

PREDICTORS OF STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PLACEMENT IN URBAN AND
SUBURBAN DISTRICTS IN NORTH TEXAS

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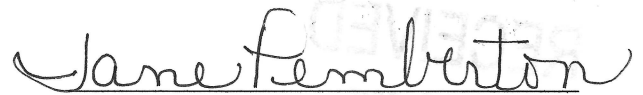
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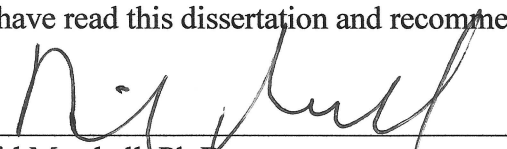
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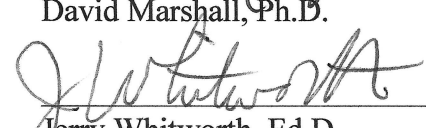
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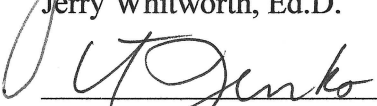
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Lovie T. Brown entitled "Predictors of Student Disciplinary Placement In Urban and Suburban Districts In North Texas" I have examined this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Special Education.


Jane Pemberton Ph.D., Major Professor

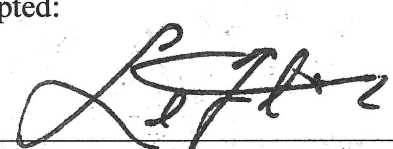
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Dean of the Graduate School

DEDICATION

The legend, Margarete Ann Hughes Thomas, who happens to be my mother, taught me to
value education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When Senator Barack Obama's book, "The Audacity of Hope" was published in 2006, two phrases anchored themselves into my mind: "to acknowledge the sins of the past and the challenges of the present without becoming trapped in cynicism or despair" and "what's remarkable is the number of minorities who succeeded against the odds."

There are many flowers to give to people who contributed to this reality. First, I would like to thank Dr. Ruth Johnson, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, for her support at Texas Woman's University. Dr. Johnson, you have given me the encouragement I needed to make these last two years bearable and I am truly grateful. I would not have made it without you. Thank you, Dr. Dwane Allen, for introducing Dr. Johnson to me. Also thanks to my department chair, Dr. Jane Pemberton, for helping me with the final details of my prospectus and dissertation. I express my sincere gratitude to Dr. David Marshall for his expertise, humor, time, and effort he gave me with my research questions and research design on many occasions. He was also instrumental in inspiring me to engage in long hours of learning about the methodology process through his ongoing feedback. Thanks for your enthusiasm and jokes, Dr. Marshall.

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ABSTRACT

LOVIE T. BROWN

PREDICTORS OF STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PLACEMENT IN URBAN AND SUBURBAN DISTRICTS IN NORTH TEXAS

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The purpose of this study is to explore how student factors vary across school factors regarding disciplinary actions in Texas schools. This research used information from secondary data to answer research questions in this study. Information about the school factors were obtained from The Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR) for school year 2012 – 2013. Three Texas schools were selected for this study. The study variables include one criterion variable (disciplinary placement rate) and 20 predictors (individual- and school-level variables). The relationship between student and school variables with two different school types was examined. The results comparing two types of school districts (suburban and urban) provided similarities and differences in results, indicating that disciplinary practices related to school size may influence how districts respond to behavior. These findings highlighted the importance of examining student and school characteristics that may influence disciplinary placement. The results of this study provide further insight into the disproportionality issue for educators related to disciplinary procedures in urban and suburban school districts.

Keywords: school suspension, school discipline, disproportionality

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
Chapter	
I. PREDICTORS OF STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PLACEMENT IN URBAN AND SUBURBAN DISTRICTS IN NORTH TEXAS	1
Suspension	2
Ethnicity.....	4
Gender.....	4
Socioeconomic Status	5
Disability.....	5
School Characteristics.....	6
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions.....	7
Significance of the Study	7
Assumptions.....	8
Methodology.....	8
Setting and Participants	9
Procedure	9
Limitations	9
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	10
Student Characteristics	11
Previous Suspension	12
Ethnicity.....	13

Gender.....	15
Socioeconomic Status	16
Disability.....	17
School Characteristics.....	19
School Types.....	19
Zero tolerance Violations.....	21
Classroom Characteristics.....	23
Staff Characteristics	23
Inexperienced Teachers and Classroom Behavior.....	24
Classroom Management	24
Academic Achievement.....	25
Summary	26
III. METHODOLOGY	27
Settings and Participants	27
Operational Definitions of Variables	29
Procedures.....	32
Data Collection	32
Method	34
Analyses.....	34
Research Questions	35
Summary	36
IV. RESULTS.....	37
Research Questions	40
Research Question One	40
Research Question Two.....	41
Research Question Three.....	43
Research Question Four	44
V. DISCUSSION	47
Key Findings of the Study	48
Research Question One.....	48
Research Question Two	48
Research Question Three	49
Research Question Four.....	49
Limitations	50
Implications for Future Research.....	52

Implications for Policymakers	52
Recommendations for Remediation.....	54
Conclusion	55
REFERENCES	57

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
1. Variables of Interest.....	33
2. Correlations of Study Variables with Student Disciplinary Placement, All Schools Combined	37
3. Correlations of Study Variables with Student Disciplinary Placement, Urban Schools.....	38
4. Correlations of Study Variables with Student Disciplinary Placement, Suburban Schools.....	39
5. Variance Explained from Results of Multiple Regression Analysis	40
6. Variance Explained from Multiple Regression Analysis, Research Question Two.....	42
7. Variance Explained from Multiple Regression Analysis, Research Question Three.....	43
8. Variance Explained from Multiple Regression Analysis, Research Question Four.....	45

CHAPTER I

PREDICTORS OF STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PLACEMENT IN URBAN AND SUBURBAN DISTRICTS IN NORTH TEXAS

The conversation about disproportionality in disciplinary placement in American public schools has been paramount in American's public educational system for many decades (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Hibel, Farkas, & Morgan, 2010; Sullivan & Bal, 2013). Concern has been expressed about the use of school disciplinary actions in public schools that may affect equal opportunities and educational attainment for students from culturally diverse populations and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Achilles, McLaughlin, & Croninger, 2007; Theriot, Craun, & Dupper, 2010). Individual- and school-level variables such as annual spending per student, racial composition, recidivism of suspended students, retention rate, dropout rate, student-teacher ratio, and average years of teaching experience were examined to explain the variance in suspension rates (Theriot et al., 2010). Removal of students who are disruptive from classrooms may be influenced by both student and school characteristics as part of nested interactions between variables.

School staffs rely heavily on disciplinary placement to provide classrooms that are conducive for learning for all students in their schools. Fabelo, Thompson, Plotkin, Carmichael, Marchbanks, and Booth (2011) reported that individual schools confront the

issue of school discipline differently. A school's disciplinary practices may, in fact, represent the characteristics of that school's suburban or urban district type and may differ from the school characteristics of another school community district type. Welch and Payne (2012) reported that disciplinary practices differ in urban school districts as a result of their regular use of zero tolerance policies. Even though differences in student cultural characteristics and educational disproportionality in school disciplinary actions have been extensively studied in the past Achilles et al. (2007), few studies have been focused on how disciplinary placement percentages might differ based on combining individual and school characteristics as predictors.

There are many variables that characterize what student- and school-level factors may cause disproportionality in school disciplinary placement. While these factors are common throughout the literature pertaining to disproportionality in school disciplinary practices, they are likely to have a more dramatic impact in urban public schools than in other school settings. Five student characteristics that continually predict disciplinary outcomes are suspension, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability. Issues identified in research that may contribute to disproportionality include individual and school related factors (Snyder & Dillow, 2012).

Suspension

The prevalence of youth offenders in schools is rapidly increasing according to Snyder and Dillow (2013). In school year 2009-2010, 433,800 incidences of students in public school districts experiencing serious disciplinary actions involving suspension

were documented. Many of these suspensions were related to law violations and lasted longer than five days. Examples of these violations included fighting, defiance, disrespect, or destroying school property. Many school districts use a zero tolerance policy that mandates severe punitive sanctions for certain rule or law violations. Generally, zero tolerance policies involve removing students from the school through expulsion (American Psychological Association Zero tolerance Task Force, 2008). Controversy exists about the use of zero tolerance practices, and Fenning and Rose (2007) describe the need to find alternative disciplinary practices.

