

Running head: Disproportionality of AAS Referrals and Suspensions

The Disproportionality of African American Student Referrals and Suspensions

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Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In Education

at

Holy Names University

Spring 2015

The Disproportionality of African American Student Referrals and Suspensions

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Proposal Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Urban Education

May 2015

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Acknowledgements

My thesis project is dedicated to the memory of my little brother, Brian Aaron Walker (March 28, 1984 – February 9, 2007). I was the older brother, but he taught me a lot about life and he always reminded me about the importance of never giving up. He will not be here to see my success, but he will always be a part of who I am. For that, I am forever thankful.

I started my journey at Holy Names University in the spring of 2010. I only planned to get my teaching credential, but my wife convinced me to continue to get my M.Ed. I am glad I took my wife's advice and continued to work towards completing my M.Ed. It wasn't easy, but it was one of the best decisions of my life! I would like to thank my wife for putting up with me while attending HNU. I know it wasn't easy and I'm sure she was frustrated at times, but I could not have done this without her! I also want to thank: Mr. Newt Green, my 9th grade English teacher for believing in me when I didn't even believe in myself, Pastor David Goodson for supporting me during my educational journey, Dr. Thea Maestre for pushing me to be a better educator and person, my thesis lead, Dr. Larry Johnson for making this process enjoyable, Dr. Kitty Kelly Epstein for opening up my eyes to the issues in urban education, my colleague and friend Tracy Lewis for modeling the passion and dedication I aspire to have as an educator, and to my pastor, Bishop K.R. Woods for showing me what perseverance and dedication is all about. To all of the HNU professors that I have met along the way, I thank you as well. I appreciate my time here and HNU will always be a part of who I am!

Abstract

African American students are having problems achieving academic success in the classrooms due to their high rates of school referrals and suspensions. The concern is that African Americans are losing valuable academic instruction time due to being referred to the office for behavior problems and as a result, African American students are being suspended from school at a high rate. When students are suspended from school, they are losing important instruction time. African American referrals and suspensions is an important issue to look at because it leads to them dropping out of school. When African American students drop out of high school, this limits their ability to be a productive member of society. In addition, the achievement gap continues to grow due to the high rate of African American student referrals and suspensions.

This study will analyze some of the factors that lead to the disproportion of African-American male student referrals and suspensions. The researcher hopes to bring more awareness to African-American male student referrals and suspensions at his school site, as well as at school sites nationwide. As a result of the research, the researcher would like to see a change in the way African-American male students are disciplined and referred to the office.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Table of Contents..... | 5 |
| Introduction..... | 7 |
| Statement of the Problem..... | 7 |
| Background of the Study..... | 7 |
| Purpose of the Study..... | 8 |
| Definition of Terms..... | 12 |
| Literature Review..... | 13 |
| Student-Teacher Relationships..... | 13 |
| AAS Home Support..... | 15 |
| ODR's and the Effects on AAS..... | 16 |
| Possible Solutions | 18 |
| Conclusions/Gaps in the Literature..... | 19 |
| Methodology..... | 20 |
| Research Question..... | 20 |
| Research Design..... | 20 |
| Research Site..... | 20 |
| Participants..... | 21 |
| Participant Selection..... | 22 |
| Procedures..... | 22 |
| Data Collection/Instrumentation..... | 24 |
| Confidentiality..... | 25 |
| Data Analysis..... | 25 |
| Anticipated Results..... | 26 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Findings..... | 26 |
| Survey Questions..... | 27 |
| Interviews..... | 28 |
| Inequalities in Disciplinary Actions..... | 29 |
| Supporting AAS in the Classroom..... | 30 |
| Training Staff..... | 31 |
| Parent Support..... | 32 |
| Institutional Racism..... | 34 |
| Interview Student X and His Father..... | 35 |
| Conclusion..... | 41 |
| Recommendations..... | 45 |
| Personal Reflection..... | 47 |
| References..... | 51 |
| Appendix A..... | 54 |
| Appendix B..... | 57 |
| Appendix C..... | 60 |
| Appendix D..... | 63 |
| Appendix E..... | 66 |
| Appendix F..... | 68 |
| Appendix G..... | 69 |
| Appendix H..... | 71 |
| Appendix I..... | 73 |

Introduction

The Statement of the Problem

African American students are having problems achieving academic success in the classrooms due to their high rates of school referrals and suspensions. The concern is that African Americans are losing valuable academic instruction time due to being referred to the office for behavior problems and as a result, African American students are being suspended from school at a high rate. African American referrals and suspensions is an important issue to look at because it leads to them dropping out of school. According to Adams, 104 of every 1,000 African-Americans will drop out of high school (2008). When African American students drop out of high school, this limits their ability to be productive members of society. Research suggests that Black students are missing 20 to 40 minutes of academic instruction due to office disciplinary referrals (Bradshaw et al., 2010). In addition, the achievement gap continues to grow due to the high rate of African American student referrals and suspensions. The rate of African American referrals and suspensions also affects the number of African American students in special education programs (Bradshaw, et al., 2010).

Background of the Study

I am a Black male with over twenty years of experience in the field of education. In my previous places of employment, I have worked in a variety of education positions from infant and toddler caregiver to college English and math tutor and everything in between. My education experiences also include working in the public, private, and Montessori school settings. I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Studies from California State University, Hayward. At the current time, I am working towards completing a Master's degree in Urban Education. I come

from a long line of educators. I have several aunts and uncles that are teachers, professors, Superintendents, preschool providers, counselors, and school board members. In my current position, I am a fifth grade teacher at a school in the East Bay. The majority of my students are Black. Each year, I am given the students with the most challenging behaviors. Most of the time, they are African-American boys. When I first started teaching, my answer for their behavior was to send them to the office, no questions asked. Now, in my fifth year as a classroom teacher, I am focusing more on keeping my students out of the office. It is a process that can be tiring at times, but Black boys and girls students need something to believe in, a passion for learning and enjoying life. Education is my passion. I had a great educational experience. All students deserve that same chance at a great education. During my time in elementary and junior high school, I was a terrible student. I was just going to school because I had to, but I was lacking drive and purpose. It wasn't until the end of my freshman year in high school where I finally began to understand the importance of having a quality education and the things it could lead me to later on in life. I knew that my attitude and behavior needed to change, so that meant staying out of trouble, staying in the classroom and focusing on my academic endeavors.

Purpose of the Study

How can African American students improve on their behavior if they are referred to the office or suspended at a high rate? One may be wondering, what is the significance of researching African American students and their high rate of referrals and suspensions? The purpose of this proposed study is to analyze some of the factors that lead to the high rate of African-American referrals and suspensions. One factor that may lead to the high rate of Black male student referrals and suspensions is student-teacher relationships. "National estimates show that 90% of public school teachers are white, 6% are Black, and fewer than 5% are of other

racess” (Fowler, Banks, Anhalt, Hinrichs & Kalis, 2008, p. 179). In this instance, it is difficult to foster positive student/teacher relationships when trust between the two races is not there. This mistrust between AAS and their teachers may be caused by the gap in cultural norms (Bradshaw et al., 2010). In the classroom, trust between the student and teacher are very important. “One study of teacher satisfaction finds that white teachers who teach a majority of nonwhite students are significantly less satisfied with their jobs than white teachers who teach a majority of white students” (McGrady & Reynolds, 2012, p.6). As a result of teacher bias, Black students are receiving referrals and suspensions at a very high rate. “According to the 2000 Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) report, Black students are 2.6 times more likely than White students to be suspended from school” (Reynolds, 2010, p. 153). One might be wondering how lowering the rate of AAS referrals and suspensions will benefit African American students and their academic progress.

Researching Black students and their high rate of referrals and suspensions will benefit a variety of groups. The groups that will benefit from this research are: African American students, their families, teachers, administrators, and professors.

AAS and their families can benefit from this research because it will present data into why Black students have a higher rate of referrals and suspensions and some of the factors that may lead to it. Students and parents don’t have enough information regarding referral and suspension rates in the Black community. As a result, they don’t have the support or resources to help change the unwanted behaviors that are being shown at school. This is where teacher knowledge comes into play.

Teachers and professors of all backgrounds and education levels can benefit from analyzing research regarding this topic. In my own classroom, I am very aware of some of the behaviors that I see, but other teachers nationwide, may not. Race is a factor that comes into play when analyzing Black males and their high rate of referrals and suspensions. If teachers are given more resources and data, they can start to implement strategies that may help change some of the wrong behavior choices they are seeing from their Black students. In turn, administrators will spend less time handling behavior problems.

Administrators need help with discipline. In regards to AAS, bias may be involved in some situations. African American students are referred to special education classes based on their behavior in class as reported by classroom teachers. If administrators are able to have professional development time to research some of the factors in the high rate of referrals and suspensions, it would benefit them by having better strategies to not only support Black students, but to cut down the high rate of referrals and suspensions.

AAS academic progress has been hindered for over the past few decades. Compared to students of other ethnicities, Black male students are struggling to keep up in the classroom. Why? A possible reason could be due to the disproportion of African American referrals and suspensions. Thirty years of research has repeatedly shown the disadvantages Blacks have when it comes to the results of referrals and suspensions (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Black students need to remain in the classroom in order to be successful, but because of the disproportionality of ODRs, they are missing a lot of instructional time. “Students who receive out-of-school suspensions or expulsions typically are not provided opportunities to continue their school work” (Townsend, 2000). As a result, they continue to play catch up while their counterparts are continuing with their educational endeavors. Oftentimes, Black male students are given ODRs

for small classroom/school infractions, while their counterparts are given opportunities to improve upon their behavior (Fenning & Rose, 2007). What are the options for African American students once they are suspended or expelled from school? Do office disciplinary referrals help change the behavior of AAS? Adams (2008) argues the point that there is not enough evidence to show that Black students have more behavior issues than other groups of children. This literature review will attempt to analyze these questions and will also delve into some of the possible factors that lead to the disproportion of African American student referrals and suspensions.

