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THE RELATIONSHIP OF PRINCIPAL GENDER AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF
SCHOOL CLIMATE ON SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION RATES OF HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The University of Mississippi

Roderick L. Payne

August 2017

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this explanatory quantitative study was to determine if relationships exist between principal gender, teachers' perceptions of the school climate, and the suspension rates of high school students in a large consolidated district in the mid-South. The research analyzed a single academic year, 2015–16, within the subject district. The study sample consisted of 20 high schools with similar characteristics. Ten of the high schools have a female principal and 10 of the high schools have a male principal. The independent variables of the study were principal gender and teachers' perceptions of the school climate; dependent variables were the number of suspensions and the number of expulsions per student during the 2015–16 academic year. The research involved conducting independent samples *t* tests and Pearson's correlations to analyze the data. Results revealed no statistical difference among measures of the dependent variables between groups. Nonetheless, relatively large mean differences and *p* value between principal gender and number of suspensions (high schools led by male principals had .583 suspensions per student and high schools led by female principals had .387 suspensions per student, $p = .15$) and a moderate correlation with a relatively low *p* value ($r = .40$, $p = .073$) between a measure of school climate and number of expulsions, indicate a possible Type II error. Given this mix of statistical results and possible error, the research concludes with a recommendation for further research.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated with the deepest love, admiration, and desire for learning to my late aunt, Katherine Flemings, who taught me to be resilient and failure is not an option, and to my late mother, Rosetta Payne, who taught me the value of hard work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by acknowledging my Lord and Savior, for through HIM, all things are possible. In the book of Proverbs, Chapter 3 verses 5 through 7, the Bible reads, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge HIM, and HE will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil.” This admonition has been my guiding principle as I traveled this educational journey, for HE opened the door of opportunity for me to reach the divine purpose in my life.

I want to acknowledge my wife, Tamiko, who has supported me through all endeavors and has been a beacon of encouragement when times were difficult. She would not allow me to surrender. Understanding education is the key component to success in life, we have strived to set the example for our children, Taylor and Brandon. The example provides only a blueprint for them to have the mindset that all things are possible when GOD is placed first.

Descended from a lineage of educators, the desire for learning was pressed upon me at an early age. Through my aunt, Katherine Flemings, I learned the value of education; failure was not an option. As an educator of 34 years, she encouraged me from my early childhood and saw the best in me when no one else did, and to her I say, “Thank you.” Coupled with learning, the value of hard work was also pressed by my mother, Rosetta Payne, who continuously stated, “No one is going to give you anything, so you are going to have to work for it.” For those words, I say, “Thank you.”

Next, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Douglas Davis, my advisor, who gave generously of his time and challenged my thinking to a broader scope while extending the olive branch through times of exasperation to continue along the journey. To the other committee members, Dr. Dennis Bunch, Dr. Denver Fowler, and Dr. Marie Barnard, I will not forget your words of encouragement, advisement, and, most importantly, the time you gave to assist me in transitioning from student to colleague. I will forever hold to the lessons taught from the classroom to casual conversations where I was learning and did not realize it.

Lastly, I would to acknowledge and thank my work family in the Office of Attendance and Discipline for encouraging words and every aspect of assistance you offered me in this journey. Each one of you has been a blessing as you helped guide me through this process with your patience, positive attitudes, and work asked of you when the burden became overwhelming.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For many students across the United States, exclusionary practices continue to exist as a means of discipline for misconduct in the school setting. School exclusionary practices consist of out-of-school suspension and expulsion, which places the student away from the school setting for a significant amount of time due to an infraction committed. This research examined the relationship between principal characteristics and the frequency of exclusionary discipline practices. Specifically, in relation to exclusionary practices being implemented as a means for addressing misconduct, is the gender of the school principal a factor? In addition, the research examined the relationship between measures of school climate and levels of student misconduct, and how these two variables are related to exclusionary discipline practices.

According to Fabelo et al. (2011), at least one-third of students will experience an out-of-school suspension or expulsion during the course of their school career. For minority students, the use of exclusionary practices continues to increase across the nation (Losen & Skiba, 2010). The utilization of exclusionary practices as a means for discipline brings substantial risks, effecting short- and long-term negative outcomes (Skiba et al., 2014). In the short term, exclusionary practices foster continuous misconduct throughout the school setting without addressing the root cause of the behavior. This disconnect often results in a student who resents the school environment as a whole. In the long term, exclusionary practices lead to poor academic achievement, failure to complete high school, and adjudication in the criminal justice

system. To combat the issue, there is a need to examine contextual variables influencing excessive exclusionary practices.

Statement of Problem

The central issue of concern addressed in this research is how differences in the gender of the building-level principal relate to the types of disciplinary practices used in a school. In the second decade of the 21st century, exclusionary practices for disciplining students have become a pervasive problem effecting school districts nationwide. The gender of the principal has become a key component when examining discipline practices for minority high school students as suspension and expulsion percentages continue to escalate (Coleman, 2005). Adams and Yoder (1985) contended research on gender roles, as it pertains to leadership, shows men and women are evaluated differently. Moreover, an important finding across all settings reveals a tendency for female principals to adopt a more democratic, participative style, whereas their male counterparts are more apt to display an autocratic, directive style (Adler, Laney, & Packer, 1993; Eagly, Karau, & Johnson, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1989). Conversely, the disproportionate rates of practices based on race and gender of the student have come under scrutiny, causing former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to examine how schools, especially high schools, are working with minority students to curtail suspension and expulsion rates.

According to Cuellar and Markowitz (2015), school leaders have many available strategies to address problem behavior among students; however, one option increasingly used by schools and administrators is to suspend problem youth, which removes students for defined periods of time. Over the past few decades, school districts across the country have adopted “zero tolerance” disciplinary policies as a way to reduce violence on campus, protect students, and maintain environments conducive to learning. At inception, these policies applied to only

the most serious offenses such as bringing a weapon to school; but over time, these policies have been expanded to include lesser infractions such as alcohol or tobacco use, fighting, or swearing (Kang-Brown, Trone, Fratello, & Daftary-Kapur, 2013). More importantly, studies reveal policy makers design and implement new legislation with a one-size-fits-all mindset. According to survey results, study conducted among elementary and secondary schools that included 97% of public school districts and 99% of public schools across the nation found there were a total of 3,053,449 student suspensions and 97,177 expulsions in 2000 (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Additionally, Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson (2002) found minority students were referred to the office more than their non-minority counterparts. Minority students are classified as individuals who differ in national, religious, and cultural origin from the dominant group. For minority groups, utilizing exclusionary practices to solve behavioral issues can also have a negative impact on urban communities because the action contributes to low educational attainment and potential criminal behavior attributed to students being absent from the classroom. More importantly, each state is unique and needs for students are significantly different, causing policy and laws to not be aligned. According to York-Barr, Sommerness, Duke, and Ghere (2004), urban schools have a host of problems, causing school administrators to have a reactive approach regarding student behavior. In urban school districts, many factors can plague a school setting, causing administrators to exercise exclusionary practices with minority students at high rates to maintain a positive school climate.

Across the nation, school administrators, district leaders, and elected officials have placed emphasis on the increasing suspension and expulsion rates of minority students. Conversely, there is a continuous search for solutions to correct the problem. This research focused on the

relationship of gender of the principal, school climate, and exclusionary practices regarding discipline to capture a more intimate view of root causes.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to examine if differences and relationships exist between male and female principals, teachers' perception of school climate, and the suspension and expulsion rates of high school students and minority high school students in a large consolidated district in the mid-South. Data from surveys of teachers' perceptions of school climate, levels of disciplinary infractions, principal gender, and numbers of suspensions and expulsions were obtained from 20 high schools out of a total of 32 high schools. The sample of 20 high schools was chosen due to principal assignments conducted by the district. Specifically, 10 high schools have female principals and 10 have male principals. Additionally, there are eight magnet schools within the sample of 20 schools, with four led by female principals and four led by male principals. The magnet schools operate under a policy of student transfers, which implement a probationary period if misconduct occurs in the school setting. The magnet transfer reviews three areas of concern to implement a probationary period: student attendance, academic grades, and student conduct. The student enrolled on a magnet transfer cannot be removed to the assigned school unless an infraction occurs resulting in expulsion; however, students who attend assigned schools can be removed from the academic setting for misconduct resulting in exclusionary discipline. A probationary period to correct misconduct is not in place for students in assigned schools. The study analyzed a single school year, 2015–16. More than a single year of data were not available because the district was coming out of a period of reorganization and merger with a county district.

The school district is composed of more than 100,000 students and is currently one of the largest 25 school districts in the nation. The minority population of the district is 98% with 45% percent of the students in the district residing in poverty. These demographics present many challenges for school principals in meeting the educational needs of the student population. In addition, 98% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, and many arrive at school settings with behavioral issues. Moreover, students who arrive at school settings with behavioral issues and exclusionary practices often afford an easy remedy for administrators. To examine exclusionary practices as a form of discipline, this study analyzed factors surrounding these practices to provide insight into some characteristics of the problem.

According to Kramer, Watson, and Hodges (2013), *culture* and *climate* are terms used to shape the dynamics of an organization. Climate emphasizes the shared perceptions of those within the organization, and culture focuses on shared assumptions, shared meanings, and shared beliefs (Kramer et al., 2013). Additionally, climate measures are based upon student, teacher, and administrator personal perceptions and experiences while culture measures are based on the rooted organizational values (Kramer et al., 2013). Due to heightened national attention of disciplinary practices of minority students, this study utilized social cognitive theory by Bandura, who developed social learning theory, self-efficacy, and the 1961 Bobo doll experiment, to interpret and discuss the results. Social cognitive theory is an account of human behavior and learning developed during the last half of the 20th century by Bandura (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2003), a Canadian psychologist. Social cognitive theory, used in psychology, education, and communication, posits portions of an individual's knowledge acquisition can be directly related to observing others within the context of social interactions, experiences, and outside media influences.

Theoretical Framework

Social cognitive theory (SCT) provides a useful lens to understand relationships between the gender of the principal, teachers' perceptions of school climate, disciplinary infractions, and exclusionary punishment. The works of Bandura include social learning theory (Bandura, 1978), the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, Freeman, & Lightsey, 1999), and the 1961 Bobo doll experiment (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961) and led to the development of SCT in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The basic premise of SCT is behavior, environment, and personal factors influence one another in a reciprocal fashion. A person's ongoing functioning is a product of a continuous interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and contextual factors (Denler, Wolters, & Benzan, 2014). According to Bandura (2001), a closely related assumption within SCT is people have an agency or ability to influence their own behavior and the environment in a purposeful, goal-directed fashion. For building-level principals, this transformative component is key when developing discipline practices and creating a positive climate in the school setting. More importantly, SCT suggests the importance of avoiding exclusionary practices in addressing inappropriate behaviors.

According to SCT, supporting the social cognitive development of students with discipline problems requires alternate approaches avoiding exclusion. Reflective practices may also contribute to the capacity building of teacher leaders and assistant principals in changing behavior and perceptions of working with the minority population of students. SCT assumes the importance of the environment in determining behavior, but it also argues people can, through forethought, self-reflection, and self-regulatory processes, exert substantial influence over their own outcomes and the environment more broadly (Denler et al., 2014). The utilization of SCT can assist in interpreting data on environmental and cognitive factors, providing an

understanding of why exclusionary disciplinary practices are utilized at a higher rate for minority students, creating an overrepresentation (Fenning & Rose, 2007).

