discipline gap exists for Black students, in that they receive disciplinary actions at a higher rate than their enrollment representation compared to both their White and Latinx counterparts. However, there was no significant discipline gap for Latinx students and their White counterparts.

Secondary analyses indicated that when evaluating the discipline gap based upon the majority population of districts, a discipline gap appeared for both Latinx and White Students. Latinx students were more likely to receive disciplinary actions at higher rates than their

representation compared to their White counterparts in WMD. In contrast, White students received higher rates of disciplinary actions than their Latinx counterparts in LMD. Black students continued to receive more disciplinary actions than their other ethnic students despite the district majority being White, Latinx or Non-Majority populations.

Black students disproportionately receive disciplinary actions compared to their Latinx and White counterparts for ISS and OSS, despite the racial/ethnic majority population of the district. The implications of these results indicate that Black students are at higher risk for disciplinary actions in Texas school districts. Furthermore, the literature suggests that Black students are more likely to face disciplinary actions when enrolled in school districts that consist of high socioeconomic status populations and urban districts (Tajalli & Garba, 2014).

Additionally, Fenning and Rose (2007) indicated that Black students enrolled in schools with predominantly ethnic minorities are still more likely to be suspended or expelled compared to their White counterparts.

The discipline gap between Latinx and White students is dependent on the majority population of the overall district. The findings suggest that cultural norms contribute to how school personnel perceive behaviors from groups that are considered minoritized populations. Within LMD, the behaviors displayed by White students may be perceived as outside of the norms or expectations for the Latinx culture. Similarly, the behaviors in Latinx districts are perceived as different than the White cultural norms. Given the historical and geographical context, possible considerations for these trends may be due to strong Latin influence within Texas. Further implications of these results are that the expected or normative behaviors are relevant to the demographic population of the district.

Many of the policies in place are being utilized beyond their original intentions of maintaining school safety, as indicated by the APA Task Force (2008). There is more to consider than just the policy, such as the expectation and social norms, such as culture of a specific school. In other words, districts are using punitive measures to address behaviors that do not warrant punitive and harsh punishments, but rather to punish behaviors that do not correspond with the cultural norms within a school, which often is associated with disadvantaged or minoritized groups. This brings into question how these cultural norms disadvantage Black students specifically. Overall, the role of school culture and how that impacts the discipline gap should be considered. Action from policymakers should go further than modifying policies by addressing the cultural norms of districts.

Impact of Language of the Discipline Gap

CRT is a framework that emphasizes the power imbalance between dominant group norms and those from minoritized groups (Simson, 2013). Often these imbalances are organized to focus on norms of behaviors of a certain racial group due to historical and social contexts (Anyon et al., 2018; Simson, 2013). The current study focused on various components of behaviors and language that are often associated with power imbalances and stereotypes. Additional considerations are the tones and motivations behind the language. Further sections discuss the impact of language associated with identity and behavior-based language, as well as the tone and motivation of language within the CoC.

Identity-Based Language

From the perspective of both CRT and social cognitive lens, identity-based language of CoC can elicit negative stereotypes from behaviors of students from minoritized backgrounds. There are often negative stereotypes and assumptions about students of color that result in the

criminalization of their behaviors (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Joseph-Salisbury & Connelly, 2018). However, the findings from the current study suggest that the amount of identity-based language does not contribute to the discipline gap. In other words, the race- and gender-associated language that focuses on identity does not predict the outcome of disciplinary actions in terms of the CoC. Possible consideration for the findings is that the language used in the CoC are more associated with outlined behaviors than the identity phrasing used. Modifying identity-based language within the CoC may not be the most appropriate way for policymakers to intervene if their purpose of changing the CoC is to address the discipline gap within their district. While the findings of this study indicate that identity-based language does not predict the discipline gap, further research can be completed within this area to expand the understanding of identity-based language in CoC.