Fabelo et al. (2011) produced statistics about disproportionality in school suspension in Texas between school year 1999-2000 and school year 2008-2009. Fabelo et al. (2011) studied 3,900 Texas schools with 1,000,000 secondary students from Texas middle and high schools. Results indicated that over 500,000 students were suspended or expelled at least once. The students with the highest rate of suspension were African American and male. For African American males, the likelihood for suspension was 75%, whereas White students' odds for suspension were 50% (Fabelo et al., 2011). Fabelo et al. found that 97% of all suspensions and expulsions were discretionary (minor and nonviolent offenses) and made at the local school level; they also noted that more African American students were suspended repeatedly when compared to students of other ethnicities and races. Fifteen percent of the 1,000,000 secondary students were assigned to disciplinary alternative education programs at least once.

Ethnicity

Educational opportunities in the U.S. public school system have improved over time for African Americans. The African American community has available school resources that include facilities, equipment, rigorous curriculum, and highly qualified school staff. However, one major challenge to America's schools is the zero tolerance policy. Using civil rights related data obtained from a survey conducted in school year 2008-2009, Losen and Skiba (2010) reported that African American students in Texas represented 14.2% of the population of students ages 6 through 21 years, but 31.4% of all actions occurred to African Americans students who were more frequently receiving disciplinary actions than were students of other ethnicities and races. Snyder and Dillow (2012) proposed that a collaborative effort is needed for identification and understanding African Americans males' characteristics to ensure a brighter future for this population.

Gender

Literature reviewed indicates that male students, especially African American males, are disproportionally suspended. Using a sample of 6,988 students from 21 elementary schools, Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Brennan, & Leaf (2010) conducted a study using a multilevel approach to analyze factors contributing to the overrepresentation of black students in office disciplinary referrals. The results shown indicated that African American male students were twice as likely to receive an office referral as females. Another study by Anderson, Howard, & Graham (2007) reported that African American males were 6.2 times more likely to be suspended in the 8th grade as a result of being

suspended in the 7th grade. Similar results were found in other studies (Bruns, Moore, Stephan, Pruitt, & Weist, 2005; Rocques & Paternoster, 2011; Sullivan, Klingbeil, & Van Norman, 2013).

Socioeconomic Status

More than 25% of students in America live in poverty conditions. The rate of children ages 5 to 17 years living in poverty in the state of Texas in 2011 was higher than the rate of poverty for children of the same age range in the nation (Aud, Wilkinson-Flicker, Kristapovich, Rathbun, Wang, & Zhang, 2013). The rate of extreme poverty for children living in the city of Fort Worth, Texas, was 10% or 21,000 in 2010 and 10% or 23,000 in 2011. However, the rate of poverty for the rest of the state was twice as high at 20.7%. Aud et al. (2013) indicated that a higher percentage of public school students attended a high-poverty school in school year 2010-2011 than in school year 1999-2000. Students living in poverty tend to demonstrate asocial behavior as well as lower academic achievement due to stressors found in their home environments (Jensen, 2009). Studies conducted found that students who receive free lunch demonstrate a higher risk for receiving school disciplinary action (Anderson et al., 2007; Bruns et al., 2005; Theriot et al., 2010).

Disability

The case of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 paved the way for special education laws to ensure America's public schools educate students with disabilities. The desegregation mandate from the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision guaranteed all

children, including those with disabilities, to a free and appropriate public education. This linkage of inclusion with racial desegregation was successful even though the literature indicates that students with disabilities are disproportionately suspended (Rocques & Paternoster, 2011; Stanley, Canham, & Cureton, 2006; Zhang, Katsiyannis, & Herbst, 2004). Additionally, the increase in school suspensions for students with disabilities has resulted from current disciplinary policies, including zero tolerance policies (Rocques & Paternoster, 2011; Stanley et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2004).

School Characteristics

Removal of disruptive students from classrooms is influenced by both student and school characteristics as part of nested interactions between variables. School characteristics may affect the way in which school administrators and teachers carry out disciplinary actions and by extension the effectiveness of their current methods in reducing disciplinary actions. School variables include the following: student enrollment, attendance rate, mobility rate, drop-out rate, percentage met on state standard for math and reading, teacher ethnicity (African American, White, Hispanic, and Asian), beginning teachers, and number of students per teacher.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how student related factors vary across school factors in order to control for alternative explanations such as race, regarding disciplinary actions in Texas schools. This study was done across combinations of student and school characteristics in suburban and urban school districts. This study

sought to determine which student or school characteristics influence disciplinary placement rates.

Research Questions

This quantitative study was conducted to answer the following four research questions:

1. What is the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors without controlling for school factors in two suburban school districts?
2. What is the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors without controlling for school factors in an urban school district?
3. What is the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors when school factors in two suburban school districts are controlled?
4. What is the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors when school factors in an urban school district are controlled?

Significance of the Study

The primary focus of this study is to identify the likelihood that a student would receive a disciplinary placement conditioned on student-level and school-level predictors. The extent to which each of these factors contributes to disciplinary placement is not clear. Studies have shown that individual schools confront issues of school discipline differently (Fabelo et al., 2011). For instance, disciplinary practices in school districts

may represent the school characteristics of the school community district type only, and, as a result, may differ from the school characteristics of another school community district type. This study will help to identify if these predictors vary in different school district types (suburban and urban). In summary, this study addressed how different district school types (suburban and urban) may predict disciplinary placement in schools conditioned on student-level and school-level predictors.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the secondary data found in the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) that is collected from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website are accurate and reliable. It is also assumed that the local school districts (LEAs) submitted accurate and reliable information to PEIMS. Finally, the collection of assessment data by the LEAs is assumed to be an accurate and reliable submission of data.

Methodology

A quantitative method was used to explore individual- and school-level variables to determine disciplinary actions in two community district types. The independent and criterion variables measured in this study were collected from TAPRs of 2012-13. TAPR collects this data from PEIMS. The criterion variable was the percentage of students with disciplinary placements for each school in the previous year. The following student socio-demographic characteristics were reviewed: prior suspension, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability. Teacher variables reviewed were: percent novice

teachers, average years of experience, teacher with advanced degrees, teacher ethnicity, teacher gender, teacher expectation, and classroom behavior. School characteristics included: suspension rate, board violations, law violations, and student enrollment.

Setting and Participants

The 34 secondary schools in the sample ($N = 34$) have a total school enrollment of 38,824 located within one metropolitan county in North Texas, Tarrant County. Data were reported from school year 2012-2013. The school districts sampled were two suburban districts with a total of 6 high schools and 10 middle schools, as well as one urban school district with 8 high schools and 10 middle schools.

Procedure

Data were collected on 8 student-level variables and 12 school level variables reflecting academic level, teacher characteristics, and school characteristics. The datasets for this current study are public information, acquired information, or extant data already collected by Texas Educational Agency (TEA) from two different community type districts for school year 2012–2013.

Limitations

Because the data were nonrandom and purposefully selected, the sample may not represent students in other regions or counties of the United States; therefore, the results may not generalize beyond the region being represented by the data. Furthermore, the variables measured in this study were collected from a secondary source and the nature of the data was not in the control of the researcher.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Disciplinary placement is the removal of a student from school that may result in a placement in a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) or Juvenile Justice Alternative Education program (JJAEP). Students are sent to DAEPs for two different offenses: mandatory and discretionary. Mandatory offenses may require removal immediately if a student causes a serious disruption, danger or harm; as with, offenses involving a firearm at school. Discretionary offenses may be subjective in nature according to the teacher or principal and may not be related to school safety, such as persistent misbehaving.

The ever-increasing numbers of students receiving expulsions from school as a result of Zero tolerance have caused concern in many school districts. Zero tolerance policy mandates severe punitive sanctions for certain rule or law violations. President Clinton signed into law the Gun-Free Schools Act in 1994 that paved the way for Zero tolerance implementation around the country. Afterward, Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs) were required and mandated by the 74th Texas legislature to enforce the Texas Safe Schools Act of 1995. Throughout the state of Texas, certain school districts' disciplinary placement rates exceed the state rate.