Studies Addressing the Problem

The negative impact of suspension and expulsion of minority high school students has become pervasive in the United States. More specifically, the increased percentages have been attributed to the consistent factors of low socioeconomic status, defiance, and poor academic ability. In a survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (2000a), approximately 10% of teachers reported being threatened in the classroom setting. The suggestion is that a majority of public school teachers encounter similar instances with minority students. The U.S. Department of Education study lends itself to the examination of teacher perceptions of minority students and school climate. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, conducted a study in 2004, data from which indicate that minority students were suspended 3 times more often than other students. As a whole, these studies indicate that, in highly populated areas of minority students, suspensions and expulsions occur at higher rates; however, the studies are limited in scope and have a focus on socioeconomic status, classroom defiance, and academic ability due to exclusion. The principal gender and teacher perceptions have not been targeted factors to investigate if a relationship exists with the exclusionary discipline practices and minority students.

Significance of the Study

The present study yielded implications for teachers, school administrators, district leaders, and elected government officials. The study also provided insights into a need to employ interventions leading to the reduction of suspension and expulsion rates for this population of students. Traditionally, secondary principals in the subject school district,

primarily high schools, have been men. The district is composed of more than 100,000 students in urban settings with a minority level of 98% and a poverty level of 45%. With a large economically disadvantaged population, district leaders are interested in data related to exclusionary discipline to support positive changes. Given the success of elementary schools in the district, the majority of which have female principals, an interest in the gender of high school principals resulted. According to Fuller (2014), school leadership is often measured by performance.

The results of this study suggest a need for urban districts to examine similar issues to improve secondary school leadership and school climates and decrease suspensions and expulsions of minority students. The levels of exclusionary discipline found in this study support the need for high school administrators and classroom teachers to develop competencies to elicit positive student behavior for students with repetitive behavior incidents and provide strategies to handle scenarios before applying exclusionary punishments.

Research Questions

This explanatory quantitative study utilized pre-existing data to examine if gender differences among school principals result in differences in teachers' perceptions of the school climate, and differences in the suspension and expulsion rates of high school students and minority high school students in a large consolidated district in the mid-South. Additionally, the study examined the relationships between teachers' perceptions of the school climate and suspension and expulsion rates. To examine gender differences among principals and disciplinary practices within high schools in the subject district, the gender of the principal, teacher survey results of perceptions of the school climate, levels of reported disciplinary

infractions, and levels of suspensions and expulsions were collected and analyzed. These data were used to respond to the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant difference between male and female principals and the number of suspensions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South?
2. Is there a significant difference between male and female principals and the number of expulsions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South?
3. Is there a significant difference between male and female principals and the number of suspensions of minority students for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South?
4. Is there a significant difference between male and female principals and the number of expulsions of minority students for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South?
5. Is there a significant difference between male and female principals and teacher perceptions of the school climate in a large consolidated district in the mid-South?
6. Is there a relationship between teacher perceptions of the school climate and the number of suspensions per for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South?
7. Is there a relationship between teacher perceptions of the school climate and the number of expulsions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South?

Research Hypotheses

- H₀1: There is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number of suspensions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.
- H₀2: There is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number of expulsions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.
- H₀3: There is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number of suspensions of minority students for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.
- H₀4: There is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number of expulsions of minority students for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.
- H₀5: There is no significant difference between male and female principals and teacher perceptions of the school climate in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.
- H₀6: There is no relationship between teacher perceptions of the school climate and the number of suspensions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.
- H₀7: There is no relationship between teacher perceptions of the school climate and the number of expulsions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.

Methods Overview

This research study utilized an explanatory design to examine pre-existing student discipline data and teacher survey data of perceptions of the school climate. According to Creswell (2012), an explanatory design describes and measures the degree or association between two or more variables or sets of scores. This research compared gender differences among school principals, and a measure of school climate to expulsions and suspension rates of high school students and minority high school students. The research questions examined whether difference in the principal's gender might relate to differences in areas involved with the social cognitive development of students; specifically levels of exclusionary discipline and perceptions of the school climate. To compare the independent variable of principal gender with suspension and expulsion rates of high school students and minority high school students, independent samples *t* tests were utilized to test the hypotheses. A Pearson's correlation was used to examine if relationships exist between teachers' perceptions of the school climate and suspension and expulsion rates.

Limitations

The study was limited in several aspects. First, the study examined only one school district in a state in the mid-South regarding administrator gender and teachers' perception of school climate toward the suspension and expulsion rates of minority high school students. As such, findings might not be generalizable to other districts. A second limitation had to do with the teacher perception data. These data were from one subscale of the survey and might be subjective in nature according to teachers' experience within the school setting. There was also an assumption each discipline incident was accurately documented. District-level data depend on the fidelity of reporting at each individual school site and might be inaccurate. Much of the

data used in this study were not under the direct control of the researcher. Lastly, the study was conducted using data from a newly merged urban and county school district with blended perceptions about discipline for minority students.

The subject school district is a unique blend of school types, sizes, and structures. The minority population of the district is 98%, with 45% percent of the students in the district residing in poverty. These demographics present many challenges for school principals in meeting the educational needs of the student population. In addition, 98% of students are eligible to receive free and reduced lunch, and many arrive at school settings with behavioral issues. Although traditional minority groups are 98% of the student population in the district, they are, to be consistent, referred to as minority members in the research. The data examined in this study might not provide a true depiction of suspension and expulsion rates because the study only encompasses data from a merged district over a single year. Within the southern region of the United States, school districts are usually small in size and mostly rural, which might limit transferability of the study due to the large, urban, majority-minority status of the district.

This study did not attempt to analyze other potential factors related to the suspension and expulsion rates, such as race of the principal, principal experience, principal's length of time in that particular school, and economic variables affecting school resources to implement interventions to curtail or mitigate the problem. The population of the study was restricted to the subject school district with data collected from 20 similar schools. While data from this sample might reflect conditions in other districts, findings of this research are not statistically generalizable to other districts.

Definitions

Within this study, several terms were utilized to assist in understanding the meaning of exclusionary practices and conceptualize the purpose of the study. The definitions provide clarity for persons outside the field of educational leadership, creating a clear lens of discipline practices pertaining to the subject district examined in this study.

Exclusionary consequence: A consequence when a student commits an infraction to violate school policy, and the student is removed from the school setting for a specific length of time (Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010).

Explanatory design: A research design utilized in quantitative studies to describe and measure the degree of difference or association (relationship) between two or more variables or sets of scores (Creswell, 2012).

Expulsion: A long-term removal from the school setting exceeding 10 days but not the length of an academic school year (Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010).

Minority: A term referring to a category of people differentiated from the social majority, those who hold the majority of positions of social power in a society, and may be defined by law (U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census, 2011).

School climate: Describes the environment affecting the behavior of teachers and students; characterizes the organization at the school building and classroom level (Miskel, 1996).

School culture: The guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2007). School culture can be used to encompass attitudes, expected behaviors, and values that have an impact on school operations (Fullan, 2007).

Suspension: A disciplinary action administered as a consequence for a student's inappropriate behavior requiring a student to be absent from the classroom or school for a specified period of time, usually one to 10 days (Morrison & Skiba, 2001).

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher identified the central issue of concern regarding how differences in gender of the principal relate to the types of disciplinary practices occurring in a school. The chapter included a statement of the problem, definition of the purpose of the study, presentation of research questions, and discussion of limitations of the research. Chapter 2 includes a discussion of existing research on principal gender, gender concept, gender differences in leadership, leadership behavior, teachers' perceptions of school climate, school climate and discipline, and racial disparities and exclusionary practices. Data for this study were analyzed using Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory to examine gender concepts in leadership behavior, teacher perceptions of school climate, and the pervasive problem of exclusionary practices for high school minority students.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

School exclusionary practices, whether out-of-school suspension or expulsion, remain a substantial component of discipline in schools across the nation. The use of exclusionary discipline in schools continues to increase, especially for minority students (Losen & Skiba, 2010). More specifically, out-of-school suspension is a discipline practice not restricted to serious or dangerous behavior; out-of-school suspension is now utilized for daily interactions and disruptions students have with teachers and school administrators, especially for defiance and noncompliance (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Skiba et al., 2011).

The implementation of school exclusion as a disciplinary tool carries potential and substantial risks of short- and long-term negative outcomes. In particular, at the school level, high rates of suspensions and expulsions have consistently been correlated with perceptions of a negative school climate (Bickel & Qualls, 1980; Steinberg, Allensworth, & Johnson, 2013; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). While examining the use of exclusionary discipline practices administered by school leaders, stereotypes and gender of the school leader are brought to the forefront to gain greater perspective of school climate, and the perceptions leaders have of students within the school setting. Stereotypical ideologies and gender of the leader can have significant impact on the school climate and the day-to-day interactions with students regarding discipline. This chapter presents existing research on stereotypes, gender stereotypes, gender differences in leadership, and the impact of exclusionary practices.

Stereotypes

According to Northouse (2007), stereotypes are explained as cognitive shortcuts people utilize to process information to describe specific groups. Stereotypes are derived from historical and cultural norms, suggesting particular groups of the population are prone to behave or biologically made a certain way (Northouse, 2007). Subsequently, as time and society progress, norms and cultures progress simultaneously, which have an impact on stereotypes. According to Duehr and Bono (2006) and Eagly and Karau (2002), the number of women in leadership roles, at least at the supervisory and middle management levels, has increased over the past half century. More importantly, a cultural shift of this magnitude can serve as a catalyst to change the stereotype associated with a certain group (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011). With respect to the notion of stereotypes, it is critical to understand cultural shifts and societal changes have influenced stereotypes through personal experiences, media outlets providing information to mass populations, and socioeconomic status (Carpenter, 2012; & Krieglmeier & Sherman, 2012).

Experiences feed perceptions that we as a society have of specific groups. An experience can assist in formulating ideologies or stereotypes, creating a false pretense about a group as a whole due to one experience. For example, a student who struggles with mathematics works with an Asian tutor to receive a better grade in the course. The tutor is highly skilled in the content area of mathematics; therefore, the student could activate a stereotype and retain a memory that all members of the Asian population are highly skilled in the area of mathematics. Krieglmeier and Sherman (2012) contended encountering a member of a specific group is the most typical manner of developing a stereotype.

Mass media, such as film and television, has become a vehicle for the delivery of images of different groups. Unfortunately, mass media can create a distorted image of a specific group, establishing negative connotations that are not realistic or accurate. According to Carpenter (2012), audiences perceive extreme or distorted images as realistic if they are familiar. Carpenter contended that when people continually view a specific group in the same manner displayed through mass media, a stereotype is created.

Gender

The meaning of gender has been thought to be interchangeable or synonymous with the term “sex.” Subsequently, the terms display different meanings when utilized in the context of leadership. According to the World Health Organization (2013), the term “gender” pertains to socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes a society places upon men and women deemed to be appropriate. In contrast, the term sex provides an explanation of biological and physical characteristics defining men and women. More specifically, the World Health Organization contended the term sex describes who we are, while gender is the stereotype formed when world awareness emerges to the individual. For example, young boys play with toy trucks and cars, providing a masculine identity, while young girls play with dolls to display a feminine identity.