Definition of Terms

ODRs – For the purpose of this literature review, ‘ODRs’ is defined as office disciplinary referrals.

AAS – For the purpose of this literature review, ‘AAS’ is defined as African American Students.

Disproportionality – For the purpose of this literature review, ‘Disproportionality’ is defined as a group representing a distinct category the rate of 10 % or higher than their representation in the total population.

Literature Review

Student-Teacher Relationships

A majority of the studies have asserted the necessity to maintain positive student/teacher relationships between AAS and non-African-American teachers. As of 2011 – 2012, the national teacher racial and ethnic makeup was as follows: 81.9% White, 6.8% Black, 7.8% Hispanic, and 3.5% Other (National Center for Education Statistics). The number of teachers who are black men is even LOWER: 1%” (Adams, 2008, p. 5). In this instance, it is difficult to foster positive student/teacher relationships when trust between the two races is not there. “Shortages of African American teachers and administrators thus limit students’ exposure to school professionals who serve as role models, symbolizing attainment of professional goals by same-ethnicity and gender individuals” (Townsend, 2000, p. 383). Researchers have suggested that this is one of the main factors of Black students’ mistrust of teachers in the classroom, lack of a diverse school staff.

One factor that may cause this mistrust between African American students and their teachers is the gap in cultural norms (Bradshaw et al., 2010). AAS come from backgrounds that are filled with violence, poverty, and other factors their non-Black teachers are not used to being around. In the classroom, trust between the student and teacher are very important. “One study of teacher satisfaction finds that white teachers who teach a majority of nonwhite students are significantly less satisfied with their jobs than white teachers who teach a majority of white students” (McGrady & Reynolds, 2012, p.6). As a result of teacher bias and not being able to relate to their cultural norms, Black students may be receiving office disciplinary referrals at a higher rate than their white counterparts. “According to the 2000 Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) report, Black students are 2.6 times more likely than White students to be suspended from school” (Reynolds, 2010, p. 153). Teachers need to help establish

trust with their African American students so they can be successful in the classroom. “As the trust in the teacher-student relationship develops, so does the reduction of disproportionate suspension rates of Black students” (Stevenson, 2008, p. 357). Office disciplinary referrals have numerous effects on Black students, which in turn builds racial tension between the teacher and the student. The literature also shows a bias between AAS and African-American teachers.

According to Bradshaw et al., young boys in classrooms with African- American teachers had greater odds of obtaining major ODRs compared to the other students (2010). When an African American student has an African-American teacher, the teacher-student relationship is not guaranteed to succeed. “Social class, generational, and experiential differences can increase the divide between African American students and their teachers and administrators, even with similar ethnic backgrounds” (Townsend, 2000, p. 383). Income is another factor that may hinder the relationships of Black students and their African-American teachers. Some AAS live in poverty, which may create a different experience from African-American teachers who live in middle-class communities (Townsend, 2000). In terms of office disciplinary referrals and the disproportionality of Black student referrals and suspensions, teacher/student trust is an important factor to analyze regardless of the race of the teacher or administrator. When one thinks of African American students and office disciplinary referrals, one may think of teachers with different ethnicities, not of African-American teachers handing out the ODRs. Bradshaw et al., suggests that African American teachers may have a higher standard for the behavior of their students and as a result, may be more inclined to use office disciplinary referrals with their students than other teachers (2010). It is one thing to earn the trust of their teachers, but Black students also need support from home to be successful in the classroom.

AAS Home Support

According to Reynolds, studies seem to show that despite socioeconomic disparities, children whose parents are involved perform better than those whose parents are not (2010). Families of African American students tend to work long hours and may have more than one job. When that is the case, AAS parent involvement becomes very minimal. (Brandon, 2007) & (Townsend, 2000) agree about the importance of consistent home support for Black students. Brandon says academic and social gains are made when Black students have parents involved at home. Townsend supports Brandon in saying that African American students need teachers and parents to work together to ensure their success. Teachers may analyze the AAS family's lack of educational support as bad parenting or not caring about their child's academic progress. Some possible factors have been analyzed that may determine how much a parent participates in the school setting. These possible factors are: cultural and linguistic diversity, economics, family composition, parental educational level, interaction with teachers/school, school success of children, and personal constraints (Brandon, 2007). These possible factors may lead to parents of African American students feeling excluded from the school setting, thus weakening the parent-teacher relationship. Another factor that may complicate the teacher-student relationship is the way AAS communicate at home compared to their classroom settings.

Parents of Black students can help support the teacher in terms of how to interact with their kids. As a group of people, African-American parents are known for being direct with their kids, oftentimes using stern discipline. In the classroom, non-Black teachers tend to do the opposite. "Parents play an integral role in the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of their children" (Reynolds, 2010, p. 147). Social skills that may be accepted in Black homes may not be accepted in the classrooms. As a result, teachers may incorrectly take

those social behaviors as being willfully defiant when directives are not immediately responded to in a quick manner (Townsend, 2000). This assumption can go a long way in the classroom and could help reduce ODR's among AAS. Parents of African American students need to be considered a part of the team, along with teachers when it comes to their child's behavior in the classroom. "When parents and educators do not develop positive partnerships, they can develop negative attitudes about each other, which often results in low participation" (Brandon, 2007, p. 116). Where the non-Black teacher lacks that connection, the Black parents can assist to help bridge that gap. With the students, teachers, and parents working together, the disproportion of referrals and suspensions amongst AAS could start going down, which in turn will help build better student/teacher relationships, instead of office disciplinary referrals determining the academic progress of African American students.

ODR's and the Effects on AAS

According to Adams, Black students are three times more likely to be suspended for an offense compared to their non-black peers (2008). This is a statistic that needs further investigating. Why are African American students being suspended more often than their non-black peers? AAS, in particular, black males, have a greater chance of being expelled from school than any other racial group or ethnic group (Reynolds, 2010). This is likely because the teacher is not black, which means Black students don't have a chance to connect to the teacher. The main effect that the disproportion of referrals and suspensions have on Black students is the fact that they are missing a significant amount of academic instruction time. Research suggest that African American students are missing 20 to 40 minutes of academic instruction due to office disciplinary referrals (Bradshaw et al., 2010). We also need to take into account time missed due to school suspensions/expulsions. As a result, African American students are falling

behind in their capability to learn alongside their non-African American peers. ODR's also place Black students at greater risks for special education referral programs (Bradshaw, et al., 2010). AAS are being placed in special education programs because their behavior is considered as showing special education tendencies by their teacher. Thus, AAS populations are increasing in special education programs and lower AAS populations in general education classes. The disproportion of AAS referrals and suspensions also attributes to the school-to prison pipeline.

When Black students are given an office disciplinary referral, the result will more than likely end with a suspension. Once away from the academic setting, the school-to prison pipeline cycle is more likely to continue (Fenning, 2007). Researchers have suggested that by the end of third grade, English and Language Arts and mathematics test scores of African American students are being used to predict how many prisons to build. For example, if 2,500 AAS score below proficient on their mandated state tests, prison construction analysts will predict that out of those 2,500 AAS, a majority of them will drop out of school and will most likely go to prison. This theory has resulted in the school-to prison pipeline.

The disproportion of ODRs also affects Black students in terms of their social skills. When Black boys and girls are suspended from school, they may lack instruction in prosocial behavior (Townsend, 2000). Researchers suggest that African American students need proper instruction in their social skills in order to be successful in the academic setting. If not, odds are AAS will fall victim to the tough life on the streets. When AAS are properly instructed in positive social behaviors, they may "accept the roles of authority figures, and employ prosocial strategies to problems among peers in school." (Utley, Greenwood & Douglass, 2007, p176)

With ODR's being used so frequently, African American students are falling further and further behind academically and as a result, the achievement gap continues to grow.

Possible Solutions

The literature reviews offered some possible solutions that may help in the disproportion of AAS referrals and suspensions. Some researchers suggested having a discipline team that is diverse and fair for all students. “The discipline team should be composed of individuals from cultures and ethnicities that represent the diversity of students found in the school” (Fenning and Rose, 2007, p. 551). Fenning and Rose also suggest that the discipline team include mental, community members, security staff, parents and students.

The researchers also suggested improvements in students-teacher relationships to help in the disproportion of Black student referrals and suspensions. “As the trust in the teacher-student relationship develops, so does the reduction of disproportionate suspension rates of Black students” (Stevenson, 2008, p. 357). In terms of student-teacher relationships, African-American teachers are included in establishing positive student-teacher relationships. Townsend (2000), however, argues that African-American males were surveyed and the students believed African-American teachers had lower expectations for them compared to White teachers.

Building connections between school and home may also be beneficial in closing the gap of disproportion of AAS referrals and suspensions. Researchers have suggested that when parents, students, and teachers, connect in a positive way, African American students may obtain positive academic and social behaviors that are expected of them in the academic environment. Fenning & Rose (2007) argue that the focus needs to remain on school factors such as discipline policies instead of home factors that have been suggested by other researchers.

School-wide professional development in cultural norms and behaviors may also help in bridging the gap of the disproportionality of AAS and referrals and suspensions. “The goals of such training would be to spark critical reflection about one’s own ethnic identity and the

influence of cultural upbringing on attitudes toward other ethnic and racial groups” (Fenning and Rose, 2007, p. 552). Researchers suggest this possible solution may have beneficial results if the professional development is planned properly.