Behavior- and Appearance-Based Language

As mentioned above, negative behavioral stereotypes associated with Black behaviors often result in the criminalization of those behaviors associated with being loud and disruptive as well as dress-related behaviors (Chang & Demyan, 2007; Joseph-Salisbury & Connelly, 2018; Fenning & Rose, 2007). Together, appearance-, disruptive behaviors-, and criminal-based language does not predict the discipline gap for the entire sample. However, when analyzed separately, appearance-based language predicts the discipline gap for Black and White students receiving ISS. The nature of the relationship is negative. In other words, policies incorporating more appearance-based language in the CoC were associated with a smaller discipline gap in ISS. As the literature suggests that students continue to be removed from their classrooms due to the dress code violations associated with race-associated stereotypes (Aghasaleh, 2018; Gilliam et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2011), this finding suggests the more language dedicated to specifying

the expectations related to dress, the less likely students are to receive ISS for violating these policies. Whether the increase of appearance language leads to more adherence by students or greater clarity of when these codes are violated for teachers or administrators should be examined. Although the use of appearance-based language does not contribute to an increase of discipline gap for Black students, policymakers should still ensure that appearance-based policies, such as dress codes, do not target students of color. In addition, clear policies about when, or if, appearance-based policy violations should result in ISS should be considered to prevent unnecessary or unfair implementation of policy.

Within districts with no majority population, appearance, disruptive behaviors, and criminal behaviors predict the discipline gap between Black and White ISS actions. Disruptive and criminal behaviors positively impact the discipline gap, whereas appearance-based language negatively impacts the discipline gap between Black and White students. The results suggest that behavior-based language within the CoC matter more within demographically diverse districts. Despite the severity of behaviors outlined within the CoC, Black students receive disciplinary actions at higher rates than their White counterparts in terms of ISS. The stereotypical language associated with behaviors can criminalize these behaviors for minority groups (Joseph-Salisbury & Connell, 2018). As mentioned above, there should be consideration for cultural norms and expectations within a district. Policymakers should consider how students' standard behaviors and expectations are outlined and address school staff's interpretation of these policies.

Linguistic Styles

The use of policies that are more positive and driven to provide restorative support can better support students within the educational setting (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Cohen et al., 2009; Devine et al., 2012; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Lassen et

al., 2006). In contrast, the use of more punitive and harsh punishments can be more harmful to students (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Rocque & Snelling, 2018).

The results of the study indicated that the collected CoC were written with extremely formal and logical language (analytic), with a relatively neutral level of confidence (clout), neutral tones (emotional tone), and somewhat detached types of language (authenticity). In terms of how these policies related to the discipline gap, the analytic-, clout-, authentic-, and emotion-based language only predicted the gap between Black and Latinx ISS. The analytic, clout, and emotional tones positively impacted the discipline gap, whereas authentic language negatively impacted the relationship. Although all four variables were significant together, clout was the most important variable for those to consider. In other words, clout appears to be a contributor to the discipline gap in terms of tone.

Overall, policies that use more formal, neutral in confidence, less authentic, and neutral regard increased the gap between Black and Latinx students. The results suggest that policymakers should focus more on the policies' clout or confidence level. Although clout appears to affect the discipline gap negatively, the current policies lack high clout or more confident language. Further research should include integrating language with higher levels of confidence to determine the level of confidence within the CoC.

Motivation-Based Language

Together, reward, risk, power, achievement, and affiliation language does not contribute to the discipline gaps. However, affiliation or language that references others positively predicted the discipline gap between Black and Latinx students in terms of ISS. The language associated with affiliation is associated with increasing the likelihood of Black students receiving

disciplinary actions compared to their Latinx counterparts. Through the lens of CRT, Black and Latinx students are perceived as the minoritized groups. Furthermore, individuals often compare one's behaviors to an expectation or a normative group (Simson, 2013). For Black students, this can mean that their behaviors are being compared to the normative expectation put in place by the majority populations as a result of historical oppression. Thus, using language affiliation language might result in school personnel evaluating a students' behavior relative to other students rather than the perceived threat of the observed behavior. As indicated above, it is important to intervene and consider the school culture in addition to the language used within the CoC.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the study results indicated that there is a discipline gap for Black students. As mentioned above, this is consistent with current literature. The language associated with appearance- and behavior-based language predicted the discipline gap between Black and White students. In contrast, the tone- and motivation-based language predicted the Black and Latinx discipline gap. Additionally, the results only addressed the discipline gap in terms of ISS and did not predict OSS rates.