Disciplinary actions disrupt academic progress for many students. Some racial and ethnic minority students received punitive disciplinary actions more frequently than

other students for similar disciplinary actions. The disproportionality rates of ethnically minority students in disciplinary placements are on the rise (Skiba, et al., 2011). The growing cultural and linguistic diversity among families in the student population in America is causing growing pains and disparity in America's public education system. There is an urgent need to understand disproportionality as it relates to school expulsion.

A recent longitudinal project by the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University produced statistics after tracking public school students enrolled in grades six to twelve between school years 1999–2000 and 2008–2009 (Fabelo et al., 2011). Results indicated that more than 4,910,900 disciplinary actions were experienced by the study group in school years 1999 through 2009. As many as 143,700 suspensions placed students in Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs) and as many as 77,300 suspensions placed students in Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs (JJAEPs) (Fabelo et al., 2011). It is important to identify the predictors for the current rate of disproportionality, and then evaluate mechanisms which will alter the disciplinary referral process that will provide all students with equal educational, equal opportunities, and educational attainment.

Student Characteristics

Previous Suspension

Sullivan et al. (2013) examined the effects of 15 school-level predictors using multilevel models to analyze the likelihood of students being issued one or more suspensions based on the nesting of individual and school characteristics. The population

was 17,837 students enrolled during school year 2009-2010 in 39 elementary and secondary schools in the state of Wisconsin. Their findings indicated that socioeconomic status (SES) significantly reduced the associations of race to suspension risk. Additionally, the school-level variable that impacted suspension was the percentage of suspensions from nondrug or weapon violations. Race and disability were significantly related to the risk of multiple suspensions after controlling for the five student variables. Sullivan et al. (2013) reported that schools with a higher suspension rate are more likely to exclude students than schools with a lower suspension rate. Schools with a higher suspension rate are more punitive in their handling of student suspensions. Similarly, Anderson et al. (2007) found that African American males were 6.2 times more likely to be suspended in the 8th grade if the students were suspended in the 7th grade. They found the odds were 3 times if suspended in 5th grade to be suspended in the 6th grade.

Contrasting results were obtained in a large-scale study across three levels of schooling that served 500,000 students conducted by Kinsler (2011). This investigation used a quasi-experimental design to compare disparity in school suspension of Black students with White students. Kinsler (2011) found that Black and White students are equally likely to be suspended and receive similar suspension durations after controlling for within school-level effects. However, race and disability were significantly related to the risk of multiple suspensions after controlling for five social and demographic variables.

Students with disabilities are disproportionately overrepresented in alternative placements for many reasons (Lashley & Tate, 2009). Due to IDEA protection, these subjective practices are prevalent when dealing with students with special needs (Zhang et al., 2004) and due to their being at-risk for school failure (Foley & Pang, 2006).

Ethnicity

Racial disparity in school suspensions may lead to migrating factors; such as, incarceration in the future (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Christle & Yell, 2008). Achilles et al. (2007) found that African American males were significantly related to higher likelihood of exclusion. Similarly, Arcia (2007) used a sample composed of primarily ethnic minority students. The author investigated the variability in suspension rates and reported that student suspension percentages were correlated significantly and positively with Black students. Bradshaw et al. (2010) concluded after controlling for student- and classroom-level variables, there was a strong likelihood of receiving any type of Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODR) for African American students, particularly males than white students. In agreement with Bradshaw et al., Kinsler's (2011) finding suggested that race was positively related to initial referrals.. Additionally, Losen and Skiba (2010) reported that 175 schools were suspending more than 33% of the Black males enrolled and 84 schools were suspending more than 50% of the Black males enrolled. In contrast, Arcia (2007) found that schools that suspended high percentages of non-Black students had a larger percentage of variance in suspensions.

Some studies found lower suspension rates for Hispanic students and percent of English Language Learners (ELLs) (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Sullivan et al., 2013). A study by Raffaele-Mendez and Knoff (2003) found that Hispanic students were suspended less often and mostly for sexual harassment for males and inappropriate behavior for females. In another study, lower suspension rates were found for Hispanic students (Losen & Skiba, 2010). Their statistics indicated that 13 schools were suspending more than 50% of the Hispanic males enrolled and 2 schools were suspending more than 50% of the Hispanic females enrolled. Those authors that included Asian students in their analysis reported that Asian students, when compared to other races, were less likely to receive a disciplinary action of any kind (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013).

Some authors conducted their studies from racial theoretical perspectives to examine reasons behind disproportionality in school districts' disciplinary practices (Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Welch & Payne, 2012). Eitle and Eitle (2004) examined the relationship between desegregation and African American students' suspension rates at the school-level using a race stratification theory. The data from the 2000 decennial census of African American students entering 728 secondary schools in Florida for desegregation was analyzed using a multilevel approach. The dependent variable was the Black suspension imbalance (Black suspension overrepresentation ratio) and defined as representation of Black students among those suspended in proportion to the total student enrollment during school year 1999-2000. As a result of this analysis, significant

variation across school districts was noted. However, school district segregation level was the only residential characteristic that demonstrated statistical significance for greater racial imbalance.

Contrasting results were obtained in a study conducted by Welch and Payne (2012). They examined the racial threat hypothesis of using harsh school punishment in addressing African American students' misbehaviors at the school level. The authors used a random sample of national schools (The National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools). The authors operationalized racial threat by the percentage of Black students in each school (percent Black students). As hypothesized, the results showed that percent Black students were positively related to suspension.

Gender

The rising disciplinary actions received by minorities that are males in some American public schools mirror the rising juvenile crime in some areas of the country primarily due to economic disadvantages. Achilles et al. (2007) found that African American males were significantly related to higher likelihood of exclusion in the three disability classifications. Similarly, Anderson et al. (2007) reported the odds for suspension were three times higher if the student had been suspended in 5th to be suspended in 6th grade for African American males. Kinsler (2011) stated that Black students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to receive a school suspension across schools. After examining 175 schools, Losen and Skiba (2010) indicated that 31 schools were suspending more than 50% of the Black females enrolled.

Other suspension rates included that 22 schools were suspending more than 33% of the White males enrolled and 18 schools were suspended more than 50% of the White females enrolled. Both Sullivan et al. (2013) and Theriot et al.'s (2010) conducted a similar analysis and found risk of suspension was significant for Black males. In contrast, Christle et al. (2005) reported gender did not yield a significant effect on all 161 middle schools in their studies. According to studies reporting results in office disciplinary referral. Bradshaw et al. (2010) found that student gender also had a consistent effect across office disciplinary referral categories, such that boys had more than twice the odds of receiving any office disciplinary referral type or having a teacher-reported office disciplinary referral. Rocques and Paternoster (2011) reported males, those with a disability, older students, and students who are in a free lunch program followed inappropriate behavior as the most significant predictor of disciplinary referrals.

Hinojosa (2008) found that male students demonstrated a higher likelihood for suspension on in-school and out-of-school suspension with 61 percent and 51 percent likelihood respectively. Raffaele-Mendez and Knoff (2003) indicated that Black male students were twice as likely to receive a suspension when compared to White males. Black females were three times more likely to receive a suspension than White females.

Socioeconomic Status

Poverty may affect psychological and emotional development due to stressors found in their home environments (Jensen, 2009). Bruns et al. (2005) established the percent of students in poverty as positively associated with all of the outcome variables:

out-of-school rate, mean out-of-school duration, and rate of total suspension days in their study. In agreement with Bruns et al. (2005), Theriot et al. (2010) findings indicated that minorities that were suspension were more likely to be poor and receive a violent offense for their previous suspension. Also, Christle et al. (2005) reported percentages of students in the Free or Reduced Lunch Program (FRLP) as the most likely predictor of disciplinary actions. Similarly, Achilles et al. (2007) found that SES was positively related to higher likelihood of exclusion. Sullivan et al. (2013) indicated that SES significantly reduced the associations of race to suspension risk. However, the correlation between receiving lunch assistance and suspension in all grades was reported to be weak in a study conducted by Anderson et al. (2007). The authors compared subgroups of the same socioeconomic background and gender which may have caused the weak correlation.