Researchers are also recommending AAS to get involved in school activities. It has been suggested that African American students that have behavior problems are less likely to join school activities. “After becoming acquainted with students’ unique talents and interests, school personnel can effectively match students with school groups or initiatives that will connect them to schools and create a sense of school belonging” (Townsend, 2000, p. 388). When Black students have a sense of belonging to a school, it may help in bridging the gap between AAS and the disproportionality of their referrals and suspensions.

Conclusion/Gaps in the Literature.

The literature review builds evidence that supports the main idea that Black students are receiving office disciplinary referrals at a disproportionate rate when compared to students that are non-African American. Some of the links look at teacher/student relationships, support from home, race relations inside of the classroom, and biases between the teacher and AAS. In addition, Black students are dropping out of high school at a more prevalent rate than non-Black students partly due to teacher bias and lack of trust from the student to the teacher. Out of every 1,000 AAS, 104 of them won’t complete high school (Adams, 2008). The bigger picture is the effects suspensions and time outside of class have on African American students.

While reviewing these articles, a few gaps in the literature were found. The main gap in literature comes from the lack of researching teachers of various races and ethnic backgrounds. In most of the articles, the researchers only analyzed African-American and White teachers. In addition, more research is needed in order to analyze various school populations. The articles

only seemed to focus on low socio-economic schools rather than include schools that are in the middle class/upper middle class range. More research regarding parents and their role with African American students and office disciplinary referrals is needed. Parents play a vital role in their child's academic progress, but due to the gap in literature, there wasn't a chance to evaluate that too much while dissecting the literature. Lastly, the literature didn't show AAS that received high volumes of ODR's years later. Curious minds would like to see how those African American students' lives turned out after encountering the disproportionality in referrals and suspensions.

Methodology

Research Question

The researcher will investigate the following question: What are the factors for African-American males being disproportionately suspended from school?

Research Design

The research design the researcher will use for this thesis presentation is an instrumental case study. An instrumental case study design is a qualitative research method that will be beneficial for this issue as it will give the researcher time to focus on a specific case using multiple instrument tools. During this study, some of the instrument tools the researcher will use are: the case study participant reflections, researcher reflections, participant interviews, researcher's observations, interviews from the case study participant's father and former teachers.

Research Site

The researcher is employed as an upper elementary school teacher in The Bay Area. The study will be conducted at the researcher's elementary school. The school is located in an urban community and is a Title One school. The goal of the Title One program is to help schools meet at least the minimum proficiency on state academic standards and assessments and to help raise their A.P.I. scores. (Academic Performance Index). 85% of the student population are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The school population is made up of: 52.9% African-Americans, 12% Asian, 24.1% Hispanic or Latino, 8.9% White, and 2.1 % other or did not state. 84.95% of the student population live in poverty. 18.55% of the student population are English Learners. The school population is made up of 526 students. The school site does not have a Special Education class, but it uses the Learning Center Model. In this model, Learning Center specialists support students in the classroom that have been identified as needing Special Education support. In addition to supporting Special Education Students in the classroom, the Learning Specialists also work with students in smaller groups outside of their mainstream classes. In regards to English Learners, they meet with the English and Language Development teacher during pull out sessions during the week. English Learners receive additional support in the classroom from English and Language Development aides.

Participants

The study will be conducted, focusing on one specific case study participant from the researcher's upper elementary classroom. The case study participant is a 10 year old African-American male. The case study participant has not been identified with any learning disabilities and he is considered to be in a general education class. The researcher also intends to interview: the case study participant's former teachers, father, principal, and members of the administrative team. The case study participant's father is African-American. The case study participant's

former teachers are an African-American woman and a Caucasian woman. The principal is an African-American woman and the members of the administrative team are African-American women.

Participant Selection

This study will apply convenience sampling. The study will be conducted with one case study student. Including the case study student, this study will consist of 3 – 10 participants.

Most of the participants in this study are African-American and one is White. The researcher selected the participants based upon their knowledge of the case study participant.

Procedures

This study will use the qualitative instrumental case study research methodology. “The focus of a qualitative study may be a specific issue, with a case (or cases) used to illustrate the issue. This type of case is called an instrumental case, because it serves the purpose of illuminating a particular issue” (Creswell, 2012, p. 465). Once the research instruments have been performed from the instrumental case study, the researcher will begin to have better insight to the factors that lead to the disproportionality of suspensions among Black male students. The researcher will use the following research instruments to help analyze the factors that lead to the disproportionality of suspensions among African-American male students:

1. Student Interview/ Student Journal Reflections (The researcher will interview the student in the researcher’s classroom one on one. During the study, the student will write reflections about his previous teachers and their discipline policy and about his current teacher’s discipline policies. The student will also write reflections about his

- overall experiences and ideas about Black males and the experiences they have in regards to school suspensions)
2. Interview with the student's father. (The researcher will conduct the interview with the student's father in the researcher's classroom.)
 3. Interviews with the student's former teachers (The researcher will conduct interviews with the student's former teachers in the researcher's classroom. The interviews will be completed on a one on one basis)
 4. Interview with the principal/administrative assistants (The researcher will interview the principal and administrative assistants in the researcher's classroom on an individual basis)
 5. Researcher Journal Reflections (The researcher will keep a journal to document his thoughts and ideas about the student that will participate in this study. The researcher will complete notes 1 – 2 times a week during the duration of this study)

The standard procedure of qualitative instrumental research is as follows: “1.) Explore a problem, 2.) State the Purpose and Research Question in a general and broad way so as to the participants' experiences, 3.) Collect Data, 4.) Analyze the Data for description and themes, and 5.) Write a report using flexible, evaluative criteria, and including the researchers' subjective reflexivity and bias” (Creswell, 2012, p. 16).

All records and any papers used in and relating to the study will be stored in the researcher's locked cabinet. In addition, the home personal computer and laptop used in this study will have locks that will need passwords to access information. The only person with access to those passwords will be the researcher. The researcher will keep and safely lock all of the files used during this study for 36 months. After that time, the files will be destroyed.

Data Collection/Instrumentation

This study will use the qualitative instrumental case study research methodology. “The focus of a qualitative study may be a specific issue, with a case (or cases) used to illustrate the issue. This type of case is called an instrumental case, because it serves the purpose of illuminating a particular issue” (Creswell, 2012, p. 465). Once the research instruments have been performed from the instrumental case study, the researcher will begin to have better insight to the factors that lead to the disproportionality of suspensions among African-American male students. The researcher will use the following research instruments to help analyze the factors that lead to the disproportionality of suspensions among African-American male students:

1. Student Interview/ Student Journal Reflections (The researcher will interview the student in the researcher’s classroom one on one. During the study, the student will write reflections about his previous teachers and their discipline policy and about his current teacher’s discipline policies. The student will also write reflections about his overall experiences and ideas about African-American males and the experiences they have in regards to school suspensions)
2. Interview with the student’s father. (The researcher will conduct the interview with the student’s father in the researcher’s classroom.)
3. Interviews with the student’s former teachers (The researcher will conduct interviews with the student’s former teachers in the researcher’s classroom. The interviews will be completed on a one on one basis)
4. Interview with the principal/administrative assistants (The researcher will interview the principal and administrative assistants in the researcher’s classroom on an individual basis)

5. Researcher Journal Reflections (The researcher will keep a journal to document his thoughts and ideas about the student that will participate in this study. The researcher will complete notes 1 – 2 times a week during the duration of this study)

Confidentiality

The researcher understands the importance of keeping the confidentiality of all of the participants involved with this study. The researcher will maintain the following measures to guarantee participant confidentiality: all interviews will be conducted in person, all interviews will be conducted in the researcher's classroom and a curtain will be put up on the window to keep pedestrians from looking inside, all computers used during this study will have password locks on them and will only be in the possession of the researcher, the researcher will provide consent forms to all participants and will let them know that their name will not be used in any way before, during, or after this study, the researcher will obtain permission to conduct this study from all necessary authority personnel before conducting this study, all paperwork will be completed without a name or any other identifiable information, and all paperwork and materials from this study will be destroyed 36 months after the completion of this study.

Data Analysis

This study will use the qualitative instrumental case study research methodology. "The focus of a qualitative study may be a specific issue, with a case (or cases) used to illustrate the issue. This type of case is called an instrumental case, because it serves the purpose of illuminating a particular issue" (Creswell, 2012, p. 465). Once the research instruments have been performed from the instrumental case study, the researcher will begin to analyze the data.

Once the researcher collects all of the interview notes, and student/teacher reflections, he will look for patterns and themes to analyze the disproportionality of suspensions in African-American male students. The researcher will then write a report detailing his findings from the instrumental case study research.

Anticipated Results

The researcher anticipates the student, participants, and himself having a better understanding of the factors that leads to the disproportionality of suspensions among Black male students. The researcher also anticipates the student becoming more aware of his current academic and social and emotional choices and as a result, spending less time with teachers and administrative staff regarding behavior and suspension choices. The researcher also anticipates becoming more aware of his Black male students and providing them more support academically and socially.

Findings

The researcher intends to present data that may help support teachers, administrators, parents, students, and educational professionals with some of the causes that may lead to the disproportion of African-American student referrals and suspensions. During this study, nine participants were asked to answer pre-interview statements from a survey. The pre-interview survey presented the participants with an introduction to the disproportion of African-American student referrals and suspensions. Once the participants concluded answering the pre-interview surveys, the researcher interviewed each participant in an attempt to understand their perspectives into the disproportion of African-American student referrals and suspensions. This section of the study will present the researcher's findings after analyzing the data.

The role of each participant in this study is as follows:

Participants #1, # 2, and #3 are members of the administrative staff; Participants #4 and #5 are African-American teachers; Participant #6 is a Caucasian teacher; Participant #7 is an African-American teacher; Participant #8 is the case study participant's father; and Participant #9 is the case study participant.