Gender stereotypes are formulated at a young age, causing the stereotypes to become a fixed mindset that persists over time. According to Northouse (2007), gender stereotypes are highly resistant to change; hence, several studies conducted of gender roles have displayed men as more aggressive, independent, objective, rational, dominant, competitive, and better decision makers. In contrast, women are portrayed as tactful, sympathetic, irrational, emotional, gentle, and quiet (Adams & Yoder, 1985). These portrayals are merely characteristics of an individual,

but they can lead to gender-based stereotypes and behaviors exhibited from an early onset. Gender stereotypes can introduce discrimination in a culture where roles have been strongly defined. In particular, the U.S. Supreme Court presided over the case of *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins* (1989), illustrating how gender stereotypes can adversely affect the work environment. Hopkins, a woman, was discriminated against for being too masculine and denied promotion to partner in the organization. The court ruled in the favor of Hopkins, but the case displayed the intractability of societal stereotypes culture places upon individuals.

Gender Differences in Leadership

There has been numerous studies analyzing gender roles as they pertain to leadership. One key research study (Adams & Yoder, 1985) revealed how differently men and women are evaluated in leadership roles. Adams and Yoder (1985) contended that in male-dominated leadership positions, parallel performance by men and women is perceived to occur due to different elements. According to Adams and Yoder, successful performance by men is credited to the internal characteristics of a man, such as skills and abilities. In contrast, successful performance by women is assumed to result from external factors relating to a situation, such as luck or simplicity of the task. Men in leadership roles are perceived as doers and achievers, whereas women in leadership roles are considered to exhibit superior interpersonal skills with passive qualities (Adams & Yoder, 1985).

According to Adams and Yoder (1985), women struggle when it comes to promotion into leadership roles. There are considerably fewer female leaders in many areas than men, especially at higher levels (Adams & Yoder, 1985). More specifically, women represent only 7.9% of the highest leadership roles in *Fortune* 500 companies, and fewer than 2% in *Fortune* 500 chief executive officers. In the United States, women hold 17% of seats in Congress

(Koenig et al., 2011; Northouse, 2007). Myriad reasons exist for why there are fewer women in leadership roles than men, but the most important position of leader or manager continues to be viewed as masculine in nature (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003).

Although the position of leader has been a male-dominated role for many years, evidence indicates men, more than women, believe good leaders have masculine characteristics (Koenig et al., 2011). Adams and Yoder (1985) cited a nationwide survey of middle-level managers, data from which revealed the perception that character traits necessary for top-level executives were more often possessed by men than women. Additionally, Schein (1973) conducted a survey in which 300 middle-level managers were asked to rate men in general, women in general, and successful middle managers on 92 character trait items. The data revealed successful middle managers as having characteristics more recognized as masculine than feminine; therefore, stereotypes of this magnitude coupled with behavioral norms associated with gender stereotypes results in a need for deeper discussion regarding the discrimination women face in leadership roles.

Leadership Behavior

In the area of leadership behavior, many researchers have examined the difference between attitudes and behaviors of men and women in the role of school principal (Grace, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1995). These research studies of gender in educational administration have raised a number the questions: Do male and female principals differ in their behaviors and actions in school? What are the qualities associated with women as managers in schools? What evidence is available to support the claims women behave differently from their male counterparts in educational settings? There is, as yet, no definitive response for these questions.

The primary goal for a leader who has high concern for production is to ensure all resources are effectively utilized to accomplish the mission of the group or organization in a reliable manner (Yukl, 2012). Bass and Stogdill (1990) contended this type of leader has an interest in completing assignments and getting the work done. Bass and Stogdill (1990) also contended this leader can be characterized as autocratic and “psychologically distant” from subordinates (p. 499). According to Yukl (2012), specific behaviors that can be seen in a leader with high concern for production include planning and organizing activities, clearly stating roles and objectives of employees and of themselves, monitoring operations, and problem solving. Leadership characteristics related to concern for production have been linked to male principals and their leadership behaviors. Northouse (2007) observed that operating in this dimension, employees are viewed as instruments for getting work accomplished. The debate surrounding this leadership behavior sparks the discussion that if employees clearly understand tasks, resources required to complete the tasks, and the environment to complete the work, they will operate more effectively and efficiently to produce at a high level.

In contrast to male leadership behaviors, there remains a need to analyze the leadership behaviors of females in identical roles. According to Bass and Stogdill (1990), leaders who have a concern for people make attempts to maintain friendly and sympathetic relations with their followers. These leaders are known to create social and emotional ties through mutual trust, open communication, and democracy (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). Yukl (2012) contended the primary goal of a people-oriented leader is to increase the quality of human relations within an organization, which is often referred to as human capital. Yukl also contended the general behavior of this type of leader is to support, develop, recognize, and empower. An important finding across educational settings reveals female principals adopting a democratic, participatory

style, which contradicts the style of their male counterparts (Adler et al., 1993; Eagly et al., 1992; Shakeshaft, 1989). Female principals are inclined to operate in a collegial manner and actively utilize constituents in the decision-making process (Grogan, 1996). According to Dunlap and Goldman (1991), female principals use power in a facilitative manner. Female principals prefer to utilize power through members of the organization displaying trust and empowering others to act. As a result of displaying trust and empowering others, the display of trust strengthens collegial relationships. Female principals are less likely to engage in conflict, whereas their male counterparts utilize an autocratic style to resolve any discord (Shakeshaft, 1989).

To gain more insight into leadership behavior, the components of teaching and learning in the daily operations of school must be studied. According to Eagly et al. (1992) and Acker (1995), a predominant distinction between men and women serving in the role of school principal is the approach to teaching as an instructional leader. C. Marshall (1995) contended female educational administrators focus more on teaching, curriculum and instruction, and children than their male counterparts. Additionally, female principals were found to pay more attention to vision-building for the school and exert more time and energy in change initiation and implementation (Acker, 1995; Fennell, 1999).

J. Marshall (1984) contended there are two concepts supporting the difference between male and female principals' leadership style and perspectives. According to J. Marshall, each gender favors a specific set of coping mechanisms and strategies. For instance, male principals have a tendency to employ the agency style of leadership. Within this set of strategies, male principals display independence through self-protection, self-assertion, separation, and denial of environmental processes. In contrast, female principals adopt a more communion strategy of

leadership. The communion style of leadership involves a high level of transparency, cooperation, and contact with other professionals during periods of uncertainty (J. Marshall, 1984). The relationship between women and leadership style, power, and managerial practice is balanced by research findings indicating female principals display the same style as men (Ball & Reay, 2000; Jirasinghe & Lyons, 1996). More specifically, Mertz and McNeely (1998) contended the male/female dichotomy must be viewed with a multidimensional approach to analyze context, ethnicity, and other key factors influencing leadership style.

Social Cognitive Theory

According to Bandura (1991), in SCT, human behavior is extensively motivated and regulated by the ongoing process of self-influence. More specifically, the self-regulative system operates through three principal functions. According to Bandura, the functions include monitoring of one's behavior and its effects, judgment of one's behavior in relation to personal standards and environmental circumstances, and affective self-reaction. Most importantly, the self-regulatory systems are the center of causal processes for decision making and assist in mediating external influences, thus providing a basis for purposeful action. Forethought guides human behavior and decision making. Self-regulatory systems have an impact on the thinking processes, resulting in stereotypes and understandings of roles. Bandura contended people form beliefs of what can be accomplished, anticipate consequences of prospective actions, set goals, and plan courses of action, producing desired outcomes. This process guides school leaders to create positive or negative school climates, affecting academic results.

Teacher Perceptions of School Climate

During the past 30 years, the study of school climates has progressed into an important area of research for educators (Huang, 2001). To understand school climate, student perceptions

are utilized to measure the climate of classroom settings while teacher perceptions are utilized to measure building level environment. School environment is one of the most important indicators of organizational strength, with theoretical foundations associated with the field of educational administration based on the assumption that schools are formal organizations (Anderson, 1982; Fisher, Docker, & Fraser, 1986; Thomas, 1976). Although the scope of school environment research has a wider lens, the primary focus of much of the research conducted to date has been the formal relationships among students, colleagues, and principals. Regardless, school environment is associated with the professional development of teachers, teacher morale, and teachers' sense of efficacy in the classroom (Fisher & Fraser, 1991). According to Borger, Lo, Oh, and Walberg (1985), school climate has a positive relation with school effectiveness and is one of its most important aspects of the school environment.

To understand the school environment, it is important to grasp and understand how organizational members develop perceptions about the climate. Gaziel (1997) revealed that among secondary schools with a disadvantaged population, variations of school climate correlate with differences in student achievement. Tarter, Hoy, and Kottkamp (1990) contended that, for teachers, school environment is associated with professional and organizational commitment. Riehl and Sipple (1996) conducted research to measure school climate from the perspectives of administrative support, collegiality, teacher influence, and autonomy; they reported findings consistent with those of Tarter et al. In schools with negative school climates, further research found these factors contribute to teacher burnout and poor collegial relations, and have a negative impact on teacher commitment and retention (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993).

Schools of different grade levels located in various demographic regions have particular environmental climates and characteristics (Huang, 2001). High school settings have a distinct

mission and vision because of the need to prepare students for beyond the classroom environment. Educators working in a high school setting specialize in a certain content area, and the particular area of concentration is the primary tool to influence students' academic and career choices. Classroom management and discipline are a primary concern of high school teachers, especially novice teachers (Gregg, 1995; Templeton & Johnson, 1998). In many high schools, student discipline has become a serious concern. In comparison to the psychological climate of various types of schools, researchers found high schools exhibit a less favorable environment than primary schools, especially in terms of affiliation, innovation, and the physical plant (Fisher et al., 1986).

In relation to less favorable environments, school districts have designed and implemented nontraditional settings to house students with behavioral problems in an attempt to ensure these students have access to a free and appropriate education. Regardless, teachers have varied perceptions of the school environment at the same academic level (Docker, Fraser, & Fisher, 1989; Fraser, Walberg, Welch, & Hattie, 1987). For example, teachers operating in high-performing school settings with a greater emphasis on academics have better facilities and more resources, greater teacher efficacy, career satisfaction, organizational commitment, and minimal discipline problems (Huang & Waxman, 1995). In contrast, teachers operating within low performing school settings have an enormous problem with student discipline creating an environment with low teacher efficacy, career satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Huang & Waxman, 1995). Understanding these differences can assist high school administrators to identify specific variables that need to be addressed to improve the school environment and climate. There is a need for educators to attain professional development, not only through teacher education programs, but also through other avenues to enhance their

skillset, knowledge, and perceptions to work effectively with diverse student and collegial populations.

School Climate and Discipline

According to Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Debnam, and Johnson (2014), school climate refers to shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape interactions between students, teachers, and administrators, and a set of parameters for acceptable behavior and norms for the school. School climate comes as a result of teacher and student social and academic interactions, and they are influenced by educational and social values. Educators arrive to class settings with preconceived ideologies, often assuming students' values and norms, educational background, and rearing are similar to their own. These preconceived ideologies create frustrations for both student and teacher. As a result, discipline problems occur, creating a less than positive environment.