Disability

Achilles et al. (2007) found that African American males were significantly related to highly likelihood for exclusion in three disability classifications: (Emotional Behavioral Disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and Learning Disability). After using logistic regressions, students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder had a higher likelihood for exclusion than students with Learning Disabilities. More importantly, students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders were positively related to a higher likelihood for exclusion when multiple school changes and attending urban schools were added. In a study by Anderson

et al. (2007), students were suspended the year prior to the current year's investigation. They found that African American males with disabilities were 2.8 times more likely to be suspended in the 6th grade if they had been suspended in the 5th grade.

In an attempt to determine antecedents of the "School-to-Jail" link, Rocques and Paternoster (2011) examined the relationship between students enrolled in special education and school discipline nested in three levels: student, classroom or teacher, and the school. Results indicated students with a disability as a predictor of disciplinary actions. In contrast, Theriot et al. (2010) did not find a significant correlation between the number of previous out-of-school suspensions and when the last suspension resulted in school exclusion in the special education population. Sullivan et al. (2013) conducted a study to investigate the likelihood of students being issued one or more suspensions based on special education status after analyses of discipline discrepancies and they found the special education population was included in the predictors with less risk. Zhang et al. (2004) investigated trends in disciplinary practices for three years by analyzing nationwide data for four disciplinary exclusion types (removal by school personnel [RBSP], removal by hearing officer [RBHO], long-term suspension [>10 days], and short-term suspension [<10 days], based on ethnicity in five racial groups, and four disability categories (Learning Disabilities, Intellectual Disabilities, Emotional Disorders, and AD [all disabilities]). Zhang et al. indicated that Texas was in the top five with highest percentages of short-term suspensions across three of four years in each racial group and in the disability category of Learning Disabilities and Emotional

Disturbance. Students with disabilities living in the south received significantly more short-term suspensions.

School Characteristics

Kunjufu (2004) noted that the desired behavior in the classroom is effective interaction between teacher and student. School staff relies heavily on suspension to assist them in providing a classroom conducive for learning for all students in school districts. However, frequent use of suspension causes negative student-teacher relationships (Myers & Pianta, 2008). Aside from student predictors, researchers examined school and context (student and school) variables to explain disciplinary actions. Authors suggest that much of the outcomes between school disciplinary practices in school districts point in the direction of the importance of teacher characteristics (Arcia, 2007; Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Sullivan et al, 2013); racial group representation in the school (Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011); and poverty (Theriot et al, 2010). Studies have shown that individual schools confront issues of school discipline differently (Fabelo et al., 2011).

School Types

Disciplinary practices in school districts may in fact represent the school characteristics of that school community district type only and, as a result, may differ from the school characteristics of another school community district type. For instance, one study found that students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders were positively related to highly likelihood for exclusion when multiple school changes and attending

urban schools were added (Achilles et al, 2007). According to Lee et al. (2011) academic performance is more likely to decline with increases in school size. It is reported that a contributing factor in disproportionality in school suspension is racial composition. Conflicts in the classroom handled inappropriately may yield escalations. One study conducted by Bruns et al. (2005) indicated that school enrollment and student attendance was significantly negatively associated with out-of-school (OSS) rates, and the rate of total OSS days. Another study's findings associated multiple school changes, urban school setting, and lower parent satisfaction with the child's school with higher likelihood of exclusion (HLE) (Hinojosa, 2008). In addition, one author predicted middle schools, schools with lower expenditure per child, schools with fewer students passing the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT), and schools with lower reported misconduct to have a positive interaction between the black suspension representation ratios (Eitle & Eitle, 2004). Kinsler (2011) found that Black student school enrollment had a positive relationship to suspension length.

Schools with higher racial composition of African Americans utilized more office referrals and more harsh school punishment in addressing African American students' misbehaviors, (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011). For instance, a study by Welch and Payne (2012) demonstrated that racial composition was positively related to some zero tolerance infractions: possession of other drugs and possession of a knife. The authors discussed the possibility of the response to zero tolerance violations elicit an automatic expulsion as the percentage of Black students increases in a school. This study agrees with Rocque

and Paternoster (2011) that suggested that many schools with higher racial composition of African Americans utilized harsh school punishment to address African American students' misbehaviors. Eitle and Eitle (2004) did not find that the size of the black student population is a significant predictor of higher suspension rates, given other researchers in this review found evidence of an association between racial composition and suspension rates.

Zero Tolerance Violations

Many school districts use a zero tolerance policy that mandates severe punitive sanctions for certain rule or law violations such as expulsion. Students who are retained or suspended from school possessing poor academic achievement may in turn be more likely to drop out of school. According to Snyder and Dillow (2012), 15.1% of the minority population dropped out of high school before graduation in 2010. Students who do not graduate from high school are more likely to be arrested than students who do graduate from high school (Lee et al., 2011). Many authors examined zero tolerance policy for suspension in relationship to punitive disciplinary actions or disciplinary placements (Christle et al., 2005; Kinsler, 2011; Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Sullivan et al., 2013; Theriot et al., 2010; Welch & Payne, 2012). For instance, Christle et al. (2005) noted that suspension rates were highly correlated with board violations and law violations for the group of 20 highest suspension rates schools (HSS) in comparison to the group of 20 lowest suspension rates schools (LSS). Sullivan et al. (2013) also reported that percentage of suspensions from nondrug or weapon violations impacted

suspension. Similarly, Kinsler (2011) found that variables that were related to more punitive punishment were behavioral history variables: number of previous offenses and whether the student was written up for multiple offenses on the same day. Black students received more punitive punishment for fighting than White students within schools and across schools.

When comparing infraction types, Raffaele-Mendez and Knoff (2003) found that Black male students were suspended mostly for battery, threat/intimidation, and sexual harassment, whereas, White students were mostly suspended for tobacco, narcotics, and alcohol possession. Black female students' violations mostly consisted of disobedience/insubordination, profanity, and disrespect. Hispanic students were suspended less often and mostly for sexual harassment for males and inappropriate behavior for females. According to Raffaele-Mendez and Knoff (2003), the suspension rates decreased in high school. The researchers suggested that the numbers decreased in high school as a result of African Americans students dropping out of school. Theriot et al. (2010) revealed the likelihood of being excluded was over 14 times higher when the student commits a violent infraction when compared to a nonviolent infraction. Moreover, the authors reported the likelihood for receiving school exclusion was nine times higher for those who commit a zero-tolerance suspension as compared to others without a zero-tolerance suspension. A positive relationship was found between the number of previous out-of-school suspensions and when the last suspension resulted in school exclusion.

Classroom Characteristics

Staff Characteristics

A contributing factor in disproportionality in school suspension indicates that a cultural mismatch exists between African American students and the educational staff in schools today. Demographic makeup of the teaching force may not reflect the same diversity found in the student enrollment in public schools. Many authors explored school staff demographic characteristics to determine the impact of suspension decisions (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Kinsler, 2011; Rocques & Paternoster, 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013; Theriot et al., 2010). Several authors explored teacher ethnicity and/or gender characteristics to determine the presence of bias in referral decisions (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Kinsler, 2011; Rocques & Paternoster, 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013). Kinsler (2011) reported Black students had a higher likelihood of getting a referral than White students from all teachers. Kinsler (2011) indicated that the average Black principal suspends students for a longer period than White principals. Bradshaw et al. (2010) reported an interaction between child ethnicity by child gender by teacher ethnicity. Bradshaw et al. (2010) concluded that Black male students with Black teachers received more disciplinary referrals. Additionally, Black students were highly likely to receive a major office discipline referral from Black teachers; such as, fighting or defiance.

In terms of gender, Rocques and Paternoster (2011) found a weak relationship between being an African American student and receiving discipline referrals from a male teacher. In contrast, Sullivan et al. (2013) reported teacher ethnicity was not shown

to be a predictor of suspension. Also, when examining past disciplinary actions, Theriot et al. (2010) did not find that ethnicity and gender of the principal predict future suspensions.