Survey Questions

The researcher asked the participants to answer the following statements (strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree) before starting each individual interview. The results are recorded next to each statement.

1. I am aware of the school's discipline policy. (4 participants chose strongly agree and 4 participants chose agree.)
2. The school's discipline policy is clear and consistent. (1 participant chose strongly agree, 1 participant chose agree, 5 participants chose disagree, and 1 participant chose strongly disagree.)
3. At my school site, African-American boys tend to be disciplined more than other ethnic groups. (2 participants chose strongly agree, 4 participants chose agree, 1 participant chose disagree, and 1 participant left this statement blank.)
4. A student's family environment is a major factor in school behavior. (3 participants chose strongly agree, 4 participants chose agree, and 1 participant was in-between agree and disagree.)

5. The school consistently teaches social and emotional curriculum to African-American male students. (1 participant chose strongly agree, 2 participants chose agree, 4 participants chose disagree, and 1 participant chose strongly disagree.)
6. Teacher-student relationships play a major factor in a student's academic performance. (7 participants chose strongly agree and 1 participant chose agree.)
7. When I walk by the office, I see African-American male students in the office most of the time. (1 participant chose strongly agree, 4 participants chose agree, and 3 participants chose disagree.)
8. I feel teachers/staff discipline all students the same. (1 participant chose strongly agree, 3 participants chose disagree, 3 participants chose strongly disagree, and 1 participant left this statement blank.)

Interviews

Participants from this study includes teachers, administrative personnel, the case study participant's father and the case study participant. The interview portion of this study asked participants to answer the following questions:

- 1.) What is your classroom management/behavior philosophy?
- 2.) Would you say students are consistently disciplined the same way regardless of race or gender?
- 3.) In your opinion, do you think teachers/school staff refer students to the office too quickly, without first trying to resolve the issue themselves first?
- 4.) What can you do as an administrator - teacher/administrative assistant to help in the disproportion of African-American male student referrals and suspensions?

- 5.) What can your school community do to help close the gap in African-American male referrals and suspensions?
- 6.) In terms of discipline, do you feel supported by your administrator/administrative staff?
- 7.) Once a student has been sent to the office for a referral or suspension, what is the process from the time a student enters the office, to the time a student leaves the office?
- 8.) Would you say students are consistently disciplined the same way regardless of race or gender?
- 9.) How would you describe student X's academic performance/behavior while in your class?
- 10.) In regards to student X, how did you support him with his behavior choices?

After analyzing the data, the researcher identified the following themes: inequalities in disciplinary actions, supporting African-American students in the classroom, training staff on discipline procedures, parent support, and participant reflections.

Inequalities in Disciplinary Actions

While interviewing the participants, the inequalities in disciplinary actions was one of the major themes most participants brought up. When asked if students are consistently disciplined the same way regardless of race or gender, participant #1 said, "No. African-American and Latino students are judged harder than the Whites students. I observed this yesterday and this annoyed me. The Vice Principal is in charge of discipline and he takes it easy on students he knows." The researcher asked the participants if they feel supported by their administrator/administrative staff in terms of discipline. Participant #6 stated, "No. I don't think

it's consistent. I have heard from the kids when dealing with certain admin, the responses are not fair for everyone. You shouldn't go to detention and play games. Specifically, with African-American males, it's more I'm going to be your pal and help you. Let's play basketball and that's going to help you do your homework? I don't know." Participant #5 said, "I would say it is not effective going to the VP. It isn't seen as discipline to the child, it is more like having fun and hanging out." The topic of student-teacher relationships came up. Participant #7 said, "I think some teachers have negative relationships with students. Problems will arise because of this and as a result, it's easier for that person to send that student to the office. Teachers give allowances for behavior, which will in turn, cause an inequality with discipline." This conversation led into ways in which to help support AAS behavior in the classroom.

Supporting AAS in the classroom

During this study, the researcher used the following strategies to help support Student X with his behavior: allowing him to write in a journal when he was upset, running laps around the track, frequent check-ins, one on one conferences, playing basketball with him during recess, checking in with his parents, and finding interests to engage him with learning. Through this study, the researcher understands the importance of supporting Student X and other African American students with their behaviors in the classroom. This is one of the themes that participants detailed in their responses.

Most participants emphasized the importance of supporting with behavior choices in the classroom. Participant #2 said, "I support the students, not the behavior and let the students know the behavior that is expected of them. I try to get on a personal level with students and get to know the students to see if they understand what they are doing. I just try to talk with them more

on a personal level. We need to support our African American students and get to the heart of the issue.” Participant #7 spoke with passion when saying, “My philosophy is that I am strong on building systems in the beginning of the year and building cultures and strong relationships. I let them come up with rules. I believe in having an honorable system and I send “the rules of engagement” home to parents to sign off on it. I try to keep things positive. The classroom needs to be a part of their identity.” Some participants made connections to teaching styles as participant #4 conveyed, “In order for things to change, you have to teach in a way that is conducive for students of color to learn. We don’t sit in chairs for long periods of time and learn that way. We need to look more at multiple intelligences.” Participant #4 went on to elaborate about the importance of Black males being able to use their verbal skills in class versus having them stifled. This ties in to social-emotional development. The researcher’s school site uses a social-emotional curriculum called Second Step. It supports all students with skills to help them learn ways to interact with peers and adults and it gives African American students a tool to help them express themselves during uncomfortable situations. Participants agreed that if used school wide, Second Step may be one way to help with AAS referrals and suspensions.

Training Staff

While conducting the interviews, some of the participants spoke about the need for training staff to help them relate better to African American students. Participant #3 said the staff is in “need for training on our discipline procedures and interventions that can be used in the classroom. Especially the topic of cultural awareness. Participant #3 went on to say, “I would suggest training opportunities for staff, and unconscious bias training. When students are suspended, it gives the message that they can’t learn and succeed here, but if they can’t succeed here, they will succeed somewhere else, and that means out there on the street.” Participant #7

said, “They need to have training on the culture and sensitivity training and understanding the family structure that is happening right now with our families. They should take a look at what African American students excel in and use that as an advantage to reduce the behavior problems.” Participant #4 mentioned peer training. “At this point, I have observed what the teachers are doing, and what the offence is. I have asked teachers, “Can I come in and help you?” It’s up to teachers to be flexible. I model for the teacher ways to teach without the referrals. There’s no point in talking about behavior without going in and talking to the teacher. The kids deserve the same respect that’s given to their peers that are not black and brown.” In addition to training the staff, parents can help with behavior issues as well.

Parent Support

All participants agreed on one thing while interviews were being conducted. They agreed on the need for parent support. One of the guiding principles at the researcher’s school site is, “We Create a Sense of Family.” When an African American student and their “family” is working together towards the same goal, reducing referrals and suspensions, it helps to set up that student for success. Participant #7 said, “It’s also about families being on board. Families need to be supportive of teachers. Parents can’t be too tired to check on their kids. Families have fallen back and things have fallen on the school and the teachers. There has to be transformation between schools, communities and families.” When asked why you think African-American male students are given referrals and suspensions more often than non-African-American students, participant #5 spoke from the heart. “I can only speak on the ones that I’ve had. I think African American families spoil the boys and let them know they don’t have to work hard. They can just do what they want at school and they still got what they wanted at home. It didn’t matter. It could be a single parent issue and they’re over compensating, but the boys are lacking

responsibility because the parents are doing everything for them. Nothing is taken seriously.” It should be noted here that participant #5 is African-American, possibly giving this participant a better perspective of how Black males are raised. Participant #5 went on to say, “I think it all starts with the parents honestly. We have to do some workshops to give the parents some information on how to let go of some of the strings and give them responsibility.” Each participant was adamant about the importance of teachers working together with AAS families in order to ensure success for their students in the future.

On March 17, 2015, the researcher noticed that student X needed support with his behavior. Student X called his mother to tell her how his day was going. When Student X usually called his mother, she would give him a pep talk and his behavior would change for the better. After this conversation with his mother, Student X was still upset and his behavior didn't change, but it got worse. The researcher asked Student X what his mom said and Student X said, “My mom said I don't have time for this right now. I'm in court with your brother and I need to take care of this right now. I can't deal with this right now.” The researcher could see Student X needed support from his mother and was disappointed when that support wasn't given. After analyzing the notes that were taken regarding Student X's behavior, the researcher noticed that Student X's behavior improved when he arrived to school on time and when he had support from his family. When the family support wasn't there, the researcher noticed Student X's behavior not only got worse, but it got much worse. The researcher noticed Student X would arrive to school anywhere from fifteen minutes to forty-five minutes late, causing Student X to be agitated because he would miss important academic instruction. Moving forward, student X and most Black male students will need family support in order for them to be successful in the academic setting. If the family support is lacking, Black male students may fall further into the system of

institutional racism. The researcher suggests the following possible solutions for the institution in the cases where parents are unable to support their students: frequent check-ins with students, reach out to other family members or friends, provide afterschool tutoring and mentoring programs, show more empathy with students, be more flexible with assignments and behavior, and spend time getting to know students on a one on one basis. The researcher plays basketball with Student X at least once a week, connects with him by discovering some of his interests, and has shown more empathy for some of the things he is going through. Last year, Student X's behavior spiked from his usual behavior expectations. The researcher showed empathy and spoke with Student X in private. Once the researcher spoke to Student X, the researcher found out that his brother was arrested and sent to a juvenile detention center. The researcher listened to what Student X said, calmed him down, and helped him in maintaining positive behavior expectations. In this instance, it was important for the researcher to connect with Student X to find the root of the change in his behavior. With support from both the institution and family members, the disproportion of AAS referrals and suspensions may have a better chance of declining. As a result, African American male students may have a better chance to succeed in the classroom and in their future educational endeavors.