Further analysis indicated that a discipline gap exists depending on the districts' majority population. There was a discipline gap between White and Latinx students, in which White students received more disciplinary actions than Latinx students in LMD. In contrast, Latinx students were more likely to receive disciplinary actions at a rate higher than their White counterparts in WMD. Despite the majority population, Black students continued to receive disciplinary actions compared to their White and Latinx counterparts.

The identity-based language associated with racial/ethnic and gender identity does not predict the discipline gap for minoritized groups, even despite the majority population of the district. The appearance-based language was negatively related to the discipline gap for the discipline gap between Black and White students. Additionally, language that utilized affiliations positively impacted the discipline gap between Black and Latinx students, suggesting the comparison of cultural norms to students who do not meet those expectations. In ethnically diverse districts, criminal and disruptive behaviors were positively predicted by the higher rates of Black students of ISS compared to their White counterparts. Whereas appearance-based language negatively impacted the aforementioned discipline gap. The following sections further indicate the application of the study, the limitations within the study, and future directions. Last, behavior-based and appearance-based language only contributed to the discipline gap within districts without an ethnic majority.

Applications and Recommendations

Despite the long history of documentation of overrepresentation of Black and Latinx students for disciplinary actions, limited research has been conducted on the impact of language on the discipline gap. The current study provides more information regarding the overarching influence that the CoC has on students of color. Results indicated that several language components predict the disciplinary gap, specifically for those Black students in Texas. The application of this study can be used by various school personnel, including but not limited to policymakers, administrators, school board members, teachers, and school counselors. Additionally, school psychologists should use “their knowledge of organizational development and systems theory to assist in promoting a respectful and supportive atmosphere for decision making and collaboration” (National Association for School Psychologists [NASP], 2010, p. 47).

As indicated in the NASP Practice Guidelines, school psychologists should understand how policy influences systems as well as participate in the discussion of policy (Skalski et al., 2015). NASP suggested that school psychologists use evidence-based strategies in implementation and evaluation of policies (Skalski et al., 2015). With the ethical obligation to use empirical methods, school psychologists should support teachers and administrators in the matters of school policy (Skalski et al., 2015).

School psychologists can provide an essential role in encouraging changes in policy as well as advocating for students who are at a higher risk for disciplinary actions. The policy changes can include consideration for the language used within the CoC. For example, one can ensure that the intention of policy is to maintain school safety (i.e., firearms, drugs), rather than punishing behaviors that are not a threat to school safety (APA Task Force, 2008; Skiba, 2000). Additionally, school psychologists can encourage policy makers to consider child development, multicultural considerations, and humility as well as common trends that are often associated with disciplinary actions (i.e., school-to-prison pipeline; lower academic achievement) (Hirschfield, 2018; Pearman et al., 2019; Wald & Losen, 2003). Last, school psychologists can advocate for district- or school-wide interventions that address unwanted behaviors. Interventions can focus on the use of positive behaviors supports and restorative practices instead of the removal of students from the academic setting (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Cohen et al., Lassen et al., 2006). The following sections address the applications of the results in terms of the discipline gap and the language used in CoC.