Inexperienced Teachers and Classroom Behavior

Researchers posit that school practices are unsuccessful as a result of domination by external motivations such as grades, threats, punishments, and suspension and less focus on internal motivation. The campus climate may impact how teachers and administrators respond to antisocial behavior exhibited by some minority students. Researchers investigated the impact of teacher experience and classroom behavior (Arcia, 2007; Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Hinojosa, 2008; Rocques & Paternoster, 2011). Both Hinojosa (2008) and Rocques and Paternoster (2011) indicated that experienced teachers encountered less behavior problems. Arcia's (2007) results indicated that a larger percentage of variance in suspension was generated by schools with more inexperienced teachers. Eitle and Eitle (2004) hypothesized that districts with high segregation have the greatest racial-ethnic imbalances in suspensions. However, reported findings from Eitle and Eitle (2004) indicated that the teaching social milieu (teachers with advanced degrees, more years of teaching experience, and smaller class size) and schools with lower reported misconduct predicted greater racial imbalances in the suspension rate.

Classroom Management

Rocques and Paternoster (2011) did not find a positive relationship between being an African American student and the risk of a disciplinary report by teacher-level factors.

However, Rocque and Paternoster (2011) did report problem behavior as the most likely predictor of disciplinary actions. On author identified classrooms with higher mean averages of bad behavior, teachers of older students, female teachers, and teachers with higher educational levels were more likely to issue office referrals (Kinsler, 2011).

Hinojosa (2008) analyzed student and teacher surveys gathered in 1997 from a large urban district to identify gaps and problems in prior literature examining disproportionality in out-of-school suspension rates. Data analysis began with classifying the 843 surveys of the students who received suspensions by race, socioeconomic status, and family status. They found that the magnitude of teacher expectations decreased the likelihood of students' expulsion by 26 percent for out-of-school suspension and 28 percent for in-school suspension. Furthermore misbehavior had the greatest impact on in-school and out-of-school suspension with a 4.38 and 5.23 greater odd respectively. The magnitude of two-family homes and access to family resources decreased the likelihood of students' expulsion by 12 percent.

Academic Achievement

Some authors link illiteracy to delinquency. Authors report a straight line exists from poor reading achievement in the third grade to the rate of graduation in the 12th grade to the rate of incarceration for males (Christle & Yell, 2008; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001). Studies investigated achievement as a risk factor for school suspension (Anderson et al., 2007; Arcia, 2007; Christle et al., 2005; Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Hinojosa, 2008; Kinsler, 2011; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013).

Anderson et al. (2007) conducted a small-scale quantitative study using a non-experimental, four-predictor logistic model to determine the correlation between achievement patterns and disciplinary actions in 211 6th graders, 201 7th graders, and 172 8th graders of African American males that may result in suspension in the following year. Anderson et al. (2007) found that as reading achievement increased at the end of 6th grade, suspensions decreased in 7th grade. Similarly, Arcia (2007) found a larger percentage of variance generated by schools with disparities in achievement scores. In contrast, Eitle and Eitle (2004) reported that schools with fewer students passing the state test did not have a positive interaction between the black suspension representation ratios. Similarly, Rocque and Paternoster (2011) found mean GPA as a least likely predictor of disciplinary actions. Christle et al. (2005) identified school based policies and practices as the risk factors of delinquency after investigating school characteristics related to academic achievement. Hinojosa (2008) examined student engagement levels to determine the effect on student punishment. The author reported that African American students, when compared to their White peers, at 2.88 and 2.70 greater odd respectively.

Summary

The above findings contributed to understanding relationships with suspension rates. Understanding relationships with suspension rates may be very useful for designing recommendations and providing remediation to students at risk for failure for all educational personnel responsible for reducing disproportionality in American public schools by viewing how the total school environment impact school suspension rates.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine how different district school types (suburban and urban) may predict disciplinary placement in schools conditioned on student-level and school-level predictors. Previous research has not addressed how different district school types (suburban and urban) may predict expulsion or disciplinary placement in schools. This chapter will discuss the approaches to data collection, operational definitions of variables, research questions, sampling procedures, methodologies that address these research questions, and the research design. The study variables include one criterion variable (disciplinary placement rate), and 20 predictors (individual- and school-level variables). Individual- and school-level variables were analyzed with a quasi-experimental method to determine disciplinary actions. A multiple regression with four models was used to answer the four research questions.

Setting and Participants

The school districts sampled included two suburban districts with six high schools and ten middle schools along with eight high schools and ten middle schools sampled in one urban school district. The schools included in the sample for the urban school district included both high and low socioeconomic schools excluding alternative schools. This sample included all the secondary schools in the two suburban schools excluding alternative schools. After exclusion, this study included a total of 38,676 secondary

students enrolled in N =34 schools in Tarrant County in North Texas during the academic school year 2012–2013.

Texas Education Agency (TEA) classifies school districts by community types or geographical locations. In this study the geographical location are divided into two categories. School community types in Texas are categorized by district size, growth rates, and proximity to urban areas. Major suburban districts are school districts that include at least 15%, but no more than 50%, of the student population of the district living in areas designated as a major urban area. Major urban districts are school districts serving one of six metropolitan areas in the state of Texas in which more than 35% of the students are identified as economically disadvantaged and in which the total population is 825,000 or more residents living in the county. This information is provided at <http://tea.texas.gov/acctres/analyze/1213/gloss1213.html>.

The majority of students district-wide in the urban district were Hispanic students (61%), followed by African American students (23%); Caucasian students (13%); and Asian students (2%). Regarding socioeconomic and disability status, 77% of all students received a free or reduced school lunch while 7% received special education services. The rate of students with Disciplinary Placements in the previous school year was 1.8 for this school district.

The majority of students district-wide in the larger suburban district were Caucasian students (38%), followed by African American students (27%); Hispanic students, (24%); and Asian students (6%). Regarding socioeconomic and disability

status, 39% of all students received a free or reduced school lunch while 9% received special education services.

The majority of students district-wide in the smaller suburban district were Caucasian students (61%), followed by Hispanic students (21%); African American students (4%); and Asian students (9%). Regarding socioeconomic and disability status, 22% of all students receive a free or reduced school lunch while 7% received special education services. The rate of students with Disciplinary Placements in the previous school year was 1.2 in both suburban districts. The disciplinary placement rate for the 2011 – 2012 school year in middle schools and high schools in all three districts ranged from 0% to 8.9%, with an average of 3.12%. However, the average disciplinary placement rate was 1.7% for all schools in the state of Texas during school year 2011-2012 demonstrating, a striking difference between the state and district rates.

Operational Definitions of Variables

These definitions are derived from Glossary for the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) for 2012–2012; Ritter Indicator Report Information; and/or 2011-2012 PEIMS Data Standards. Information regarding definitions of these variables, including the processes by which they were derived, can be obtained from the TEA website at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/tapr/2013/glossary.html>.

Disciplinary placement rate: Percentage of students removed to an interim alternative educational setting by school personnel for offenses involving drugs, weapons or serious bodily injury during school year 2011-2012.

Student with disciplinary placements: Counts and percents of students placed in alternative education programs under Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code (Discipline; Law and Order) are shown (for the 2011-12 school year) in the TAPRs. Disciplinary placement counts are obtained from PEIMS records. Districts report the disciplinary actions taken toward students who are removed from the classroom for at least one day. This measure counts students only once and includes only those whose removal results in a placement in a disciplinary alternative education program or juvenile justice alternative education program.

Mobility rate: A student is considered to be mobile if he or she has been in membership at the school for less than 83% of the school year (i.e., has missed six or more weeks at a particular school).

Percent at-risk: A student is identified as at-risk of dropping out of school based on state-defined criteria.

Percent economically disadvantaged: The percent of economically disadvantaged students is calculated as the sum of the students coded as eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or eligible for other public assistance, divided by the total number of students.

Percent ELL: These are students identified as English language learners by the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) according to criteria established in the Texas Administrative Code.

Percent African American: A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

Percent Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Percent Hispanic: A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

Percent White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.

Total Special Education students: This refers to the population of students served in special education programs.

Total student: This is the total number of public school students who were reported in membership on October 28, 2012, at any grade, from early childhood education through Grade 12. Membership is a slightly different number from enrollment because it does not include those students who are served in the district for less than two hours per day.

Attendance rate: Total number of days that students were present in 2012-13 divided by total number of days students were in membership in 2012-13.

Drop-out rate. The number of dropouts in Grades 7 through 12 during school year 2011-12 divided by number of Grade 7-12 students who were in attendance at any time during the 2011-12 school year.

Percent met STAAR state standard for math: This percent shows the percent of students who took and passed the STAAR math test.