According to Haynes, Emmons, and Ben-Avie (1997), school climate is “the quality and consistency of interpersonal interactions within the school community that influence children’s cognitive, social, and psychological development” (p. 322). Understanding this definition of school climate is critical to the emotional, social, and academic success of students; this understanding helps to create organizational commitment from educators within the school setting.

According to Cohen and Geier (2010), school climate is composed of four domains: safety (rules and norms); relationships (respect for diversity and school connectedness or engagement); teaching and learning (social, emotional, ethical, and support for learning); and institutional environment (physical surrounding). Although the role of these domains varies from one researcher to another, there is consistent agreement among scholars that school climate is related to the academic performance of students, student adjustment, student behavior, student

absenteeism, and the rate of suspension and expulsion (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009; Rumberger, 2011; Wang & Dishion, 2012). The domains support the analyses of school discipline and its relationship to school climate.

According to Peguero and Bracy (2015), schools in the United States have embraced exclusionary forms of punishment in an effort to keep students who disrupt and cause discipline problems out of the classroom. Thus, a consequence of zero-tolerance policies mandating exclusionary punishments is a dramatic increase in suspensions and expulsions (Hirschfield, 2008; Hirschfield & Celinska, 2011; Kupchik, 2010; Skiba et al., 2011). While disciplinary consequences are intended to maintain school order and protect students and staff, exclusionary practices tend to create problems extending beyond the school setting. Students who receive an exclusionary consequence often become educationally disengaged (Skiba et al., 2011). More specifically, students who receive an exclusionary consequence for a disciplinary infraction do not view the school setting and educational attainment as viable options for success. The result is failure to complete high school due to low self-efficacy within the environment (Kupchik, 2010; Noguera, 2008; Rios, 2011). Subsequently, when students are disengaged from overall school environment, the natural course of success in education is hampered by engagement in delinquency, drug use, and other criminal behavior.

Schools are formative institutions where students spend a significant portion of time. As such, it is necessary for the environment to be safe and welcoming for students. The perception of a negative school climate can adversely affect school interactions, experiences, and behaviors. In particular, when students perceive the school climate as being unsafe because of continuous learning disruptions, presence of gangs, and racial and ethnic tensions, there is an increase in student misbehavior, poor cognitive functioning, disengagement from the school setting, and

decreased academic motivation (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). Conversely, when students perceive the school climate is a safe and supporting, student academic success increases, social interactions among students and between students and teachers are positive, and the schools becomes a place of nurturing growth (Cornell & Mayer, 2010).

Within any school setting, there are processes and procedures to amicably resolve matters occurring on a daily basis. Processes and procedures exist to guide student discipline and allow it to be handled with fairness and equity to maintain an orderly environment. According to Blader and Tyler (2003), procedural justice refers to fairness in the formal and informal processes of resolving disputes. Tyler and Huo (2002) contended that procedural justice is demonstrated in myriad contexts, including those requiring police intervention with community members. According to Hagan, Shedd, and Payne (2005), when applied to students and schools, procedural justice usually refers to student beliefs about the fairness of school rules and application of discipline practices. Students who have a cognitive understanding of school rules and discipline practices and perceive them as fair have successful interpersonal relationships with peers and school staff, have a sense of belonging to the school environment, and maintain academic success with minimal to zero discipline infractions (Hong & Eamon, 2012; Payne, 2008). Conversely, students who perceive school regulations and procedures as unfair tend to have less of a sense of belonging to the school environment, less academic successes, and more discipline infractions (Kupchik, 2010; Payne, 2008). Based on these previous studies, it is vital for educators to serve as mentors, role models, and sources of encouragement and support for students.

School Culture

According to Hoy (1990), culture is the belief systems, values, and cognitive structure of an organization. Bower and Parsons (2016) contended beliefs extend beyond written missions, and many values are tacit. Beliefs and values are apparent in the ways resources are allocated and utilized, and the norms inculcated in day-to-day operations (Bower & Parsons, 2016). Culture is the glue that holds an organization together and unites people around shared values and beliefs (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Organizational culture is often the unspoken agreement that structures values, enabling individuals to function as single unit.

Although culture is often spoken of as an object, the context of culture is a process (Bolman & Deal, 2003). School culture evolves as the organization encounters new challenges and new individuals enter the dynamic. However, culture is a reflection of the members of the organization and rarely shifts radically or rapidly (Bower & Parsons, 2016). The constructs of culture and an organization operate in a reciprocal manner. The Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools posited school culture is more vital than professional development as it pertains to student achievement (Stolp & Smith, 1995). Stolp and Smith (1995) also contended positive school cultures are associated with increased student motivation and achievement, increased teacher collaboration, and improved job satisfaction among educators. Positive school culture alleviates or at least mitigates the influence of risk factors (i.e., suspension or expulsion) causing a negative impact on achievement (Stolp & Smith, 1995). According to Stolp and Smith (1995), the favorable results of student success due to a positive culture warrant developing a positive school culture as a school reform strategy.

Racial Disparities and Exclusionary Practices

In order to maintain a safe and appropriate school climate, public schools have been mandated by federal policies such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 to develop academic and disciplinary guidelines and policies. According to Fenning et al. (2012), codes of conduct typically distributed to students, parents, and teachers describe the responsibilities of all students and specific consequences for student misconduct. These codes of conduct are the condition of education (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Although school districts across the nation have varied discipline policies, the majority have zero-tolerance policies outline consequences for disciplinary infractions inclusive of suspensions and expulsions for misconduct (Klein, 2014). As a result of these practices, entities such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (2003) criticized the approach, claiming it to be one-size-fits-all failure. However, the primary criticism of exclusionary practices seems to be that students, especially of non-majority ethnic backgrounds and cultures, often face exclusionary consequences for “challenging” but nonetheless minor misbehaviors.

The interpretation of challenging behaviors can vary from one school district or one school to the next, according to cultural norms within contemporary public schools. According to Gibson, Wilson, Haight, Kayama, and Marshall (2014), a key consideration to understand is which cultural group decides which student behaviors are challenging and warranting of an exclusionary consequence. If the majority group dictates which discipline infractions should result in suspension, and members of the majority group lack cultural knowledge of the student behavior, then behaviors occurring within the minority group are often viewed as inappropriate or challenging. The result is a cultural mistrust of the minority group and behavior seen as pathological or even criminal (Gibson et al., 2014).

Pathologizing is a process of treating differences as deficits and leads to discriminatory policies and practices (Horwitz & Wakefield, 2007; Shields, 2004). Pathologizing the behavior of African American children in public schools often results in the criminalization of youth identities (Denby & Curtis, 2013). Rios (2011) contended criminalization of African American and Latino students is a process whereby adults view cultural and behavioral differences as criminally deviant. According to Rios (2011), youth of color are routinely monitored, threatened, policed, labeled, and punished (particularly by educators and police) as part of a “youth control complex” (p. 24) that criminalizes daily youth behaviors. In response, pathologizing causes youth of color to respond to the majority group with an oppositional identity that rejects the norms and values of the majority group (Tatum, Eberlin, Kottraba, & Bradberry, 2003). Tatum et al. (2003) argued the development of these oppositional identities assists the minority group as a means of protection through distancing themselves from the perceived racism of White educators and adults. Often, the internalization of oppositional identities can lead to delinquency. Conversely, Rios contended the internalization of oppositional identities provides youth with a sense of dignity, pride, and independence in the face of adversity and exclusion.

Restorative Justice

According to Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne (2005), the practice of restorative justice in schools has the capacity to build social and human capital through challenging students in the context of social and emotional learning. While the goal of restorative justice is to address misconduct and harmful behavior, restorative justice also benefits the students and the school community. However, the preeminent challenge for schools is to shift from traditional discipline

practices driven by punitive, external motivators to restorative discipline driven by relational motivators to empower students and their communities (Morrison et al., 2005).

Restorative practices, whether proactive or reactive, illuminate the importance of relationships in the school dynamic. In particular, restorative practices cause a shift from punitive discipline practices, whereby the student is isolated for misconduct, to relational practices, whereby the student is provided with supports to assist in understanding the misconduct. As a result, the purpose of restorative justice is to create a context in which individuals can accept responsibility for their actions, learn from their mistake, and support one another through positive relationships (Morrison et al., 2005). The implementation of restorative practices require a shift in pedagogy and changes in organizational structures and cultures to maximize sustainable outcomes (Morrison et al., 2005).

Sustainability during implementation requires a willingness for change and a transformational step from traditional thought processes about student discipline. Traditionally, schools have set policies and procedures established to maintain order necessary for teaching and learning. Hence, when a student violates the policy, administrators respond to the violation through a governing system of sanctions and issue the appropriate consequence without analyzing the potential for the same infraction to be repeated by the same or different student. In contrast, restorative discipline practices build on the foundation of relationships and simultaneously utilize the concepts of social and emotional learning. Restorative practices require a student to analyze his or her behavior and its effects on the individual and the school community. According to Morrison et al. (2005), the responsibility of the affected community is to listen, learn, and respond appropriately to the behavior. Morrison et al. contended the core of the restorative process is maintenance of an individual's dignity and self-worth. The processes

are designed to create the capacity of internal sanctioning systems to guide behavior, which instills accountability and responsibility within the overall school community. Transforming the mind-set associated with traditional disciplinary practices to one of restorative justice is a critical component of culture change within a school setting.

Restorative practices focus on the quality of relationships between all members of the school community (Morrison et al., 2005). Harmful behavior reflects harm to relationships. Hence, repairing relationships is necessary and forces the school community to learn from the harmful event and examine attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that contributed to the misconduct (Zehr, 1990). The challenging of mind-sets and behaviors is when and where the culture of the school setting begins to shift. When traditional practices are deeply embedded in schools, it is difficult for the school community to recognize the cultural cues defining the organization. New members of the school community, who can cause unrest with existing members, do not often recognize the cues. According to Simpson (2004), cultural cues include how management speaks to and about staff; how staff speaks about management, especially in their absence; how management and staff speak to and about students and parents; the patterns of communication within staff meetings and afterwards; how criticism and disagreement are handled; how the school invites, promotes, and supports initiatives and vision; and how the school responds to identified needs among students or staff. Leadership has been identified as the most critical component of school reform because it influences every aspect needed to enhance student achievement in schools (Marzano, 2003). Leadership, like restorative justice, is about empowerment of the school community.

Summary

In Chapter 2, the literature on principal gender and teacher perception of the school climate was examined as it pertains to exclusionary practices for high school students. In particular, an emphasis was applied to gender differences in leadership and leadership behavior to provide a perspective of why each gender differences tends to operate in a specific manner and how the behavior impacts the school climate. The chapter also included an analysis of the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory to provide insight into self-efficacy for school leaders, teachers, and students to understand the cognitive development and thought processes involved when disparities occur across racial lines or when a majority group renders exclusionary practices. This chapter included discussions of some of the characteristics of the use of exclusionary consequences as a primary means to curtail discipline infractions. Through the lens of social cognitive theory, results are analyzed and discussed.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter includes a description of the methods utilized for this quantitative study examining the suspension and expulsion rates of high school students as a whole and minority high school students in particular in a large consolidated district in the mid-South. Specifically, the study compared the gender of the principal with suspension and expulsion rates of high school students, and determined if relationships exist among teacher perceptions of the school climate and suspension and expulsion rates. An explanatory, quantitative design was implemented.