Discipline Gap

As mentioned above, White students received more disciplinary actions than Latinx students in LMD, whereas Latinx students were more likely to receive disciplinary actions at a

rate higher than their White counterparts in WMD. The results suggest that students who are minorities relative to the majority population are at higher risk for receiving disciplinary actions. Although the results do not allow for causal interpretation, it can suggest that districts' social norms or expectations vary depending on the majority population. This suggests that incorporation of cultural norms into school policy results in bias in determining consequences of violations of policy and thus the discipline gap. The discipline gap may continue to change depending on the cultural influences within the area. Policymakers need to consider the racial/ethnic demographics within each district. Additionally, there should be consideration of the type of discipline actions that is enforced and the nature of the violation. As mentioned above, it is essential to consider the violations that are more consistent with maintaining law and order, and what is really a violation based upon the culture of the district. As suggested through the APA Task Force, it is important to consider interventions and supports to address school culture in addition to analyzing policies.

Language of Codes of Conduct

The following recommendations to address the language of CoC should be considered a systemic way to address the discipline gap for the overrepresentation of Black students who receive ISS, which persist throughout Texas School Districts. Policymakers should consider the language used to outline the expected and punitive behaviors within the CoC. As mentioned above, appearance-based language is negatively predicted of the discipline gap despite the majority population. Steps should be taken to consider the perception and interpretation of policies that include appearance-based language. For the tone of language, considerations for using more language that demonstrate either higher or lower confidence levels within the policies. Further research is needed to understand this relationship.

Behavioral-based language appears to be associated with the higher rates of Black students receiving ISS than their White counterparts in districts without an ethnic majority population. Some behaviors are not criminal or threatening within the CoC, but students receive disciplinary actions. These behaviors are lesser of a threat than violent behaviors or drugs, which punitive policies were intended for use. Policymakers should exclude language that outlines ambiguous behaviors, such as loud or disruptive students be removed them from the classroom. To address these less threatening behaviors, policymakers should consider using Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) within districts to address these behaviors rather than the removal of students from the classroom, which is consistent with previous literature (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Cohen et al., 2009; Lassen et al., 2006).

Language that references others or affiliation-based language positively impacted the discipline gap between Black and Latinx students. Policymakers should consider how affiliation-based languages naturally compares students with their counterparts. As mentioned with the literature, there is a natural comparison of the behaviors and expectations of White students to students of color (Brown & Di Tillio, 2013). As already indicated, this can be detrimental to Black students as their behaviors are often perceived as negative or not consistent with cultural norms. Policies should include the direct language of a student's behavior rather than language that references others and are potentially rooted in social expectations. In addition to reviewing CoC, there should be further consideration for the implications of support for school cohesiveness, positive school climate, and cultural humility workshops for school personnel.

School personnel should take steps to ensure the perception of the CoC does not impact the perception of the student's behaviors. Changes to policy should undergo additional theme analysis to ensure that stereotyped or punitive language is not incorporated into the policies. It is

worth noting that the results of the study do not indicate any causal relationship for the discipline gap; rather, they only indicate associations and predicted relationships. As a result, policymakers must consider the language used in policy and include other techniques and ways to address the discipline gap on a universal level. As mentioned above, PBS and universal intervention are essential to address the discipline gaps. The current study does provide direction for future research on the topic to provide further ways for policymakers to support students within the educational setting.

Limitations to the Study

Within the study, several limitations impact the generalizability of the results. The following sections address the limitation within the characteristics of the sample, methodology, and implications of the results.

The data collected only applies to the state of Texas in terms of population and state specific regulations of disciplinary actions as it applies within public education. There were several limitations regarding the districts that were collected for the sample. Although districts were randomly selected from each ESC region, there was not an equal number of district representations within each region in the final sample. In addition, the community type within the sample was not representative of Texas. For example, of the total 177 total charter schools within Texas, the sample consisted of 11. There was a lack of integration or consideration for each district's racial/ethnic demographics. As indicated in the results, the discipline gap varied depending on the racial/ethnic majority population. Including more ethnically diverse districts such as BMD would have increased the generalizability of the findings and provided more insight for the discipline gap within those racial/ethnic majority districts. Additionally, the data consisted of district level data rather than school level data. The use of school-specific

disciplinary data would have allowed for more specificity in recommendations depending on grade level, school population, and staff demographics.