Percent met STAAR state standard for reading: This percent shows the percent of students who took and passed the STAAR reading test.

Percent African American teachers: Teachers are reported as African American.

Percent White teachers: Teachers are reported as White.

Percent Hispanic teachers: Teachers are reported as Hispanic.

Percent Asian teachers: Teachers are reported as Asian or Pacific Islander.

Percent of novice teachers: Teachers reported with less than five years of experience.

Number of students per teacher: This shows the total number of students divided by the total teacher FTE count.

Procedures

Data Collection

The data in this current study included publicly available secondary data already collected by the TEA for school year 2012-2013 on two different school district types. These reports are generated by the public education information management system (PEIMS) from the state of Texas. The data source is the Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR). The TAPR provides descriptive statistics (counts and/or percentages) on a variety of student characteristics, school programs, and staff data. This information

was retrieved from the website <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/tapr/2013/index.html>.

There are many variables that may contribute to higher suspension rates and that may lead to higher disciplinary placement rates. Building from the assumption that individual and school characteristics are better able to explain variance in school disciplinary actions, it is conceivable that both characteristics influence both suspension and disciplinary placement percentages as they serve as the nested interaction between the two variables together. Predictor variables are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

<i>Variables of Interest</i>	
<i>Criterion Variable</i>	
Percent of students with Disciplinary placement (2011 – 2012)	
<i>Predictor Variables</i>	
Student Variable	School Variables
At Risk Rate	Student enrollment
% African American	Attendance rate
% White	Mobility rate
% Hispanic	Drop-out rate
% Asian	% met STAAR state standard for math
Total SPED students	% met STAAR state standard for reading
% Economically Disadvantaged (FRLP) ^a	% African American Teachers
% English language learners (ELLs)	% White Teachers
	% Hispanic Teachers
	% Asian Teachers
	% Notive Teachers (beginner teachers)
	# of Students per Teacher
<i>Note:</i> ^a Participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program (FRLP)	

Method

A correlational method were used to explore individual- and school-level variables to determine disciplinary actions in two community type school districts (suburban and urban) likely to promote disciplinary placement practices according to prior research. A major advantage for this design is having the participants already intact, and in most cases the groups are unaware that they are involved in a study (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).

After the data were collected for this study, the data were downloaded into Excel files, then saved in a file and loaded directly into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Once the data were loaded in SPSS, analysis was conducted in a SPSS data file. Disciplinary placement was correlated with each predictor variable, and stepwise multiple regression analyses determined the statistically significant relationships between school variables disciplinary in two types of school districts (suburban and urban). Multiple regression analyses predicted the number of students receiving a disciplinary placement based on several independent variables. Multiple regressions provide the assessment of the combined effectiveness of several independent variables in clarifying differences on a dependent variable while it also identifies the unique contribution each independent variable makes to that overall clarification (Abu-Bader, 2010).

Analyses

Several stepwise multiple regression analyses were conducted for this study, to estimate a regression equation that predicted levels of disciplinary placement among

secondary students based on their student characteristics and school characteristics. The independent variables were entered according to their statistical contribution in explaining the variance in the dependent variable that determined which student or school characteristic significantly influenced disciplinary placement rates. The research questions were answered using four separate analyses of the data.

Research Questions

1. What is the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors without controlling for school factors in two suburban school districts?
2. What is the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors without controlling for school factors in an urban school district?
3. What is the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors when school factors in two suburban school districts are controlled?
4. What is the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors when school factors in an urban school district are controlled?

Four models were examined:

- a) Model One included eight variables from suburban schools that describe the race percentages, total student, percent FRLP, total SPED, percent ELL, and at risk rate.

- b) Model Two included eight variables from urban schools that describe the race percentages, total student, percent FRLP, total SPED, percent ELL, and at risk rate.
- c) Model Three included 12 variables from the two suburban school districts but control for the socio-demographic characteristics.
- d) Model Four included 12 variables from the urban school district but control for the socio-demographic characteristics.

Summary

Based on previous theories, student demographical factors predicted disciplinary actions; therefore, these variables were entered into model One and model Two. Finally, school variables were entered in model Three and model Four. The focus of using stepwise regression would be the question of what the best combination of 20 predictor variables would be to predict the dependent variable.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Thirty-four schools were surveyed. Bivariate correlations are displayed in Tables 2, 3, and 4. Stepwise regressions (used to examine the research questions) can obscure the relationship between a dependent variable and a given predictor, so the bivariate correlations can reveal relationships that would be otherwise overlooked.

Table 2

Correlations of Study Variables with Student Disciplinary Placement, All Schools Combined

Variable	Correlation	Variable	Correlation
Total Student	.063	% Met State Standard Math	-.386*
Special Education	.261	Total Teaching Staff	.123
% Student African American	.312	% Males	.153
% Student Hispanic	.221	% Females	-.153
% Student White	-.565*	% Minority Teachers	.556*
% Student Asian	-.252	# of Students Per Teacher	-.094
% Economically Disadvantaged	.585*	% Notive (Beginner Teacher)	.626*
% English Language Learner	.447*	Average Years of Experience	-.567*
Attendance rate	-.759*	Average Experience with District	-.308
Mobility Rate 2011–2012	.876*	% African American Teachers	.496*
At Risk Rate	.743*	% Hispanic Teachers	-.103
Dropout rate	.285	% White Teachers	-.455*
% Met State Standard Reading	-.633*	% Asian Teachers	.051

Note: *P < .05

Table 3

Correlations of Study Variables with Student Disciplinary Placement, Urban Schools

Variable	Correlation	Variable	Correlation
Total Student	.679*	% Met State Standard Math	-.718*
Special Education	.830*	Total Teaching Staff	.702*
% Student African American	.388	% Males	.615*
% Student Hispanic	.241	% Females	-.616*
% Student White	-.408	% Minority Teachers	.206
% Student Asian	-.025	# of Students Per Teacher	.007
% Economically Disadvantaged	.524*	% Notive (Beginner Teacher)	-.089
% English Language Learner	.139	Average Years of Experience	-.009
Attendance rate	-.843*	Average Experience with District	-.308
Mobility Rate 2011–2012	.803*	% African American Teachers	.072
At Risk Rate	.726*	% Hispanic Teachers	-.104
Dropout rate	.813*	% White Teachers	-.214
% Met State Standard Reading	-.015	% Asian Teachers	-.137

Note: *P < .05

Table 4

Correlations of Study Variables with Student Disciplinary Placement, Suburban Schools

Variable	Correlation	Variable	Correlation
Total Student	.116	% Met State Standard Math	-.189
Special Education	.406	Total Teaching Staff	.150
% Student African American	.271	% Males	-.133
% Student Hispanic	-.009	% Females	.133
% Student White	-.376	% Minority Teachers	.392
% Student Asian	.237	# of Students Per Teacher	.216
% Economically Disadvantaged	.312	% Notive (Beginner Teacher)	.553*
% English Language Learner	.315	Average Years of Experience	-.628*
Attendance rate	-.577*	Average Experience with District	-.604*
Mobility Rate 2011–2012	.828*	% African American Teachers	.383
At Risk Rate	.625*	% Hispanic Teachers	-.017
Dropout rate	.090	% White Teachers	-.395
% Met State Standard Reading	-.514*	% Asian Teachers	-.148

Note: *P < .05

Research Questions

Research Question One

What is the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors without controlling for school factors in two suburban school districts?

Table 5

<i>Variance Explained from Results of Multiple Regression Analysis</i>							
Factor	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
SPED	.83	.69	.78	7.55	<.001	31.00	<.001
% FRLP	.93	.87	.42	4.13	.001	41.73	<.001

Note: All coefficients are rounded to the nearest two decimals.

The major coefficients created by the regression analysis from the model summary table include multiple correlation coefficient (*R*), multiple R square (*R*²); from the coefficients table include standardized regression coefficient (β), *t* value, and the level of significance (*p*); and from the ANOVA table include *F* ratio and overall level of significance (*sig.*). Table 5 presents the results of regression of socio-demographic or student variables in the two suburban school districts that revealed only two factors emerged as significant predictors of disciplinary placement. Special education enrollment emerged as the stronger predictor of disciplinary placement ($\beta = .76$, $p < .001$). As shown, 69 percent of the variance in disciplinary placement ($F = 31.00$, $p < .001$) was predicted in an initial regression step. Entered on the second step in the regression, percent of student receiving free/reduced lunch ($\beta = .42$, $p < .001$), accounted for an

additional 10 % of the variance in disciplinary placement. These results indicate that higher disciplinary placement rate is a function of the higher special education enrollment in the suburban school districts and higher percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged. To sum up, the model explains about 87 % of the variance in disciplinary placement ($R = .93$). About 7 % of the variance in disciplinary placement is still unaccounted for in this model.