The sample included 20 high schools selected from a population of 32 high schools in a district. A purposeful sample of 20 high schools within the district was used for the study. The sample was selected—to the extent possible—of similar schools, with 10 of the schools having a male principal and 10 of the schools having a female principal. Data on suspension and expulsion rates of high school students, minority high school students, and teachers' perceptions of school climate were collected and analyzed. The independent variables included principal gender and teachers' perceptions of the school climate. The dependent variables were suspension and expulsion rates of high school students. The planned analyses of suspension and expulsion rates of minority students were removed from the study because the disproportional percentage of minority students in the district—98% (includes African American, Asian, and

Hispanic students)—made valid comparison impractical. The data examined were extracted from schools serving grades 9 through 12.

Research Questions

Data collected and analyzed included the gender of the principal, average per-school results from a survey of perceptions of school climate, and levels of reported disciplinary infractions, and levels of suspensions and expulsions. These data were used to respond to the following hypotheses:

H₀1: There is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number of suspensions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.

H₀2: There is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number of expulsions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.

H₀3*: There is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number of suspensions of minority students for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.

H₀4*: There is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number of expulsions of minority students for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.

H₀5: There is no significant difference between male and female principals and teacher perceptions of the school climate in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.

H₀6: There is no relationship between teacher perceptions of the school climate and the number of suspensions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.

H₀7: There is no relationship between teacher perceptions of the school climate and the number of expulsions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.

* Hypotheses 3 and 4 removed from final analyses of findings.

The hypotheses for this study guided the research design to examine if differences and relationships exist between the independent and dependent variables.

Research Design

The research used an explanatory quantitative design (Campbell & Stanley, 1968) utilizing pre-existing data. To examine the independent variable of gender of the principal relative to suspension and expulsion rates of high school students and minority students, independent samples *t* tests were used to test hypotheses 1, 2, and 5. To examine the independent variable of teacher perceptions, a Pearson's correlation was used to compare the dependent variables in hypotheses 6 and 7.

Data from the Instructional Culture Insight Survey (ICIS) instrument administered as part of The New Teacher Project (2009) were analyzed to measure the independent variable of teacher perceptions of the school climate. The ICIS is composed of 11 domains: learning environment, professional development, student growth measures, instructional planning, evaluation, workload, career progression, peer culture, retention, hiring process, and observation feedback. The district uses the survey as a comprehensive tool to collect and aggregate data from teacher feedback to assist principals in setting priorities around the instructional culture

necessary for improvement. Teachers are required to complete the survey because doing so is part of the evaluation process. Moreover, the ICIS (TNTP, 2009) encompasses an index, validated with a Cronback's alpha value of .75, as a measure of the instructional culture of the school.

The 11 domains within the survey are guided by a four-pronged cycle. The cycle is a measure of continuous improvement and encompasses the areas of measure, assess, plan, and execute. During the measure phase, each teacher is administered the survey. Second, the school leader assesses the results and identifies areas of strength and weakness. Third, school leaders formulate a plan of action to address the areas of greatest need. The plan devised is then executed with support of district personnel and administrative peers. The ICIS (TNTP, 2009) was used to measure if relationships exist between school climate and the level of suspensions and expulsions of students. The Tableau database (Tableau Foundation, n.d.) was used to collect discipline data regarding suspensions and expulsions for the sample of 20 schools over a single year. Data collected using the Tableau database were used to measure the impact of the gender of the principal on suspension and expulsion rates.

Statistical Tests and Data Analysis

The statistical tests utilized to examine and compare data were independent samples t tests for research questions and hypotheses 1 through 5 and Pearson's correlation for research questions and hypotheses 6 and 7.

t Test

The independent samples t test was utilized in this study. This statistical test is used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means in two unrelated groups, assuming the participants in each group are different. The t test is used to

condense the data, comparing two groups into one number: the t value. The t value is a measure of the size of the difference relative to the variation in the sample data. According to Maverick (2015), the t test is based on the following assumptions: (a) the scale of measurement applied to the data collected follows a continuous ordinal scale; (b) with a simple random sample, the data are collected from a representative and randomly selected portion of the total population; (c) when the data are plotted, the results are in a normal distribution, bell-shaped curve; (d) a reasonably large sample size is used to approach a normal bell-shaped curve; and (e) there is homogeneity of variance, meaning when equal variance exists, the standard deviations of samples are approximately equal. For the purpose of this study, the independent samples t test was used to determine whether there is a significant gender difference between gender of principals relative to the number of suspensions and expulsions of high school students and minority high school students.

Pearson's Correlation

The Pearson's correlation will demonstrate if there is a linear relationship between two data sets. In this research, a strong correlation would support the need for school administrators to develop behavior interventions to equip students with repetitive behavior incidents strategies to handle scenarios before applying exclusionary consequences. This study examined if differences and relationships exist between teachers' perceptions in each school and suspension and expulsion rates.

Sample of Subject Schools

The sample of this study included 20 high schools in a large consolidated urban district in the mid-South that ranks among the largest 25 districts in the nation. For the purpose of this study, the unit of analysis was schools. The schools within this study serve students in grades 9

through 12 and are located in various demographic areas of the county. Additionally, there are eight magnet schools within the sample of 20 schools. The magnet schools operate under the guise of student transfers, which implement a probationary period if misconduct occurs in the school setting. The magnet transfer reviews three areas of concern to implement a probationary period: student attendance, academic grades, and student conduct. The student enrolled on a magnet transfer cannot be removed to the assigned school during the course of the academic year unless a disciplinary infraction occurs resulting in expulsion. Students who attend an assigned school can be removed from the school setting for misconduct resulting in exclusionary discipline. A probationary period to correct misconduct is not in place for students in assigned schools.

The student population of the district is composed as follows: 92.3% African American, 2% Caucasian, 4% Hispanic, and less than 2% Asian. Additionally, 12.9% of the student population in the district has been diagnosed as having a disability or disabilities. Moreover, 98% of the district is economically disadvantaged. In the district, there is a per-pupil expenditure of \$11,221.60. Approximately 48.8% of the students are girls and young women, and 51.2% are boys and young men. Each school site receives federal Title I funds because the students they serve live beneath the poverty level standard set forth by the federal government. These funds are allocated based on the population and need of the school. The sample of 20 schools is compiled from the merger of urban and county districts; of those 20 schools, 18 are from the legacy urban district and two are from the legacy county district. In each school site, the student population is composed of majority African American students.

The sample of 20 high schools examined was selected because of the administrative assignments of the subject district and the schools having similar components. Each school site

offers of a traditional program of study, but also embodies a specific concentration (e.g., international studies) to meet students' interests, resulting in varied perspectives of the school climate. Teachers during the academic year are administered the ICIS in the fall and spring semesters to analyze the school climate. For the purpose of this study, only data from the spring semester 2015–16 school year were analyzed. Responses on the ICIS are captured using a Likert scale. The survey was administered to capture perceptions of 800 teachers within the 20 high schools identified for the study. Of the 10 female principals, nine are African American and one is Caucasian. Of the 10 male principals, five are African American and five are Caucasian. Within the sample of 20 schools, each principal has led the school for a minimum of 3 years, affording each to establish specific discipline protocols for daily operations aligned with district policies.

Instruments

Two instruments were utilized to collect data from the sample schools: The ICIS and the Tableau database. The ICIS is a Likert-scale survey instrument administered by TNTP (2009) and provides pre-existing data recorded by the school district, affording the researcher to extract the results from a database. The ICIS consists of 11 domains (validity of .75 and reliability of .75) to analyze teacher perceptions of school leadership and instructional environment; however, this study focused on only one subscale: the learning environment. The learning environment domain consists of six items (see Appendix A). Each year, the survey is administered in the fall and spring semesters to analyze the school climate and provide principals a more intimate view of how teachers perceive their environment. For the purpose of this study, data from only the spring administration of the survey for the 2015–16 school year were analyzed. By analyzing data from only the spring administration of the survey, a clearer depiction was obtained

regarding the school climate perceived by new personnel arriving to the school setting and becoming acclimated to the environment. Results from the ICIS are also utilized in evaluation of the principal. The ICIS results provide pre-existing data and are used by principals to review processes and procedures regarding student discipline as well as the overall daily operations of the organization.

In contrast to the ICIS, the Tableau database is a specific system utilized by the district to house discipline data. The Tableau database operates as a warehouse, allowing administrators to retrieve student discipline records in real time as infractions are entered into the student management system daily for schools. The information provided from the database allows principals to disaggregate discipline data in specific domains and subgroups to gain viewpoints of discipline trends that might have an impact on the school climate. More importantly, Tableau displays growth measures that indicate improvements in school processes and procedures, and displays increases or declines in domains such as expulsions (11–180 days) and suspensions (1–10 days). Suspensions and expulsions are reported to the state, and data analysts review incidents to ensure information is entered correctly to report accurate percentages regarding discipline infractions. The data reported in the Tableau database are also accessible for public view through the state website. The information does not provide names of students or teachers, but the names of the schools and percentages of the racial composition of each school are included. Additionally, the public can view academic and discipline data for each school site. The researcher of this study used the warehouse to collect discipline data over a 1-year period beginning with school year 2015 and ending in school year 2016.

Procedure

The dissertation committee granted initial approval to conduct the research. Approval to proceed was then granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Mississippi; the IRB reviewed the procedures to ensure ethical research practices were used and no harm would come to participants involved in the study. Following approval from the university, the Office of Performance Management and Research of the school district granted permission to use Tableau and ICIS survey data for the research. The district was assured the research would not have adverse impact on the district, individual schools, or any school personnel.

Confidentiality for all participants was maintained through a coding system. The coding system for schools and participants allowed the researcher to analyze the data without placing any individuals at risk. The software program Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS), Version 23, was used to analyze the data.

Summary

This chapter included an outline the research design and a description of the sample, measurement instruments, and the procedures used in the study. The chapter also included an outline of the statistical tests and data analyses utilized to determine if relationships exist between the independent variables of principal gender and school climate and the dependent variables of suspension and expulsion rates of high school students. Chapter 4 includes an examination of the results. The results are discussed in Chapter 5, followed by implications and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine if a difference exists among teachers' perceptions of school climate, the suspension rates of students, the expulsion rates of students, the suspension rates of minority students, and the expulsion rates of minority students in 20 high school in a large consolidated district in the mid-South. A second purpose of this study was to determine if relationships existed between teachers' perceptions of school climate and the suspension and expulsion rates of students. The study provides information for teachers, school administrators, district leaders, and elected government officials regarding how administrator gender, teacher perception, and school climate are related to the suspension and expulsion rates of students. The study also adds to the literature on gender differences in the role and practice of leading a school as the principal.

Chapter 4 includes a discussion of the sample demographics, descriptive statistics, data screening, research question/hypothesis testing, and conclusions. Data were analyzed with SPSS Version 23 for Windows. The following section includes a discussion of the district and sample demographics.