The study's methodology consisted of several limitations in terms of measuring the language of CoC and disciplinary action. In terms of language, a new dictionary was created to measure stereotype language to analyze the data. Although the dictionary meets appropriate psychometric properties, it was the first time that the dictionary was used within a study. It is important to consider that the SPMSE-DA did not emphasize all the possible words consistent with stereotypical language. The SPMSE-DA could benefit from incorporating more words from school personnel such as teachers, administration, and policymakers. This would have allowed the words included in the dictionary to be more representative and applicable to the school setting. Similar to other psychological measures, there should be consideration for the possible bias of the researcher in the collection of the words. Overall, the SPMSE-DA could benefit from further modification.

In terms of disciplinary data, there are limitations to using secondary data. First, the fidelity of the data depends on the accuracy of reporting from each district and regional PEIMS manager. There were a significant number of missing data in the sample due to regulations as indicated by TEA. Districts with a low percentage of ethnic populations could not post the number of disciplinary actions due to the possibility of revealing confidential information as protected through the FERPA. As a result, the missing data within the sample were from districts with small racial/ethnic populations for Black, Latinx, and White students. It is possible that these districts with small racial/ethnic populations could have provided a more thorough depiction of Texas districts. Additionally, the missing data could skew the disciplinary rate actions within the entire sample.

Although the study investigated the relationship between the language of the CoC and the rate of disciplinary actions, it did not depict a causal relationship. A greater understanding of the specific reasons why students are removed from the classroom would allow more precise revision of CoC language which could then lead to testing using an experimental design. However, careful consideration of the ethics of such a study would need to be undergone.

The language within the CoC does not depict all reasons for the discipline gap. As a result, the study's findings only provide a portion of the phenomenon of the discipline gap. The study does depend on teachers, administrators, and policymakers to read and comprehend the CoC each year. It is worth noting that staff training requires members to read student policies; however, it is uncertain how school personnel read the CoC. It is possible that some school staff members do not read the CoC each year or depend on other aspects of information to indicate whether a student is disciplined. If school staff members do not carefully read the CoC and use this as the basis for their discipline choices, other methods to address the discipline gap must be utilized.

Suggestions for Future Research

Many limitations mentioned above lend to further research areas for the discipline gap and language used within the CoC. The current study indicated specific patterns of disciplinary actions within Latinx, White, and non-racial/ethnic majority districts in terms of ISS and OSS. Future research can focus on BMD to determine the relationship of the discipline gap and the relationship of linguistic patterns within the CoC. Current literature suggest that Black students will continue to experience a discipline gap (Fenning & Rose, 2007).

The current study focused on the entire state of Texas; however, each region within Texas has different cultural norms and diverse populations due to geographic and historical

influences. These influences can differ based upon surrounding states (i.e., Louisiana, Oklahoma) or country influences (i.e., Mexico). Additionally, different areas within Texas have diverse demographic populations. For example, certain cities also serve as a place for international refugees. Further research can investigate those relationships and how that might change the interpretation of behaviors outlined in the CoC. Other potential contributors to the discipline gap include academic achievement of the district, amount of funding, socioeconomic status, and staff demographics and should be considered in future research. Last, research can include the impact of CoC on other forms of disciplinary actions such as expulsions, DAEP and/or Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP).

Although the current study focused on Black, Latinx, and White students, future research can include students from various racial/ethnic backgrounds such as Native Americans and Pacific Islanders. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are common trends within each ethnic group in terms of whether they are more and less likely to receive a disciplinary action. The following students would benefit from further examination of how the CoC impact those relationships as well as modifications to the policies to best support them. Although TEA does not recognize students from the Middle East/North African (MENA) countries as their own racial group, further research could be done on disciplinary actions for students from MENA countries. In addition to expanding the sample in terms of racial/ethnic groups, future research could include other marginalized groups such as special education, Emerging English Language Learners, students that identify as LGBTQAI+ and gender/sex differences.