Previous studies indicated that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Bruns et al., 2005; Hinojosa, 2008; Sullivan et al., 2013; Welch & Payne, 2012) and students with disabilities (Achilles et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2005) had a higher likelihood for suspension. Furthermore, many studies identified the student variable, students with disabilities, as significantly related to highly likelihood for exclusion (HLE) in most disability classifications (Achilles et al., 2007; Anderson et al., 2007; Rocques & Paternoster, 2011; Theriot et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2004). Only one study identified this group of students as less likely to be suspended (Sullivan et al., 2013). Due to learning difficulties, intellectual disabilities, and/or emotional disorders minority, students tend to be overreferred for disciplinary actions.

Research Question Two

What is the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors without controlling for school factors in an urban school district?

Table 6

Variance Explained from Multiple Regression Analysis, Research Question Two

Factor	R	R^2	β	t	p	F	p
At Risk Rate	.63	.39	.63	3.20	.006	10.23	.006

Note: All coefficients are rounded to the nearest two decimals.

The major coefficients created by the regression analysis include multiple correlation coefficient (R), multiple R square (R^2); standardized regression coefficient (β), t value, level of significance (p), F ratio and overall level of significance ($sig.$). Table 6 presents the results of regression of socio-demographic or student variables in the two suburban school districts that revealed only one factor emerged as a significant predictor of disciplinary placement. At risk rate emerged as the strong predictor of disciplinary placement ($\beta = .63$, $p < .006$), accounting for 39 % of the variance in disciplinary placement. ($F = 10.23$, $p < .006$). These results indicate that higher disciplinary placement rate is a function of the higher rate of students identified as at risk in the school district. To sum up, the model explains about 39 % of the variance in disciplinary placement ($R = .63$). Therefore, schools with a higher percentage of students identified as at risk of dropping out of school has a higher likelihood of students being disciplinary placed. About 61 % of the variance in disciplinary placement is still unaccounted for in this model.

Research Question Three

What is the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors when school factors in two suburban school districts are controlled?

Table 7

Variance Explained from Multiple Regression Analysis, Research Question Three

Factor	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Attendance rate	.89	.71	-.84	---	---	34.51	<.001
Total SPED	.95	.80	.66	6.33	<.001	25.62	<.001
% ELL	.97	.90	.37	4.47	.001	38.70	<.001
Dropout Rate	.96	.93	.40	3.96	.003	46.87	<.001
% Hispanic	.97	.94	-.14	-1.99	.074	42.77	<.001
% Asian	.98	.96	-.15	-1.95	.079	43.73	<.001

Note: All coefficients are rounded to the nearest two decimals.

The major coefficients created by the regression analysis include multiple correlation coefficient (*R*), multiple R square (*R*²), standardized regression coefficient (β), *t* value, level of significance (*p*), *F* ratio, and overall level of significance (*sig.*). Table 7 presents results of regression predicting student- and school- level variables in the two suburban school districts that revealed three of the six factors emerged as significant predictors of disciplinary placement. As shown, only Attendance Rate, Total SPED, and % ELL made a significant contribution to the model. Attendance Rate, Total SPED, % ELL, Dropout Rate, % Hispanic, and % Asian accounted for 95.6 % of the variance in

disciplinary placement. Attendance Rate is the strongest alone in Model 1 ($F = 34.51$, $p < .001$). With a beta of $-.84$ ($p < .001$), β indicates a negative partial correlation between Attendance Rate and Disciplinary Placement. This indicates that the better the Attendance Rate is, the lower the percentage of Disciplinary Placement. The second factor emerged as a significant predictor was Total SPED ($\beta = .66$, $p < .001$), accounting for an additional 8.7 % of the variance in disciplinary placement. The third factor emerged as a significant predictor was percent ELL ($\beta = .37$, $p < .001$). Percent ELL accounted for 9.8 % of the variance in disciplinary placement. The fourth factor emerged as a significant predictor was Dropout Rate ($\beta = .40$, $p < .003$), accounting for an additional 3.8 % of the variance in disciplinary placement. These results indicate that suburban schools with higher disciplinary placement rate is a function of the higher Special Education enrollment, higher ELL population, and higher dropout rate of the students enrolled in the district.

Research Question Four

What is the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors when school factors in an urban school district are controlled?

Table 8

Variance Explained from Multiple Regression Analysis, Research Question Four

Factor	R	R^2	β	t	p	F	p
Mobility Rate	.78	.61	.88	7.96	<.001	23.89	.001
# of Students Per Teacher	.87	.75	.53	4.41	<.001	21.01	.001
% Asian	.93	.86	-.36	-3.10	.008	25.80	.008

Note: All coefficients are rounded to the nearest two decimals.

The major coefficients created by the regression analysis include multiple correlation coefficient (R), multiple R square (R^2), standardized regression coefficient (β), t value, level of significance (p), F ratio, and overall level of significance ($sig.$). Table 8 presents results of regression predicting student- and school-level variables in an urban school district that revealed three factors emerged as significant predictors of disciplinary placement. As shown, Mobility Rate emerged as the strongest predictor of disciplinary placement, accounting for 61 % of the variance in disciplinary placement. ($F = 23.89$, $p < .001$). The second factor emerged as a significant predictor was number of students per teacher ($\beta = .53$, $p < .001$), accounting for an additional 14 % of the variance in disciplinary placement. The third factor emerged as a significant predictor was percent Asian ($\beta = -.36$, $p < .008$). Percent Asian accounted for 11 % of the variance in disciplinary placement. These results indicate that higher disciplinary placement rate is a function of the higher mobility rate of the students enrolled in the district, higher student-teacher ratio, and higher percentage of Asian students. To sum up, the model explains about 86 % of the variance in disciplinary placement ($R = .93$). Percent Asian was found

to be negatively associated with disciplinary placement, and this is not statistically significant. Only about 14 % of the variance in disciplinary placement is yet unaccounted for in this model.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Although researchers have proposed several theories about why disproportionality may exist in disciplinary actions for minorities, findings across studies are inconsistent. However, the findings in this study are consistent with previous research that found removal of disruptive students from classrooms may be influenced by both student and school characteristics as part of nested interactions between variables. This study found that four of the eight student variables: Percent Asian, Percent ELL, Percent Hispanic, and Total SPED increased the likelihood of receiving a disciplinary placement in suburban schools when controlling for school factors. In contrast, of the individual variables, only Percent Asian negatively increased the likelihood of receiving a disciplinary placement in an urban school when controlling for school factors. For school characteristic, higher student-teacher ratio and higher mobility rates were significant variables without controlling for school factors. Overall, out of the 20 predictors that included individual- and school-level variables, the at risk rate for dropping out of school in both school district types emerged as significant in influencing disciplinary placement rates. Furthermore, out of the eight predictors that included individual-level variables, students who are economically disadvantaged or students with a disability in suburban

schools and students at risk for dropping out of school in an urban school may significantly influence disciplinary placement rates.

Key Findings of the Study

Research Question One

Results of analyses that predicted the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors without controlling for school factors in two suburban school districts indicated that higher disciplinary placement rate is a function of the higher rate of students identified as needing special education services in the suburban school districts and the higher rate of students identified as economically disadvantaged. These two factors together explained a high percentage of the variance in schools' percentages of disciplinary placement rates. In a review of the relevant literature, economically disadvantaged percentage is interpreted to be primarily a predictor of disciplinary placement.

Research Question Two

Outcomes of analyses that predicted the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors without controlling for school factors in an urban school district indicated that schools with a higher percentage of students identified as at risk of dropping out of school has a higher likelihood of students being disciplinary placed. This was the only factor that explained a high percentage of the variance in schools' percentages of students disciplinary placed. Higher drop-out rates appeared as a significant predictor of disciplinary placement by student factors when school factors in

suburban school district types are controlled. Christle et al. (2005) found similar results in drop-out rates in a group of 20 high suspension schools (HSS).