Institutional Racism

In the process of interviewing the participants, the theme of institutional racism came up often. One of the participants asked the question, was the educational system set up for AAS to succeed? Participant #4 spoke to this issue by stating, "Personally, I believe the education system needs to be overhauled. If anyone looks at the history, they would see that it was designed for white men. It was never intended for people of color to be educated in the foundation of education. We had a lot of things changed like The Civil Rights Movement, but it's still set up

for white males.” Participant #4 continued by saying, “Students of color are trying to learn in a system that wasn’t set up for them. Students of color have to code switch and learn in a way they don’t learn. Kids of color learn from stories, oral tradition, but the education system is not formed that way. Students of color are not praised for their verbal skills. It would take a complete overhaul of the system so our children can be valued and learn in a way that is conducive for them to learn.” In making their last point, participant #4 said, “It’s definitely, I think that in this country, we keep wanting to test kids and hold them to standards that weren’t designed for them. Kids of color will always be at a deficit because the educational system wasn’t created for them and their minds. The results of the tests imply that children of color need to be like white kids and that is a fundamental problem when we’re saying there is an achievement gap, but you are comparing a white kid to a black kid. Our kids don’t want to be white, they just want to be who they are. And they want to be respected for who they are.”

Participant #7 connected with participant #4 by saying, “If we don’t change, the system will remain the same. The history of education doesn’t have a history of serving Black students well. Histories bring about legacies. There is a legacy of not supporting black men well. The only school that is different is Morehouse College, which was designed to support black men. How can we get an institution to change and help support African American students? I’ll be the change that I want to see. It’s like pushing a greasy boat up a hill. It’s designed to smash and as a result, it will be destroyed. It’s a more systemic system in America and we have to recognize it.”

Interviewing Student X and His Father

The researcher interviewed Student X’s father in attempt to understand Student X’s behavior choices. During the interview, the researcher asked Student X’s father the following questions:

1. How would you describe your student's Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade teachers in terms of their discipline practices and their ability to provide support for your student academically and socially?
2. What is your student's behavior like in the home setting?
3. What does he do well/what needs more improvement?
4. In your student's current academic year, have you found his teacher/teachers/administration to be consistent in their discipline practices?
5. Why do you think African-American male students are given referrals and suspensions more often than non-African-American students?
6. In your opinion, how can teachers/administrators help to reduce the disproportionality of African-American male student referrals and suspensions?
7. Do you have any last comments or questions regarding this topic?

Student X's father spoke about Student X being enrolled in another district during kindergarten and first grade and the lack of diversity in the other district. Once Student X arrived at the researcher's school site, his father said Student X had to make adjustments to the diverse staff and student population.

When asked about Student X's behavior at home, his father said, "Busy. He has problems listening and focusing. I think by him being the youngest, he tends to be spoiled sometimes. I would say spoiled by certain individuals." Student X's dad did say that Student X plays sports well and thinks he needs to get involved with acting.

The researcher asked Student X's father why do you think African-American male students are given referrals and suspensions more often than non-African-American students. He responded by saying, "The culture is different than a lot of administrators. Things that African-

American students have to deal with at home are different than the other races. The support in the home is different compared to other races. The family structure is different. Different challenges for African-American students.”

When asked how can teachers/administrators help to reduce the disproportionality of African-American male student referrals and suspensions, Student X’s father answered by stating, “They need to have training on the culture and sensitivity training and understanding the family structure that is happening right now with our families. Do they have restorative justice here? Take a look at what African-American students excel in and use that as an advantage to reduce the behavior problems.”

Finally, the researcher asked Student X’s father if he had any last comments or questions regarding this topic. He responded by saying, “I think the district and administration need to take a look at the struggles that African-American students have and it starts in the home. Things that happen in the home will affect the student. Example - parents arguing, no food, moving from place to place. A lot of times, kids have problems with the trust factor. If they have problems trusting their family at home, they won’t trust people that they only see for a few hours a day. It’s a trust thing. Kids recognize the sincerity of administrators and teachers.”

During his interview, Student X said kindergarten went well for him, but he had to adjust in first grade because he went to a new school. He also said his teachers were disciplined in second and third grade. When prompted to elaborate about his second and third grade teachers being disciplined, Student X said that those teachers taught him routines and strategies to help him with his behavior. One of those strategies was allowing him to run laps around the track when he was upset. Student X said these teachers were consistent with their discipline

procedures, and as a result, it helped him in minimizing incorrect behavior choices. Student X was also asked to name some qualities that may help a teacher/principal in understanding students of color. He said, "I think they need to get to know students better, sit down and talk to them and get to know them." Student X was also asked why do you think African-American male students are given referrals and suspensions more often than non-African-American students. He answered by stating, "Because at home, it may be different.....what you carry from home goes into what you're doing at school. If you're doing really bad at home, it carries on to school. If you're disrespectful at home, that can take on to the classroom." Student X concluded the interview by saying the teachers and administration need to do a better job in terms of disciplining students. Most participants referenced the gap in discipline strategies between the Principal and Vice Principal. At the researcher's school site, the Principal is known for being fair to all students regardless of racial or gender differences. The researcher has interacted with the Principal on numerous occasions regarding discipline. In each instance, she has been stern, fair, empathetic, and willing to speak with students right away. If parents needed to be called, she would not hesitate to do so. The researcher has spoken with most staff members at his school site, and most staff members have said when it comes to discipline, they would rather communicate with the Principal because they know she will be swift and fair. The same thing has not been said regarding the Vice Principal and his discipline strategies.

At the beginning of the year, an African-American male student in the researcher's class, slapped an Asian female student in the researcher's class. The female student's mother wrote the researcher an e-mail explaining her concern regarding her daughter being slapped. The researcher went to the Vice Principal to show him the parent's e-mail. The Vice Principal responded by saying, "It's not that big of a deal. He didn't even slap her that hard." The

researcher went on to discuss this incident with the Vice Principal, but the Vice Principal questioned the researcher in such an intimidating way, that the researcher left that meeting feeling unsupported. The Vice Principal went on to tell the female student's mother the same thing. He told her mom, "It wasn't that big of a deal. He didn't slap her that hard." The researcher spoke with the female student's mother a few days after the incident and she was in tears. She could not understand how someone was able to put their hands on her daughter and nothing was done about it.

In a separate incident, two of the researcher's students had an incident during recess. The same African-American male student from the incident above, punched a Mexican-American student in the chest. The researcher interviewed both students immediately after the incident and the African-American student admitted to hitting the Mexican-American student and that the Mexican-American student did not hit him back at any time. I wrote a referral for the African-American student stating that the African-American student punched the Mexican-American student in the chest. The researcher never stated that the Mexican-American student hit the African-American student. Later that day, the Vice Principal met with the researcher and the two students and told the researcher that both students were in trouble for fighting. The Vice Principal's suggestion was to have both of the boys help the researcher in the classroom the next day before school started. The researcher went along with the idea because the Vice Principal stated, "I think this will work, so we are going to try this." He asked the researcher what he thought of the consequence, but he did not show much interest in the researcher's response because he was busy stating what he thought should happen, instead of collaborating together with the researcher. The following day, both of the boys did not show up to help the researcher in the classroom. The Vice Principal did check in to see if they helped in the classroom, but then

continued with what he thought was a good idea. That same day, the father of the Mexican-American student went to the researcher's classroom. He was upset with the researcher because the Vice Principal told him the researcher said both of the boys were hitting each other and that they were both at fault. As stated earlier, the researcher never stated both boys were hitting each other. The researcher stated that the African-American student punched the Mexican-American student in the chest for no particular reason, but for whatever reason, the Vice Principal told the parents that both of the boys were fighting.

The incident above is a sample of the inconsistencies with the Vice Principal's lack of consistent discipline among students. Staff members are aware of the Vice Principal's inconsistent discipline practices and as a result, the students' behavior hasn't improved much because the Vice Principal is usually the one that is in charge of the discipline that happens at the school site. As a result, students ask for the Vice Principal when they get into trouble because they know he won't discipline them consistently every time. A staff member also told the researcher that she observed the school's superintendent grab an African American student by the arm and she also observed him yelling at that same student. The researcher has observed the Vice Principal and school superintendent yelling at Black students, often times causing the situation to worsen. When it comes to non-AAS, the Vice Principal and school superintendent speak to those students in a more respectful tone. Student X said it best when he mentioned the importance of administrators and teachers using consistent discipline strategies when interacting with Black students. The staff has noticed the inconsistencies with discipline, and now, so are the students.

The interviews suggest that consistent awareness of teachers and administration is needed in terms of supporting AAS with reducing the number of referrals and suspensions they receive.

Participants also noted the importance of staff training and the need for African American parent support. In addition, all of the participants said they are aware of the school's discipline policy. However, six out of the eight participants stated that the school's discipline policy is not clear and consistent. According to the participants' responses on their surveys and the interview responses, teacher-student relationships are also believed to play a major factor in AAS academic performance. Most participants noticed discrepancies in the way the principal disciplines Black students versus the way the Vice Principal disciplines AAS, stating that the Vice Principal is not equitable when disciplining Black and non-Black students. The interviews suggests that the system of institutional racism will only widen if the necessary changes are not implemented.

Conclusion

This study was crafted to examine the disproportion of African-American student referrals and suspensions. This study analyzed the following research question:

What are the factors for African-American males being disproportionately suspended from school?

The research question was investigated through an instrumental case study design. The researcher used the following research tools to collect the data: the case study participant reflections, researcher reflections, participant interviews, researcher's observations, and interviews from the case study participant's father and former teachers.