District and Sample Demographics

The sample consisted of 20 high schools in a consolidated district in the mid-sSuth. The subject district has a total population of 32 high schools. Ten of the 32 high schools have female

principals. The remaining 10 schools in the sample were selected to include 10 similar schools led by male principals. Within the sample of 20 schools, eight are magnet schools with four male principals and four female principals. The unit of analysis was schools. Demographic information including the principal's gender, total student population, SPED student population, minority student population, and nonminority student population (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Sample School Demographic Data*

School	Principal gender	Total student population	SPED student population	Minority student population	Non-minority student population
School 1	Male	1,479	209	1,175	304
School 2*	Male	1,178	139	1,095	83
School 3	Male	691	99	684	7
School 4*	Male	1,152	117	1,144	8
School 5*	Male	1,666	193	1,666	0
School 6	Male	1,001	181	996	5
School 7	Male	590	125	590	0
School 8	Male	365	158	367	2
School 9*	Male	1,543	93	1,396	147
School 10	Male	1,166	126	1,485	111
School 11	Female	362	91	360	2
School 12*	Female	2,051	200	1,644	407
School 13	Female	912	125	905	7
School 14	Female	580	101	575	5
School 15	Female	599	127	599	0
School 16	Female	373	50	369	4
School 17*	Female	271	8	257	14
School 18	Female	2,086	238	1,764	322
School 19*	Female	546	78	536	10
School 20*	Female	101	1	101	0
Total		18,712	2,459	17,274	1,438

Note. * = magnet school.

The minority population in the district is 92.3% African American and 4% Latino. In the sample schools, 39% of the students attend schools with a female principal and 61% of the students attend schools with a male principal. The sample schools are composed of a population of 12.5% students receiving special education services. Data for the sample schools indicate

45% of the events resulting in expulsions or suspensions occurred in the classroom; 21.2% occurred in the hallway; and 9.1% occurred in the cafeteria. The most common discipline infractions resulting in exclusionary punishment were disruptive behavior (19.7%, $n = 1,733$), insolence or insubordination (14.3%, $n = 1,252$), class cutting (12.8%, $n = 1,120$), fighting (11.7%, $n = 1,031$), and rules violations (11.6%, $n = 1,016$). These infractions accounted for 70.1% of all infractions resulting in suspension or expulsion.

During the 2015–16 school year, there were 206 (.011 per student) students expelled and 8,601 (.459 per student) students suspended. The number of days of expulsion ranged from 11 to 180 ($M = 94.02$, $SD = 65.93$) with a median of 76 days. The number of days of suspension ranged from 1 to 10 days ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 2.53$) with a median of 3 days.

Descriptive Statistics

Data used for the analyses are from the 2015–16 school year and are presented in Table 2. Suspensions per student is determined by dividing the numbers of suspensions by the number of students in each school. Likewise, the number of expulsions per student is the number of expulsions divided by the number of students. Schools ranged in size from 2,086 students to 101 students. The number of suspensions ranged from a high of 1,305 to a low of 15, and suspensions per student from 1.375 to .146. The number of expulsions ranged from 29 to 0, and the expulsions per student ranged from .25 to 0. Survey scores were based on a Likert scale adjusted by the district to a 0–1 scale based on the average responses from teachers in each school to six items in the ICIS (see Appendix A). A total of 1,143 teachers serve in the sample schools, and 962 responded to the survey for a response rate of 84.9%. The high survey response rate is attributed to teachers being required to complete the survey because doing so is part of the

teacher evaluation process. Average school survey means on the six items used in this research ranged from .962 to .306.

Comparisons of schools with male principals and schools with female principals are presented in Table 2 and Table 3. For teacher perceptions of school climate, scores ranged from 0.6127 to 0.6696 ($M = 0.6411$). A mean of 0.6411 indicates moderate agreement with the statement that school leaders provide a safe and productive school climate in the schools where teachers teach.

Table 2. *Sample School Suspensions, Expulsions, and Climate Survey Means (SY 2015–16)*

School	Principal gender	Total students	Suspensions	Suspensions/ student	Expulsions	Expulsions/ student	Survey mean
School 1	Male	1,479	304	0.205	7	0.005	0.43
School 2*	Male	1,178	418	0.354	29	0.025	0.651
School 3	Male	691	631	0.913	13	0.019	0.574
School 4*	Male	1,152	498	0.418	8	0.007	0.493
School 5*	Male	1,666	1,305	0.783	12	0.007	0.934
School 6	Male	1,001	640	0.639	24	0.024	0.655
School 7	Male	590	811	1.375	6	0.01	0.64
School 8	Male	1,166	374	0.321	13	0.011	0.581
School 9*	Male	365	186	0.507	13	0.036	0.402
School 10	Male	1,543	490	0.318	12	0.008	0.767
School 11	Female	362	250	0.69	8	0.022	0.437
School 12*	Female	2,051	552	0.269	7	0.003	0.827
School 13	Female	912	374	0.41	13	0.014	0.599
School 14	Female	580	372	0.641	10	0.017	0.535
School 15	Female	599	125	0.209	15	0.025	0.81
School 16	Female	373	208	0.557	7	0.019	0.772
School 17*	Female	271	18	0.066	0	0.0	0.917
School 18	Female	2,086	740	0.355	7	0.003	0.531
School 19*	Female	546	290	0.531	8	0.015	0.306
School 20*	Female	101	15	0.146	0	0.0	0.962

Note. * = magnet school.

The data were screened for normality with skewness and kurtosis statistics. In SPSS, when the skewness and kurtosis coefficients are less than 2 times their standard errors, the distributions are considered to be normal. For the number of expulsion days, the skewness (0.23,

$SE = 0.17$) was within normal limits, but the kurtosis (-1.58 , $SE = 0.34$) was not. For the number of suspension days, the skewness (1.59 , $SE = 0.03$) and kurtosis (1.79 , $SE = 0.05$) were outside the range of normality. For teacher perceptions of the school climate, the values exceeded the range for normality. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients are presented in Table 4.

Table 3. *Sample School Suspensions, Expulsions, and Climate Survey Means (SY 2015–16)*

Principal gender	Average total students	Average suspensions/student	Average number of suspensions	Average expulsions/student	Average number of expulsions	Average survey mean
Male	1083.1	0.5833	565.7	0.0152	13.7	0.6127
Female	788.1	0.3874	294.4	0.0118	7.5	0.6696

Table 4. *Skewness and Kurtosis Coefficients*

Action state description	Skewness	SE of skewness	Kurtosis	SE of kurtosis
Expulsion	.232	.172	-1.58	.341
Suspension	1.59	.026	1.79	.053
Teacher perceptions of school climate	-.519	.026	.409	.052

Although the distributions were not normal, the analyses proceeded as planned; therefore, the results are reported from the t tests because it was the proposed method of analysis.

Alpha Level

The alpha level is the value at which the null hypothesis is rejected, assuming that the null hypothesis is true. In social sciences, the alpha level is $p < .05$ (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2013). As a result, the alpha level used in the study was $p < .05$.

Results

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 5 were tested with independent samples t tests. Research questions and hypotheses 6 and 7 were tested with the Pearson's correlation. Based on the small

percentage of nonminority students in the sample (2%), it was not practical to compare the two groups using a *t* test; therefore, hypotheses 3 and 4 were removed from the analyses.

Hypothesis 1

Null Hypothesis 1 states there is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number of suspensions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South. The independent variable is the gender of the principals. The dependent variable is the number of suspensions. Results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *Number of Suspensions per Student and Principal Gender*

	Male principals (<i>N</i> = 10)	Female principals (<i>N</i> = 10)	<i>t</i> value	<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>
Number of suspensions	.583	.387	-1.487	18	0.15

With a *t* value of -1.487 and $p = .15$, the data fail to support the null hypotheses being rejected. In school year 2015–16, schools with male principals ($M = 5.83$, $SD = 0.367$) did not have significantly more suspensions than schools with female principals ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.202$).

Hypothesis 2

Null Hypothesis 2 states there is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number of expulsions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South. The independent variable is the gender of the principals. The dependent variable is the number of expulsions. Results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *Number of Expulsions per Student and Principal Gender*

	Male principals (<i>N</i> = 10)	Female principals (<i>N</i> = 10)	<i>t</i> value	<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>
Number of expulsions	0.0152	0.0118	-0.768	18	0.45

With a t value of -0.768 and $p = .45$, the data fail to support the null hypothesis being rejected. In school year 2015–16, schools with male principals ($M = 0.0152$, $SD = 0.009$) did not have significantly more expulsions than schools with female principals ($M = 0.0118$, $SD = 0.030$). Schools with male principals ($M = 0.0152$) and female principals ($M = 0.0118$) had no significant difference in the number of expulsions for the 2015-16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.

Hypothesis 5

Null Hypothesis 5 states there is no significant difference between male and female principals and teacher perceptions of the school climate in a large consolidated district in the mid-South. The independent variable was the gender of the principals. The dependent variable was teacher perceptions of the school climate. Results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. *Teacher Perceptions of School Climate and Principal Gender*

	Male principals ($N = 10$)	Female principals ($N = 10$)	t value	Df	p
Teacher perceptions	0.61	0.66	.5401	18	0.59

With a t value of $.5401$ and $p = .59$, the data fail to support the null hypothesis being rejected. In school year 2015–16, schools with male principals ($M = .61$, $SD = 0.133$) did not have significantly different perceptions of school climate than schools with female principals ($M = 0.66$, $SD = 0.223$). Schools with male principals and female principals had no significant difference in perceptions of school climate during the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.

Null Hypothesis 6

Null Hypothesis 6 stated there is no relationship between teacher perceptions of the school climate and the number of suspensions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high

schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South. Null Hypothesis 6 was tested with Pearson's correlation (r). There was a $r = -.237$ correlations between teacher perceptions of their school climate and the number of suspensions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South, $p = .334$, two-tailed. As teacher perceptions of their school climate increased or became more favorable, there was a corresponding decrease in the number of suspensions. The coefficient of determination, (r^2) = 0.05602, indicates 5.6% of the variance in the number of suspensions can be explained by teachers' perceptions of their school climate. A scatterplot of this relationship is presented in Figure 1. The result failed to support a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of school climate and number of suspensions in the school; therefore, the data are insufficient to support Null Hypothesis 6 being rejected.

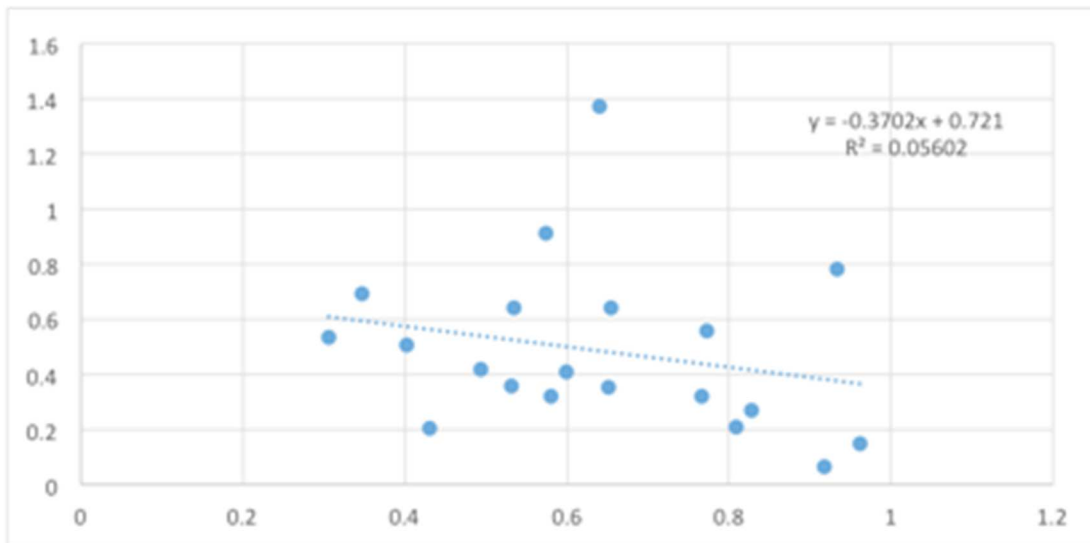


Figure 1. Teacher perceptions of the school climate and suspensions.