Research Question Three

The findings from this analysis that predicted the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors when school factors in two suburban school districts are controlled indicated that suburban schools with higher disciplinary placement rate is a function of the high total Special Education enrollment, high percentage of ELL population, and high drop-out rate of the students enrolled in the district. These three factors together explained a high percentage of the variance in schools' percentages of disciplinary placement rates. Even after controlling for school factors, the percentage of special education enrollment was clearly the variable that most strongly predicted disciplinary placement in suburban schools. Another finding predicted the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement in suburban schools was percent of ELL population according to student factors when school factors in two suburban school districts are controlled. The percentage of ELL enrollment contradicts what was expected. Previous research as reviewed in the literature review reported percent of ELL population to have no significant relationship to exclusionary discipline rates (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Sullivan et al., 2013).

Research Question Four

The analysis that predicted the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement by student factors when school factors in an urban school district are

controlled indicated higher disciplinary placement rate is a function of the higher mobility rate of the students enrolled in the district, higher student-teacher ratio, and high percentage of Asian students. These three factors together explained a high percentage of the variance in schools' disciplinary placement rates. After controlling for school-level variables, mobility rates had a strong likelihood of receiving a disciplinary placement in an urban school. This finding agrees with Achilles et al. (2007), who found multiple school changes and urban school setting promoted highly likelihood for expulsion. A noteworthy finding by Hinojosa (2008) showed the impact of children living in two-family homes with constructive home resources negatively impacted the likelihood of students' expulsion. Secondly, although smaller class sizes or lower student-teacher ratios may reduce distractions in the classroom and the need for disciplinary actions, they are not common in urban school districts. Finally, percentage of Asian students presented a negative relationship toward disciplinary placement rates and stayed in the final regression model as a significant predictor. This may not, however, be a surprising finding for several reasons. Several authors in the review of studies that included Asian students in their analysis reported that Asian students, when compared to other races, were less likely to receive a disciplinary action of any kind (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013).

Limitations

The sample in this study was limited to two school community district types classified by geographical location: urban and suburban located in one region in North

Texas in Tarrant County, which included 34 schools, excluding alternative schools. The preferred number of independent variables for sample size requirement in stepwise regression is 40. This sample was not anticipated to apply to any other region or county in the United States. It is assumed that the secondary source is accurate and reliable information submitted to the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) by the Local Educational Agency (LEA). It is also assumed that the data collection process for the assessment data is accurate and reliable data. Future investigations should use a check and balance system to verify the accuracy of the data. Furthermore, it was assumed that individual and school predictors are better able to explain variance in school disciplinary actions; it is conceivable that both characteristics influences both suspension and disciplinary placement percentages as they serve as the nested interaction between the two variables together. Additionally, it was assumed that the student related factors vary across school factors by controlling for alternative explanations such as race, regarding disciplinary actions in Texas schools across a combination of student and school characteristics in two community type (suburban and urban) school districts. More importantly, although the researcher ordered the entry of the variables based on relative importance according to prior research, the stepwise analysis enters independent variables into the regression according to their statistical contribution in explaining the variance in the dependent variable. This procedure may exclude predictors from the analysis that may explain a higher percentage of the variance in the dependent variable. Finally, it was assumed that the alternative explanations in this study

help determined which student or school predictor significantly influences disciplinary placement rates.

Implications for Future Research

The result of this study suggests a new question that needs answering: Why did the predictor the percentage of Asian students present a negative relationship toward disciplinary placement rates and stay in the final regression model as a significant predictor in both school district types? At the same time, these findings were consistent with predictions offered by others. Several authors in prior research included Asian students in their analysis reported that Asian students were less likely to receive disciplinary actions (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013). However, researchers need to explore this issue further to determine the impact of this variable in disciplinary actions. Another issue to consider is the nested interactions between student- and school-level variables. Many of the studies in the literature review considered the multilevel structure of the data, thereby using student-level and school-level data to draw conclusions about individuals and schools. Data interpretation is critical in providing meaning and significance to the research conducted; therefore, using an atheoretical research design to test the statistical relationship such as, the stepwise regression may limit the interpretation of the findings.

Implications for Policymakers

Although researchers have proposed several theories about why disproportionality exists in disciplinary actions for African American males in special education, findings

across studies are inconsistent and changes are not implemented to resolve this crisis. The findings summarized above demonstrate why it is important for policymakers in Texas to examine the school disciplinary systems in place by digging deep into an issue that has received relatively little public scrutiny. Congress declared that State Education Agencies (SEA) are charged to establish a process to determine if significant discrepancy in suspension and expulsion rates of racial and ethnic students were higher than other students. However, just reporting these rates will not resolve this issue. Concern was noted in the frequency of punitive disciplinary actions toward some racial and ethnic students than other students for similar disciplinary actions. This provision was designed to encourage schools to develop solutions to this disproportionality issue.

Statistics derived from the studies in the literature of review indicate that suspension has several risk factors. Research has documented this problem for over 40 years (Skiba et al., 2011). The rising disciplinary actions received by minorities that are males in some of our American public schools mirrors the rising juvenile crime in some areas of the country primarily due to the economic disadvantages and low achievement abilities. The knowledge generated by this analysis may lead to an increase in awareness of factors associated with students' likelihood of receiving a Disciplinary Placement. These factors may not be directly causative in nature, but they may lead to a better understanding of disproportionality processes and aide efforts aimed at addressing the issue.

Recommendations for Remediation

This study's results may be useful for designing recommendations and providing remediation to students at risk for dropping out of school by viewing how the total school environment impact school suspension rates. Students that are often suspended are disengaged in the classroom, unmotivated to learn, experience low achievement, and received more punitive sanctions from minor infractions.

Moreover, in recent decades, disproportionality of minority students is closely aligned to social factors such as social status and lower achievement levels. Students who are retained or suspended from school possessing poor academic achievement may in turn be more likely to drop out of school. Schools should implement effective programs designed to increase student achievement. These interventions should provide important information about specific needs of the students and attempts to maximize their opportunities to become successful in the general education environment.

Preparing teachers to teach African American male students who are economically disadvantaged is a critical issue and requires preparation. Misbehaving may create gaps in learning that will impact students' academic success. Therefore, schools should implement effective programs designed to increase student achievement. These interventions should provide information about specific needs of the students and attempts to maximize their opportunities to become successful in the general education environment. A study by Anderson et al. (2007) found that as reading achievement increased at the end of 6th grade, suspensions decreased in 7th grade. Their findings

indicated that low reading levels predicted the likelihood of the onset of serious delinquency in later grades which may increase the possibility of serious delinquency persisting over time in the life of the juvenile.

This research may inform educational practitioners and policymakers in increasing educational opportunities and reducing inappropriate disciplinary referrals for minority male students, especially students with disabilities at the secondary level. The knowledge generated by this analysis may lead to an increase in awareness of factors (at-risk, disability and socioeconomic status) associated with students' likelihood of receiving a disciplinary placement.

Conclusion

The present findings highlight the importance of examining student and school characteristics that may influence disciplinary placement. School characteristics were associated with the likelihood of students receiving a disciplinary placement, and were better predictors than student characteristics. These findings were consistent with (Rocques & Paternoster, 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013; Theriot et al., 2010) in terms of the importance of school characteristic on influencing disciplinary placement rates, and with (Achilles et al., 2007; Anderson et al., 2007) and others in terms of the importance of Special Education status, Free and Reduced Lunch Program status, and At-Risk status in predicting higher disciplinary rates in suburban and urban schools. Based on these findings a new significant negative relationship was presented in the findings that may lead one to speculate on why an unusual relationship makes sense and may require

further research. For instance, the percentage of Asian students was a surprising finding over more influencing variables like Attendance, Total SPED enrollment, Percent of ELLs, Dropout Rate, and Percent of Hispanic population in the model.

This study may contribute knowledge pertaining to the impact of student and school variables to gain further insight into the disproportionality issue for educators that will promote awareness related to disciplinary procedures in urban and suburban school districts. Educators and parents in the learning community need information for improving disciplinary actions and decreasing disciplinary referrals, and designing meaningful interventions for students to avoid punitive punishments.

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