As a result of this study, and the interviews that were conducted, the researcher came to the following conclusions:

- a. Positive teacher-student relationships are important in reducing AAS referrals and suspensions. One facet of this is having a diverse teaching staff that reflects the population of the students attending the school. As of 2011 – 2012, the national teacher racial and ethnic makeup was as follows: 81.9% White, 6.8% Black, 7.8% Hispanic, and 3.5% Other (National Center for Education Statistics). All of the participants in this study also concluded that teacher-student relationships are important in maintaining positive relationships with African American students. Starting the first day of school, teachers, administrators, and school staff members should start learning the names of the students and find out what some of their interests are. Another strategy for developing positive relationships with students is spending time with them outside of the academic setting. The researcher has lunch clubs on Mondays with students that made positive behavior choices the previous weeks. For the more challenging students, the researcher engages with them during recess, or he includes them as teacher's helpers for before and after school prep and planning time. Most importantly, teachers, administrators, and school staff need to let students know that they care. This can be done by showing empathy for what students are going through. The focus shouldn't be the behavior itself, but rather, the causes for the incorrect behavior choices. When students know their teachers, administrators, and school staff actually care for them, the trust between everyone will be strengthened. As a result, the disproportion of AAS referrals and suspensions should start to decrease.
- b. Participants in the study spoke about the importance of having support from Black families. They believe Black families have put all of the attention on teachers and are

not focusing on supporting teachers with their Black students. Families of African American students tend to work long hours and may have more than one job. When that is the case, AAS parent involvement becomes very minimal. The researcher suggests the following possible solutions for the institution in the cases where parents are unable to support their students: frequent check-ins with students, reach out to other family members or friends, provide afterschool tutoring and mentoring programs, show more empathy with students, be more flexible with assignments and behavior, and spend time getting to know students on a one on one basis. The researcher has implemented a lot of these strategies with Student X and they have proven to be very beneficial. (Brandon, 2007) & (Townsend, 2000) agree about the importance of consistent home support for AAS. Brandon says academic and social gains are made when African American students have parents involved at home. Townsend supports Brandon in saying that AAS need teachers and parents to work together to ensure their success. Some participants stated that the educational system is not designed for Black students. This is where the need for staff training enters the picture. The researcher has participated in social emotional and cultural awareness training. In those trainings, the researcher was provided with insight into some of the beliefs and values of other cultures. In the case of AAS, teachers, administrators, and staff members can benefit immensely through understanding some of the African-American beliefs and cultural norms. One example of this is the way teachers speak to African American. Teachers ask AAS do a task. Oftentimes, they ask more than once. In contrast, African-American families tell their students what to do in a more assertive way. In the African-American home, some AAS know that their parents are

in charge of the household and that means there will be severe consequences if the rules are not followed the first time given. In the classroom, those same African American students tend to use their verbal skills by talking back to the teachers when given directives and as a result, they end up receiving referrals or suspensions. If staff members are trained in cultural awareness and the parent support increases, it may lead to more success in the classroom for AAS.

- c. Participants in this study strongly agree with each other in saying a school's discipline policy needs to be clear and consistent. A major factor in this also falls on the administration and their ability to discipline students the same way, regardless of race. Inconsistent discipline practices may widen the gap of institutional racism. According to Adams, AAS students are three times more likely to be suspended for an offense compared to their non-black peers (2008). This proportion can lead to the school-to-prison pipeline, one of the pieces of institutional racism. Once away from the academic setting, the school-to prison pipeline cycle is more likely to continue (Fenning, 2007). Researchers have suggested that by the end of third grade, English and Language Arts and mathematics test scores of Black students are being used to predict how many prisons to build. For example, if 2,500 AAS score below proficient on their mandated state tests, prison construction analysts will predict that out of those 2,500 AAS, a majority of them will drop out of school and will most likely go to prison. Thus, the school-to-prison pipeline continues.

- d. Lastly, participants in this study are imploring more training for teachers and administrators to help them relate better with Black students, Black males in particular. If teachers and administrators can relate better to their AAS, the trust between both sides can build up, helping to reduce African American student referrals and suspensions. “As the trust in the teacher-student relationship develops, so does the reduction of disproportionate suspension rates of Black students” (Stevenson, 2008, p. 357). Office disciplinary referrals have numerous effects on AAS which in turn builds racial tension between the teacher and the student.

Recommendations

- 1.) Teacher/Student Relationships – Respectful teacher-student relationships are needed in order to ensure a positive academic environment for African American students. As a result, the researcher is recommending that teachers make it a goal to get to know their AAS better by finding out about their families and their likes and dislikes. Teachers also need to communicate with parents more frequently to discuss positive gains in the classroom, not just behavior problems. Lastly, realize that African American students come from different backgrounds than their non-African-American peers. The researcher is recommending that teachers immerse themselves in the Black community. Teachers can start by visiting their African American students in their home environment. This will give teachers an opportunity to examine how Black parents communicate and discipline their children. Doing this may help teachers with using discipline strategies that AAS are familiar with at home and then use those same strategies in the classroom. Visiting neighborhood parks, recreation centers, churches, and shelters are other ways teachers can identify the

ways their Black students interact in their communities. Once teachers spend time in the Black community with their African American students and their families, the trust between teachers and AAS may begin to strengthen.

- 2.) Administrators – The school discipline policy should be clear and consistent for all students. This may help with closing the gap of institutional racism. Superintendents, Principals, Vice Principals, and all other administrative staff need to make sure staff members are aware of the school wide policy and are enforcing it equally among all students. Administrators should also make it a habit to get to know AAS and their families. One recommendation is to have more family events at the school. In addition to Back to School Night and Art night, schools should think about including a family game night or a family movie night. By doing this, administrators will have multiple chances to get to know their African American students and their families and in turn, strengthen the trust between themselves and African American students. In addition to this, administrators should be more considerate in terms of hiring a diverse staff, one that reflects the population of the students attending the school. Black students need more staff members in the school that look like them.
- 3.) Family Support – The researcher is recommending that AAS families and parents make more of an effort to be involved with their child’s education. Parents and guardians may not be able to physically be at the school all of the time, but e-mailing and calling the school staff to check on academic and social progress is a good start. In addition, the researcher is recommending that parents hold their students accountable for their academic and social progress. Black students can be successful when teachers and families work together. One way to do this is to keep a

- daily/weekly communication log. The teacher and parents can communicate positive and challenging behaviors and give each other ideas on ways to support African American students at school and at home.
- 4.) School Wide Training – In order for school staff members to relate better to AAS, the researcher is suggesting that they participate in African-American cultural training. While interviewing participants for this study, two participants mentioned that the education system is not set up for Black students to succeed. One participant mentioned the educational success of Black men that is happening at Morehouse College. The researcher is recommending that schools hire staff from Morehouse College and other historically black colleges and universities to help with professional development trainings on cultural awareness of the Black culture and ways to relate and educate Black male students. Administrators and staff members can also schedule trips to schools like Morehouse to analyze the way they successfully educate Black men.
- 5.) Teacher Preparation Programs – The researcher is suggesting that teacher preparation programs help in closing the gap of institutional racism by offering more courses on African-American history/culture. More than likely, African American students will have teachers that are non-African American. Due to this reality, teacher preparation programs are responsible for preparing new teachers for the different cultures they are going to experience in their classrooms. The researcher is suggesting that the curriculum includes topics that expose new teachers to the experiences and ways of the African American culture.

Personal Reflection

One of the hot topics during this study was the question of the education system and whether or not it was set up for Black men to fail. In my opinion, I believe the education system in America was not intended for Black male students. While I was growing up in the late eighties to early nineties, I was robbed of a lot of experiences. The main one in particular was found in the curriculum. I didn't learn much about Black history. Each year, I learned, or should I say, relearned about Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I wasn't exposed to Black literature until college, but each year I had weeks and weeks of instruction on slavery and Christopher Columbus. To put in nicely, I had a very bland education when it came to learning about my culture/other cultures. Today, Black boys are asked to sit still for long periods of time and are told to be quiet. The curriculum reflects them somewhat now, but more is needed. In order for Black male students to get engaged with their education, I believe the curriculum should represent them in a positive light and they should have more teachers of color. These things won't solve everything, but it's a start.

As I sit here writing this personal reflection, all I can do is smile! This has been a challenging process for me, but I have enjoyed it. I started my teaching career in the fall of 2010, teaching kindergarten. I don't remember much that year, probably because I was writing a lot of referrals. I started teaching thinking that teaching was my first priority in the classroom. I didn't have time to deal with behavior issues, so I just wrote referrals and sent those students to the office. Looking back to it, most of the students that I sent to the office were African-American. I had terrible management skills that year and my lack of patience caused me to be sick a lot of the year and I had terrible headaches. I thought writing referrals would solve the problem, but it only made things worse.

Fast forward four years, I am a different teacher. I'm teaching fifth grade this year and I have a class of active ten and eleven year olds. However, I have written fewer referrals this year than any of my other years of teaching. As an African-American male teacher, I always receive the African-American boys and girls with behavior problems. This year, I was prepared with new strategies that I found through researching for this study. One of the main things I am doing differently is I am asking more questions of my students. If I see a behavior that is not acceptable for the academic setting, instead of running to my desk to get a referral, I talk with that student on the side and I ask them, "What can I do to help you to be successful right now?" It may be as simple as they didn't have breakfast and are hungry, or it may be that a cousin or uncle died a few days before. A referral wouldn't have shown me that, but just by checking in for a few minutes, my students know that I care about them as a person first. After that, we can learn together in a positive academic environment. We need more caring teachers.