Null Hypothesis 7

Null Hypothesis 7 states there is no relationship between teacher perceptions of school climate and the number of expulsions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South. Null Hypothesis 7 was tested with Pearson's

correlation (r), which revealed $r = -.40$ correlations between teachers' perceptions of their school climate and the number of expulsions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South, $p = .073$, two-tailed. As teachers' perceptions of their school climate increased or became more favorable, there was a corresponding decrease in the number of expulsions. The coefficient of determination (r^2) = 0.167, which means that 16.7% of the variance in the number of expulsions can be explained by teachers' perceptions of their school climate. A scatterplot of this relationship is presented in Figure 2. The result failed to support a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of school climate and number of expulsions in the school; therefore, the data are insufficient to support Null Hypothesis 7 being rejected.

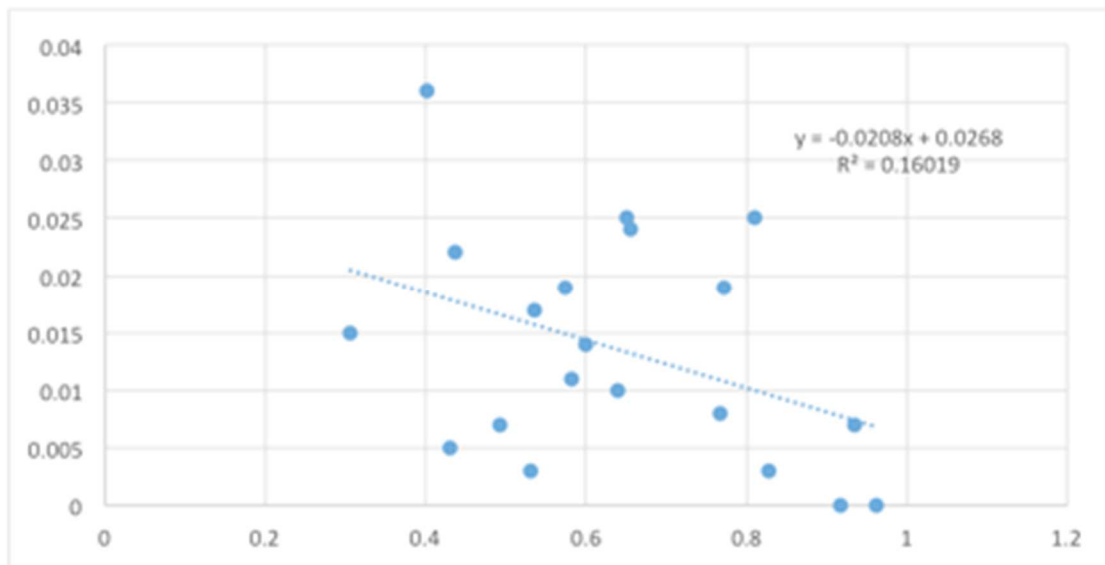


Figure 2. Teacher perceptions of school climate and expulsions.

Summary

Seven research questions and hypotheses were proposed for this research. Two of the questions were discarded due to an insufficient number of nonminority students in the sample schools. Data analyzed to test the five remaining questions failed to reject the null hypotheses.

Two of the questions did have relatively low p values. The comparison of suspensions in schools with female principals and schools with male principals was significant at a $p = .15$ level (Hypothesis 1) and the relationship between suspensions and perceptions of school climate in each school was significant at the $p = .073$ level. Findings are summarized in Table 8.

Implications are discussed in Chapter 5.

Table 8. *Summary of Hypotheses, Statistical Tests, and Outcomes*

Hypothesis	Statistical test	Result	Sig.	Outcome
H ₀₁ : There is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number of suspensions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-south.	Independent samples t Test	$t = -1.489$	$p = 0.15$	Null not rejected
H ₀₂ : There is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number of expulsions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.	Independent samples t test	$t = .768$	$p = 0.45$	Null not rejected
H ₀₃ : There is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number of suspensions of minority students for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.	Independent samples t test	NA	NA	NA
H ₀₄ : There is no significant difference between male and female principals and the number expulsions of minority students for the 2015–16 among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.	Independent samples t test	NA	NA	NA
H ₀₅ : There is no significant difference between male and female principals teacher perceptions of the school climate in a large consolidated district in the mid-	Independent samples t test	$t = .540$	$p = 0.59$	Null not rejected

Hypothesis	Statistical test	Result	Sig.	Outcome
South.				
H ₀₆ : There is no relationship between teacher perceptions of the school climate and the number of suspensions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.	Pearson's <i>r</i>	<i>r</i> = .237	<i>p</i> = .334	Null not rejected
H ₀₇ : There is no relationship between teacher perceptions of the school climate and the number of expulsions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South.	Pearson's <i>r</i>	<i>r</i> = .40	<i>p</i> = .0.073	Null not rejected

CHAPTER 5:
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of results, discussion of findings, and implications for further research stemming from the research. The school district is composed of more than 100,000 students and, as of 2017, is among the 25 largest school districts in the nation. The district is composed of 203 schools. Of the school district population, 95% is minority and 45% of the students reside in poverty. These demographics present many challenges for school principals in meeting the educational needs of the student population. In addition, 98% of students receive free and reduced lunch and many arrive at school settings with behavioral issues. Given the high levels of exclusionary discipline, there is a desire among district leaders to modify school leadership practices to reduce exclusionary practices. According to existing research, exclusionary practices should not serve as an easy remedy for dealing with problem students. Additionally, district leaders desire changes in school leadership to improve negative school climates. To examine exclusionary practices as a form of discipline for the school district, this study analyzed contextual variables surrounding these practices to provide insight into some characteristics of the problem.

The population of this study was composed of 20 high schools. The district has a total of 32 high schools. For the purpose of this study, the unit of analysis was the school level. The sample of 20 schools was selected using purposeful sampling. The 10 female principals included nine African American principals and one Caucasian principal , while the 10 male principals

included five African American principals and five Caucasian principals. Each school site serves grades 9 through 12, with the sample including eight magnet schools. The magnet schools operate under the guise of student transfers, which implement a probationary period if misconduct occurs in the school setting; however, the student cannot be removed from the setting unless exclusionary discipline is rendered for an infraction resulting in an expulsion.

The sample of 20 schools were composed of a total of 1,143 teachers from whom data were collected through surveys reflecting teachers' perceptions of the school climate. Additional data from the sample schools include levels of disciplinary infractions, principal gender, and numbers of suspensions and expulsions per 100 students in each school. The study analyzed data from a single school year—2015–16—because the district was subject to several policy and personnel changes due to merger, and the chosen academic year was a stabilizing year for the district.

Summary of Results

The independent samples *t* tests was conducted to analyze the dependent variables of suspension rates of high school students, suspension rates of minority high school students, expulsion rates of high school students, and expulsion rates of minority students. Independent samples *t* tests were conducted to analyze hypotheses 1, 2, and 5. Hypothesis 1 yielded a *t* value of -1.47 and $p = .15$, and the data failed to support the null hypothesis being rejected; male principals ($M = 5.83$) did not have significantly more suspensions than schools with female principals ($M = 3.87$). Hypothesis 2 yielded a *t* value of -0.768 and $p = .45$, and the data failed to support the null hypothesis being rejected; male principals ($M = 0.0152$) did not have significantly more expulsions than female principals ($M = 0.0118$). Hypotheses 3 and 4 were excluded from the study due to the small percentage of nonminority students in the sample (2%);

it was not practical to compare the two groups utilizing independent samples *t* tests. Hypothesis 5 yielded a *t* value of .5401 and $p = .59$, and the data failed to support the null hypotheses being rejected; schools with male principals ($M = .61$) did not have significantly different perceptions of the school climate than schools with female principals ($M = 0.66$).

For hypotheses 6 and 7, a Pearson's correlation (*r*) was utilized for the analysis of the independent variable of teacher perceptions of the school climate and the dependent variables of the number suspensions and expulsions. For Hypothesis 6, $r = -.237$ between teachers' perceptions of their school climate and the number of suspensions for the 2015–16 school year, $p = .334$, two-tailed. The data revealed as the teachers' perceptions of the school climate became more favorable, the number of suspensions decreased ($r^2 = 0.05602$; 5.6% of the variance in the number of suspensions can be explained by teachers' perceptions of their school climate. The result failed to support a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of school climate and number of suspensions; the null hypothesis is not rejected. Lastly, for Hypothesis 7, $r = -.40$ between teachers' perceptions of their school climate and the number of expulsions for the 2015–16 school year, $p = .073$, two-tailed. The data revealed that as teachers' perceptions of their climate became more favorable, the number of expulsions decreased ($r^2 = 0.167$; 16.7% of the variance in the number of expulsions can be explained by teachers' perceptions of their school climate. Pearson's correlation conducted for Hypothesis 7 revealed there is no relationship between teachers' perceptions of the school climate and the number of expulsions; the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

While none of the hypotheses achieved the $p < .05$ standard for significance, hypotheses 1 and 7 have relatively low *p* values (Hypothesis 1: $p = 0.15$; Hypothesis 7: $p = 0.073$), which

analyze the relationship between gender of the principal and suspensions and the relationship between survey of climate and expulsions. The low p values might be an indication of possible Type II errors. According to Creswell (2008), a Type II error occurs when the research fails to reject the null hypotheses when an effect actually occurs in the population; the data do not imply there is no difference, but rather, there is not sufficient evidence to conclude the difference is not a random fluctuation within the sample. With a large difference of means in suspension data, female principals averaging 350 suspensions per 1,000 students (.35 per student) and male principals 550 per 1,000 (.55 per student), the study indicated there might be a difference between male and female principals and the number of suspensions. The study also indicated there might be a relationship between teachers' perceptions of the school climate and the number of suspensions for students. Assuming the possibility of a Type II error, these findings are consistent with SCT, as outlined by Bandura (1991). Social cognitive theory supports the social cognitive development of students with discipline problems rather than approaches utilizing exclusion.