Further research could include collecting data from a school level rather than a district level. Incorporating school-specific disciplinary actions can indicate if certain aspects of language impact primary or secondary schools differently. Recommendations can also be made

more specific to schools considering the diversity of both students and staff. As an extension to the current study, a theme analysis would allow for specific phrases within the CoC related to stereotypical language. Following up with a theme analysis would provide more directive changes or modifications to CoC for policymakers. Future research should expand on the data collected and improve the data in terms of language. Further research can be done to incorporate more language associated with stereotypes from teachers and school personnel to improve the SPMSE-DA dictionary. Analyzing the disciplinary referral can also be used to compare to the language of the CoC. Future direction of research can be for language analysis of referral reasons for disciplinary actions, such as the use of stereotyped language used to described the behavior that resulted in the disciplinary action.

Conclusion

The present study contributes to the current body of literature in regard to how the CoC are associated with disciplinary actions in the state of Texas. Consistent with previous literature, Black students are at higher risk of receiving disciplinary actions than their Latinx and White counterparts. The nature of the discipline gap for White and Latinx is dependent on the demographics of the district, specifically the majority racial/ethnic population. The behavior-based language was consistent with the expected relationship as indicated in the literature, predicting the disciple gap for Black students. The relationship that appearance-based language positively impacts the discipline gap rather than the negative relationship. Additionally, tone and motivation-based language only predicted the Black and Latinx ISS discipline gap. Although several discipline gaps exist, many of them did not indicate any relationship with the language used in CoC.

The results revealed that current language used within the CoC only address the discipline gap for Black students and address ISS. The study provides directions for policymakers on how to tailor their interventions or supports to address the discipline gap, such as the demographic majority of the district. As noted above, different discipline gaps depend on the district's majority population. As a result, there could be different ways that districts and schools address these issues based upon appropriate cultural norms and topics of potential multicultural training for staff members. Limitations of the study were found within the sample of districts and the nature of using secondary data. There is room for future research to further depict the discipline gap with limitations. Future research will allow policymakers and other school personnel to better support students within the public-school systems.

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APPENDIX A

SPMSE-DA DICTIONARY

Appearances

- Bag
 - Bag*
- Black
 - Black*
- Braid
 - Braid*
- Chain
 - Chain*
- Color
 - Color*
- Dark
 - Dark*
- Different
 - Differ
 - Differ*
- Dirt
 - Dirt*
- Graffiti
 - Graffiti*
- Grill
 - Grill*
- Groom
 - Groom*
- Hair
- Hood
 - Hood*
- Logo
 - Logo*
- Oversized
 - Oversiz*
- Shave
 - Shav*
- Skin
- Tuck
 - Tuck*
- Provocative
 - Provoca*
- Sexy
 - Sex*

- Skirt
 - Skir*
- Shorts
- Tight
 - Tight*
- Spandex
- Bra
- Underwear
- Undergarment
- Rip
 - Rip *
- Hole
 - Hole*

Criminal Behaviors

- Aggressive
 - Aggress*
- Gang
 - Gang*
- Hazing
 - Haz*
- Unlawful
 - Unlawful*
- Violence
 - Violen*
- Drug
 - Drug*
- Fight
 - Fight*
- Combat
 - Comba*
- Deface
 - Deface*

Disruptive Behaviors

- Speech
- Disruption
 - Disrup*
- Distraction
 - Distrac*
- Limitation
 - Limi*
- Loud
 - Loud*
- Volume
 - Volum*

- Resistance
 - resistan*
- Yell
 - Yell
 - yelling
 - yells
- Offensive
 - Offensi*
- Respect
 - Respec*
 - Disrespec*
- Throw
 - throw*
- Cheat
 - Cheat*
- Plagiarize
 - Plagiari*

Race/Ethnicity

- Culture
 - Cultur*
- Language
 - Language*
- Nation
 - Natio*
- Diverse
 - Divers*
- Ethnicity
 - Ethni*
- Race