I have an African-American student in my class this year. As a third grader, her teacher got so upset with her that the teacher had her sit outside in the cold and rain because she wasn't focusing in class. So there she was, in the hallway, in the rain, by herself. She was outside for over ten minutes and she ended up getting sick. When she entered my class on the first day, her mom told me she didn't want me as her teacher because I reminded her of her third grade teacher and she didn't want to go through that again. That broke my heart. As we get ready to end this school year, that same student is telling me how much she is going to miss me and that she wants to keep in touch. It didn't get this way over night. It took months and months of building up trust between each other and letting her know that I believe in her. She is the first one to greet me at the door each morning and the first one to help me when I ask for it. In 2010, it was about giving

referrals and having a controlled classroom. Now, it's about building relationships and trust so when things do get crazy, everyone knows it's going to be o.k.

Will I write referrals? Yes, but only if it's regarding physical contact/fighting or something that is threatening another person. If not, I'm going to practice what I have learned through this study, ways to reduce the disproportion of AAS referrals and suspensions. Besides, a student can't learn if they're in the office or at home. Whether challenging or not, ALL students have the right to a positive educational experience. With me as their teacher, those students will.

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Appendix A

Parental Consent for a Minor to Participate in Research

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Before giving consent for your child to participate in this research study, it is urgent that you read and understand the following pertinent information regarding this study and how it will be conducted.

Name of Research Study

The Disproportionality of African American Male Student Referrals and Suspensions

Statement of the Problem

African American students are having problems achieving academic success in the classrooms due to their high rates of school referrals and suspensions. The concern is that African Americans are losing valuable academic instruction time due to being referred to the office for behavior problems and as a result, African American students are being suspended from school at a high rate. When students are suspended from school, they are losing important instruction time. African American referrals and suspensions is an important issue to look at because it leads to them dropping out of school. When African American students drop out of high school, this limits their ability to be a productive member of society. Research suggests that African American students are missing 20 to 40 minutes of academic instruction due to referrals (Bradshaw et al., 2010). In addition, the achievement gap continues to grow due to the high rate of African American student referrals and suspensions.

Research Question

What are the factors for African-American males being disproportionately suspended from school?

Purpose and Background of Study

The purpose of this proposed study is to analyze some of the factors that lead to the high rate of African-American referrals and suspensions.

Procedures

Julius Walker, a graduate student at Holy Names University, will conduct this research project. The procedures are as follows: your student will have an interview with me to discuss the discipline practices in previous classes, your student will keep a reflection journal to write about his/her experiences with discipline practices during this school year, and your student will have an end of study interview with me to share what he/she learned during this study. Before any parts of this study begin, consent forms will be signed and documented by the principal of the

school to acknowledge the study I will conduct on school premises and all study participants, including you, the parent/guardian.

Method for Providing Confidentiality

The researcher, Julius Walker, will maintain the following measures to guarantee your child's confidentiality: all interviews will be conducted in person, all interviews will be conducted in the researcher's classroom and a curtain will be put up on the window to keep pedestrians from looking inside, all computers used during this study will have password locks on them and will only be in the possession of the researcher, the researcher will provide consent forms to all participants and will let them know that their name will not be used in any way before, during, or after this study, the researcher will obtain permission to conduct this study from all necessary authority personnel before conducting this study, all paperwork will be completed without a name or any other identifiable information, and all paperwork and materials from this study will be destroyed 36 months after the completion of this study. **All information you provide will be kept confidential**

Risk/Benefits to Participant

There are no known or anticipated risks to participate in this study. The potential benefits of this study are to provide information regarding the disproportionality of African-American male students in regards to referrals and suspensions and to provide your child an opportunity to reflect on his/her future educational endeavors.

Questions

If you have any questions regarding this research study, please contact the researcher Julius Walker by e-mail at: jrws033@gmail.com or Dr. Kimberly Mayfield, Chair of the Department of Education/ Master's Coordinator at Holy Names University at (510) 436-1396.

Consent

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You can decide to decline to have your child participate in this research study at any time. You may withdraw your child's participation at any time without any consequences. Deciding to have your child withdraw from this study will not affect their academic standing at your child's school.

Cost

There is no cost for your child to participate in this study.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix B

Student Assent Form

Dear Student:

I am asking you to help me in my research study. I am conducting a study to identify the factors that may lead to the disproportionality of African-American male student referrals and suspensions.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means you do not have to participate if you don't want to. You will not have any consequences if you decide not to participate in this study.

If you opt to participate, you will have a chance to speak with me about your previous teachers and the discipline policies they had. In addition, you will keep a journal to reflect on your experiences with staff members and how you feel about their discipline policies. During this study, your name will not be used in any way. All information regarding this study will only be kept and viewed by the researcher and it will be kept safe in a locked cabinet. No one will know that any information was presented by you. There will be no negative consequences if you choose not to participate in this study. You are encouraged to ask the researcher questions if you do not understand any part of the study that is being conducted.

Name of Study

The Disproportionality of African American Male Student Referrals and Suspensions

Statement of the Problem

African American students are having problems achieving academic success in the classrooms due to their high rates of school referrals and suspensions. The concern is that African Americans are losing valuable academic instruction time due to being referred to the office for behavior problems and as a result, African American students are being suspended from school at a high rate. When students are suspended from school, they are losing important instruction time. African American referrals and suspensions is an important issue to look at because it leads to them dropping out of school. When African American students drop out of high school, this limits their ability to be a productive member of society. Research suggests that African American students are missing 20 to 40 minutes of academic instruction due to referrals (Bradshaw et al., 2010). In addition, the achievement gap continues to grow due to the high rate of African American student referrals and suspensions.

Research Question

What are the factors for African-American males being disproportionately suspended from school?

Purpose and Background of Study

The purpose of this proposed study is to analyze some of the factors that lead to the high rate of African-American referrals and suspensions.

Procedures

Julius Walker, a graduate student at Holy Names University, will conduct this research project. The procedures are as follows: you will have an interview with me to discuss the discipline practices in previous classes, you will keep a reflection journal to write about your experiences with discipline practices during this school year, and you will have an end of study interview with me to share what you learned during this study. Before any parts of this study begin, consent forms will be signed and documented by the principal of the school to acknowledge the study I will conduct on school premises and all study participants, including you, and your father.

Method for Providing Confidentiality

The researcher, Julius Walker, will maintain the following measures to guarantee your confidentiality: all interviews will be conducted in person, all interviews will be conducted in the researcher's classroom and a curtain will be put up on the window to keep pedestrians from looking inside, all computers used during this study will have password locks on them and will only be in the possession of the researcher, the researcher will provide consent forms to all participants and will let them know that their name will not be used in any way before, during, or after this study, the researcher will obtain permission to conduct this study from all necessary authority personnel before conducting this study, all paperwork will be completed without a name or any other identifiable information, and all paperwork and materials from this study will be destroyed 36 months after the completion of this study. **All information you provide will be kept confidential**

Risk/Benefits to Participant

There are no known or anticipated risks to participate in this study. The potential benefits of this study are to provide information regarding the disproportionality of African-American male students in regards to referrals and suspensions and to provide you an opportunity to reflect on your future educational endeavors.

Questions

If you have any questions regarding this research study, please contact the researcher Julius Walker by e-mail at: jrws033@gmail.com or Dr. Kimberly Mayfield, Chair of the Department of Education/ Master's Coordinator at Holy Names University at (510) 436-1396.

Consent

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You can decide to decline to have your child participate in this research study at any time. You may withdraw your child's participation at any time without any consequences. Deciding to have your child withdraw from this study will not affect their academic standing at your child's school.

Cost

There is no cost for your child to participate in this study.

Student Signature

Date

Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix C

Principal Consent Form

Dear Principal Diane Lang,

As a part of my M.Ed. degree, I am required to conduct a study. According to the University's policy on the ethical conduct of research, I am writing to ask your consent to conduct a study involving a 5th grade student at Anna Yates Elementary School. Before giving me your consent to conduct this research study, it is urgent that you read and understand the following pertinent information regarding this study and how it will be conducted.

Name of Study

The Disproportionality of African American Male Student Referrals and Suspensions

Statement of the Problem

African American students are having problems achieving academic success in the classrooms due to their high rates of school referrals and suspensions. The concern is that African Americans are losing valuable academic instruction time due to being referred to the office for behavior problems and as a result, African American students are being suspended from school at a high rate. When students are suspended from school, they are losing important instruction time. African American referrals and suspensions is an important issue to look at because it leads to them dropping out of school. When African American students drop out of high school, this limits their ability to be a productive member of society. Research suggests that African American students are missing 20 to 40 minutes of academic instruction due to referrals (Bradshaw et al., 2010). In addition, the achievement gap continues to grow due to the high rate of African American student referrals and suspensions.

Research Question

What are the factors for African-American males being disproportionately suspended from school?

Purpose and Background of Study

The purpose of this proposed study is to analyze some of the factors that lead to the high rate of African-American referrals and suspensions.

Procedures

Julius Walker, a graduate student at Holy Names University, will conduct this research project. The procedures are as follows: This study will use the qualitative instrumental case study research methodology. The researcher will use the following research instruments to help

analyze the factors that lead to the disproportionality of suspensions among African-American male students:

6. Student Interview/ Student Journal Reflections (The researcher will interview the student in the researcher's classroom one on one. During the study, the student will write reflections about his previous teachers and their discipline policy and about his current teacher's discipline policies. The student will also write reflections about his overall experiences and ideas about African-American males and the experiences they have in regards to school suspensions)
7. Interview with the student's father. (The researcher will conduct the interview with the student's father in the researcher's classroom.)
8. Interviews with the student's former teachers (The researcher will conduct interviews with the student's former teachers in the researcher's classroom. The interviews will be completed on a one on one basis)
9. Interview with the principal/administrative assistants (The researcher will interview the principal and administrative assistants in the researcher's classroom on an individual basis)
10. Researcher Journal Reflections (The researcher will keep a journal to document his thoughts and ideas about the student that will participate in this study. The researcher will complete notes 1 – 2 times a week during the duration of this study)

The standard procedure of qualitative instrumental research is as follows: 1.) Explore a problem, 2.) State the Purpose and Research Question in a general and broad way so as to the participants' experiences, 3.) Collect Data, 4.) Analyze the Data for description and themes, and 5.) Write a report using flexible, evaluative criteria, and including the researchers' subjective reflexivity and bias.

All records and any papers used in and relating to the study will be stored in the researcher's locked cabinet. In addition, the home personal computer and laptop used in this study will have locks that will need passwords to access information. The only person with access to those passwords will be the researcher. The researcher will keep and safely lock all of the files used during this study for 36 months. After that time, the files will be destroyed. Before any parts of this study begin, consent forms will be signed and documented by the principal of the school to acknowledge the study I will conduct on school premises and all study participants.

Method for Providing Confidentiality

The researcher, Julius Walker, will maintain the following measures to guarantee confidentiality: all interviews will be conducted in person, all interviews will be conducted in the researcher's classroom and a curtain/construction paper will be put up on the window to keep pedestrians from looking inside, all computers used during this study will have password locks on them and will only be in the possession of the researcher, the researcher will provide consent forms to all participants and will let them know that their name will not be used in any way before, during, or after this study, the researcher will obtain permission to conduct this study from all necessary authority personnel before conducting this study, all paperwork will be completed without a

name or any other identifiable information, and all paperwork and materials from this study will be destroyed 36 months after the completion of this study. **All information you provide will be kept confidential**

Risk/Benefits to Participant

There are no known or anticipated risks to participate in this study. The potential benefits of this study are to provide information regarding the disproportionality of African-American male students in regards to referrals and suspensions and to provide opportunities to reflect on the school's discipline policies.

Questions

If you have any questions regarding this research study, please contact the researcher Julius Walker by e-mail at: jrws033@gmail.com, or by phone at (510) 219 – 7407. In addition, you may Dr. Kimberly Mayfield, Chair of the Department of Education/ Master's Coordinator at Holy Names University at (510) 436-1396.

Consent

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You can decide to decline participation in this research study at any time.

Cost

There is no cost for your child to participate in this study.

Principal Signature

Date

Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix D

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Dear Participant,

As a part of my M.Ed. degree, I am required to conduct a study. According to the University's policy on the ethical conduct of research, I am writing to ask your consent to participate in this study involving a 5th grade student. Before giving me your consent to participate in this research study, it is urgent that you read and understand the following pertinent information regarding this study and how it will be conducted.

Name of Study

The Disproportionality of African American Male Student Referrals and Suspensions

Statement of the Problem

African American students are having problems achieving academic success in the classrooms due to their high rates of school referrals and suspensions. The concern is that African Americans are losing valuable academic instruction time due to being referred to the office for behavior problems and as a result, African American students are being suspended from school at a high rate. When students are suspended from school, they are losing important instruction time. African American referrals and suspensions is an important issue to look at because it leads to them dropping out of school. When African American students drop out of high school, this limits their ability to be a productive member of society. Research suggests that African American students are missing 20 to 40 minutes of academic instruction due to referrals (Bradshaw et al., 2010). In addition, the achievement gap continues to grow due to the high rate of African American student referrals and suspensions.

Research Question

What are the factors for African-American males being disproportionately suspended from school?

Purpose and Background of Study

The purpose of this proposed study is to analyze some of the factors that lead to the high rate of African-American referrals and suspensions.

Procedures

Julius Walker, a graduate student at Holy Names University, will conduct this research project. The procedures are as follows: This study will use the qualitative instrumental case study research methodology. The researcher will use the following research instruments to help

analyze the factors that lead to the disproportionality of suspensions among African-American male students:

1. Student Interview/ Student Journal Reflections (The researcher will interview the student in the researcher's classroom one on one. During the study, the student will write reflections about his previous teachers and their discipline policy and about his current teacher's discipline policies. The student will also write reflections about his overall experiences and ideas about African-American males and the experiences they have in regards to school suspensions)
2. Interview with the student's father. (The researcher will conduct the interview with the student's father in the researcher's classroom.)
3. Interviews with the student's former teachers (The researcher will conduct interviews with the student's former teachers in the researcher's classroom. The interviews will be completed on a one on one basis)
4. Interview with the principal/administrative assistants (The researcher will interview the principal and administrative assistants in the researcher's classroom on an individual basis)
5. Researcher Journal Reflections (The researcher will keep a journal to document his thoughts and ideas about the student that will participate in this study. The researcher will complete notes 1 – 2 times a week during the duration of this study)

The standard procedure of qualitative instrumental research is as follows: 1.) Explore a problem, 2.) State the Purpose and Research Question in a general and broad way so as to the participants' experiences, 3.) Collect Data, 4.) Analyze the Data for description and themes, and 5.) Write a report using flexible, evaluative criteria, and including the researchers' subjective reflexivity and bias.

All records and any papers used in and relating to the study will be stored in the researcher's locked cabinet. In addition, the home personal computer and laptop used in this study will have locks that will need passwords to access information. The only person with access to those passwords will be the researcher. The researcher will keep and safely lock all of the files used during this study for 36 months. After that time, the files will be destroyed. Before any parts of this study begin, consent forms will be signed and documented by the principal of the school to acknowledge the study I will conduct on school premises and all study participants.

Method for Providing Confidentiality

The researcher, Julius Walker, will maintain the following measures to guarantee confidentiality: all interviews will be conducted in person, all interviews will be conducted in the researcher's classroom and a curtain/construction paper will be put up on the window to keep pedestrians from looking inside, all computers used during this study will have password locks on them and will only be in the possession of the researcher, the researcher will provide consent forms to all participants and will let them know that their name will not be used in any way before, during, or after this study, the researcher will obtain permission to conduct this study from all necessary authority personnel before conducting this study, all paperwork will be completed without a

name or any other identifiable information, and all paperwork and materials from this study will be destroyed 36 months after the completion of this study. **All information you provide will be kept confidential**

Risk/Benefits to Participant

There are no known or anticipated risks to participate in this study. The potential benefits of this study are to provide information regarding the disproportionality of African-American male students in regards to referrals and suspensions and to provide opportunities to reflect on the school's discipline policies.

Questions

If you have any questions regarding this research study, please contact the researcher Julius Walker by e-mail at: jrws033@gmail.com. In addition, you may Dr. Kimberly Mayfield, Chair of the Department of Education/ Master's Coordinator at Holy Names University at (510) 436-1396.

Consent

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You can decide to decline participation in this research study at any time.

Cost

There is no cost for your child to participate in this study.

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix E
Pre-Interview Survey Questions

The Disproportion of African-American Male Student Referrals and Suspensions

Pre-Interview Survey (**Please check one.**)

| Question | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| I am aware of the school's discipline policy. | | | | |
| The school's discipline policy is clear and consistent. | | | | |
| At my school site, African-American boys tend to be disciplined more than other ethnic groups. | | | | |
| A student's family environment is a major factor in school behavior. | | | | |
| The school consistently teaches social and emotional curriculum to African-American male students. | | | | |
| Teacher-student relationships play a major factor in a | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| student's academic performance. | | | | |
| When I walk by the office, I see African-American male students in the office most of the time. | | | | |
| I feel teachers/staff discipline all students the same. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

**Appendix F
Student Survey Questions**

Pre-Research Questions

How would you describe your teachers from Kindergarten through third grade in terms of their discipline policies?

What were some things they did well? What are some things they could have improved on?

How would you describe your academic and social efforts during that time/now?

What do you think are some qualities that helps a teacher/principal in understanding students of color?

Why do you think African-American male students are given referrals and suspensions more often than non-African-American students?

What are some things you would like to see changed in your school community in regards to the way students are disciplined?

Appendix G
Survey Questions for Student's Father

How would you describe your student's Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade teachers in terms of their discipline practices and their ability to provide support for your student academically and socially?

What is your student's behavior like in the home setting?

What does he do well/what needs more improvement?

In your student's current academic year, have you found his teacher/teachers/administration to be consistent in their discipline practices?

Why do you think African-American male students are given referrals and suspensions more often than non-African-American students?

In your opinion, how can teachers/administrators help to reduce the disproportionality of African-American male student referrals and suspensions?

Do you have any last comments or questions regarding this topic?

Appendix H
Survey Questions for School Administrator/Administrative Assistants

In terms of referrals and suspensions, what is the ethnic/racial background of the majority of students that are sent to the office for referrals or suspensions?

What do you think are some causes for this?

Once a student has been sent to the office for a referral or suspension, what is the process from the time a student enters the office, to the time a student leaves the office?

Would you say students are consistently disciplined the same way regardless of race or gender?

Why do you think African-American male students are given referrals and suspensions more often than non-African-American students?

In your opinion, do you think teachers/school staff refer students to the office too quickly, without first trying to resolve the issue themselves first?

What can you do as an administrator/administrative assistant to help in the disproportion of African-American male student referrals and suspensions?

Do you have any last comments or questions regarding this topic?

**Appendix I
Survey Questions for Teacher Participants**

How long have you been teaching at this school site?

During that time, how many referrals/suspensions have you initiated?

What is your classroom management/behavior philosophy?

How would you describe student X's academic performance/behavior while in your class?

In regards to student X, how did you support him with his behavior choices?

Did you keep student X's parents informed about his academic/behavior progress in your class?

Why do you think African-American male students are given referrals and suspensions more often than non-African-American students?

What can your school community do to help close the gap in African-American male referrals and suspensions?

In terms of discipline, do you feel supported by your administrator/administrative staff?

Do you have any last comments or questions regarding this topic?