According to SCT, exclusionary practices will do little to remediate the problem because exclusionary practices fail to address the social cognitive causes of the misbehavior. The principal is key to establishing the climate of a school setting. When teachers feel safe to deliver instruction and students understand boundaries, the need for exclusionary discipline is reduced as a final recourse for misconduct. According to Bandura's (1991) SCT, the self-regulative mechanism operates in three principal sub-functions: self-monitoring of one's own behavior and its effects, judgment of one's behavior with environmental circumstances, and affective self-reaction. School climate has an impact on these components and influences how students and the principal respond to others in the environment; however, the self-monitoring sub-function is

the most critical because it is imperative for students to improve behavior and prevent adverse outcomes from occurring. With the difference of means between male and female principals regarding student suspensions and expulsions, Bandura's self-regulatory system is of interest in considering the role of the principal in supporting a positive climate in which negative behaviors are reduced with personal agency and resulting positive impacts on thought, affect, motivation, and action.

Significance of Outliers

In order to determine if relationships exist between teachers' perceptions of their school climate and the number of suspensions and expulsions, a Pearson's correlation (r) was conducted for questions 6 and 7 and hypotheses 6 and 7. An area of concern with this analysis was outliers. Due to a small sample size, magnet schools with small student populations were included in the sample. These schools had low levels of exclusionary practices and small populations of students; however, the larger magnet schools displayed a larger number of student suspensions and expulsions. According to Laerd Statistics (2016), Pearson's correlation is sensitive to outliers and can have an effect on the line of best fit and the Pearson coefficient. Moreover, Laerd Statistics suggested outliers in the analysis can mislead results; therefore, it is best to keep them to a minimum. With Research Question 6, there was a relationship between teachers' perceptions of their school climate and the number of suspensions for the 2015–16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South, (r^2) = 0.05602, which means 5.6% of the variance in the number of suspensions can be explained by teachers' perceptions of the school climate. A p value of .334 resulted in the failure to reject the null hypothesis. Similarly, Research Question 7 revealed there was no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of their school climate and the number of expulsions for the 2015–

16 school year among 20 high schools in a large consolidated district in the mid-South, (r^2) = 0.16747. A p value of .73 resulted in a failure to reject the null hypothesis. Due to the small sample size and the need to maintain a uniform number of comparison schools, outlier schools were not removed from the data.

Implications for Further Research

In the area of leadership behavior, many researchers have examined the differentiation between attitudes and behaviors of men and women as it pertains to school principalship (Grace, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1995). Researchers of gender in educational administration have posed a number of questions: Do male and female principals differ in their behaviors and actions in school? What are the qualities associated with female managers in schools? What evidence is available to support the claims women behave differently from their male counterparts in educational settings? While these questions have been posed, there has been no definitive response.

In this study, the independent samples t tests revealed the strongest relationship regarding gender differences, albeit not a statistically significant difference, between principals to be suspensions of high school students. Similarly, the Pearson's correlation revealed a relationship between teachers' perceptions of the school climate and the number of suspensions and expulsions; however, the difference in mean scores in the data does not provide sufficient robustness for statistical significance, resulting in the need for further research.

According to J. Marshall (1984), each gender tends to favor a specific set of coping mechanisms and strategies. For instance, male principals have a tendency to employ the agency style of leadership. Within this set of strategies, male principals display independence through self-protection, self-assertion, separation, and denial of environmental processes. In contrast,

female principals adopt a more communion strategy pertaining to leadership. Advocates of the communion style display a high level of transparency, cooperation, and contact with other professionals during periods of uncertainty (J. Marshall, 1984). In contrast, teachers' perceptions of the school climate may have influence on the number of suspensions and expulsions. Tarter et al. (1990) contended that for teachers, school environment is associated with professional and organizational commitment. Riehl and Sipple (1996) conducted research measuring school climate from the perspectives of administrative support, collegiality, teacher influence, and autonomy and reported similar findings to those reported by Tarter et al.

This research study explored components affecting exclusionary discipline practices; however, further research is needed to take a deeper view of root causes of exclusionary practices. While minority students make up 17% of the public school population, they represent 32% of all suspensions nationally at a rate that is 2.3 times greater than nonminority students (Brooks, Schiraldi, & Ziegenberg, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2001). School districts across the nation have poured resources into closing the achievement gap disparity with minority students but simultaneously remove the same population of students from the classroom setting due to an exclusionary consequence rendered by school administrators. To understand this precept, an objective lens is needed to analyze how certain behaviors are disciplined. In particular, there is a need for district policies to guide administrative decisions that remove children from the learning environment. There is a need for more research to focus on equity issues related to consequences of student behavior and to understand why minority populations are being negatively impacted by these practices.

Research on exclusionary practices has placed a focus on race differences and searching for student and school-level factors to explain disproportionate rates with suspensions and

expulsions (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). Less research has been conducted examining teachers and their potential effect on suspension and expulsion (Hinojosa, 2008). Teachers interact with students for the majority of a school day, and the expectations and perceptions of teachers have an impact on academics and social outcomes (Hinojosa, 2008). In particular, classroom teachers play a large role with students because they initiate the office referral process before an administrator sees the student. Teachers' perception of a discipline infraction through an office referral can lead to disparity with consequences levied with a student. Hinojosa (2008) contended teachers evaluate students on a daily basis as a professional requirement; however, if teachers have lowered expectations or stereotypical views of minority students, this view might lead to misinterpretation of behavior or intentions in school. Teacher bias against minority students might then influence decisions when rendering consequences resulting in exclusionary discipline. Thus, research of teachers with this bias is also warranted.

In summary, the following is a list of recommendations for further research:

- Other subscales within the ICIS might be analyzed to provide further data about school climate.
- Explore other aspects regarding characteristics of the principal related to school discipline such as race, age, and experience.
- Expand the number of schools to include multiple districts, a larger sample size, and a more uniform sample of comparison of schools.
- Expand research to include disciplinary infractions that do not result in suspension or expulsion, such as discipline infractions resulting in detention or in-school suspension.

- Investigate other school districts where there is more of a balance in the racial composition of the student population to determine if there are equity issues within districts.
- Expand the study beyond the high school setting to include middle and elementary schools.
- Utilize mixed methods or qualitative methods to include interviews and document analysis to gain a deeper understanding of school leadership, school climate, and decision making.

While this study did not yield significant results, some of the relationships point to the need for these types of additional research to better understand the relationships of school leadership, school climate, and disciplinary practices.

Conclusion

This study found there may be a relationship between gender of the principal and suspensions; however, it was determined that schools with female principals did not have significantly more suspensions than schools with male principals. Additionally, the study revealed there might be a relationship between teacher climate surveys and the number of suspensions and expulsions for students. These relationships indicate possible Type II errors, meaning these relationships might exist, but the research was not able to capture them with a high degree of statistical probability. Moreover, the study excluded the testing of two hypotheses due to a small population of nonminority students within the school district. While this study did not produce significant findings, further investigation is warranted with increasing percentages of minority students being removed from the school setting due to exclusionary discipline practices (Losen & Skiba, 2010).

School exclusionary practices, whether out-of-school suspension or expulsion, remain a substantial component of discipline in schools nationwide. The use of exclusionary discipline in schools continues to increase, especially for minority students (Losen & Skiba, 2010). More specifically, out-of-school suspension is a discipline practice not restricted to serious or dangerous behavior; rather, it is now utilized for daily interactions and disruptions students have with teachers and school administrators, especially for defiance and noncompliance (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Skiba et al., 2011). If further research links principals' behaviors to levels of exclusionary practices, our ability to lower the number of suspensions and expulsions is enhanced.

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APPENDIX:

ICIS LEARNING DOMAIN ENVIRONMENT DETAILED FINDINGS



School Response	District Response	Top-Quartile Schools
Winter 2012	Spring 2013	Spring 2013

Learning Environment	6.9	5.5	6.3	8.7
My school is a good place to teach and learn.	65%	57%	63%	92%
School leaders promote a safe and productive learning environment in my school.	65%	57%	65%	93%
Across my school, there are consistent expectations and consequences for student behavior.	40%	24%	37%	81%
School leaders consistently support me in addressing student misbehavior when I have exhausted my classroom consequences.	40%	29%	45%	84%
Teachers and leaders at my school immediately address student misbehavior in shared school spaces like hallways and the lunch room.	55%	38%	53%	85%

Percentages represent the percent of teachers who "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with each item.



VITA

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Career Objective

To obtain a challenging position allowing for growth in an administrative or supervisory capacity in the educational field.

Education

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI – Oxford, MS

Doctor of Philosophy – Concentration in Educational Leadership, May 2017

UNION UNIVERSITY – Jackson, TN

Education Specialist – Concentration in Educational Leadership, August 2006

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS UNIVERSITY – Memphis, TN

Master of Education – Concentration in Curriculum and Instruction, May 2002

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT MARTIN – Martin, TN

Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice / Minor in Political Science, August 1997

Areas of Certification & Awards

- Administration & Supervision (PreK-12)
- Elementary Education (K-8)
- Memphis City Schools Mentor (2002- 2005)
- Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers (2003 & 2005)
- Highly Qualified in all subjects K-6
- Highly Qualified in Language Arts 7-8
- Highly Qualified in Reading 7-8

Professional Experience

District Administrator of Attendance & Discipline – Shelby County Schools (Present)

- Responsible for approving Power of Attorney and custody cases for enrollment of students
- Conduct disciplinary hearings for students who have violated code of conduct policies
- Address parent and school concerns by conducting investigations of complaints regarding discrimination, harassment, and intimidation against students impacting academics
- Responsible for logistics in the implementation of an online registration system for the district

- Reviewing documentation to approve student transfers throughout the district at the request of parents
- Collaborates with state officials to conduct Office of Civil Rights site visits for identified schools
- Presenter at 2015 National Conference for Evidence-Based Approaches and Best Practices to Help Schools Achieve Academic Success

Secondary Education Administrator – Shelby County Schools – Millington High School (2009-2013)

- Principal for students in grade 12 and service all concerns with parents and community members
- Responsible for on-site intervention program for special needs students who have behavioral issues
- Responsible for attendance and student enrollment regarding state reporting
- Responsible for scheduling special events/community relations projects that involve the school
- Member of teacher evaluation team for the purpose of teacher licensure and tenure
- Conduct IEP meetings for special needs students to ensure academic requirements are met
- Standardized test supervisor ensuring that the school is in compliance with state and national guidelines
- PLC facilitator for foreign language department overseeing instructional strategies implemented
- Transportation coordinator for students in grades 9-12 and coordinated field trips for instructors
- Implemented Saturday School tutoring program to assist students who were struggling academically and coordinated program with ACT prep sessions to improve student scores

Secondary Education Administrator – Memphis City Schools (Summer 2009)

- Served as principal for promotional and overage for grade students in grades 6-8
- Responsible for student scheduling, teacher payroll, and facilities management
- Responsible for correspondence with district officials concerning student grade reports

Secondary Education Administrator – Memphis City Schools – Overton High School (2006-2009)

- Chairperson of SACS/CASI team that corresponded with district officials in implementation of new district goals/standards
- Responsible for monthly internal audits to school improvement plan
- Completion of staff/student schedules for the academic school year
- Responsible for attendance and discipline for a current student body of 1,370 in grades 9-12
- Responsible for monthly audits on discipline to review data and trends in behavior for the purpose of behavioral intervention planning
- Responsible for security and emergency management for daily operation and extracurricular events
- Responsible for student transportation
- Conduct IEP meetings to ensure academic requirements are met for gifted and special needs students
- Evaluator of staff in curriculum areas
- Assist in event planning for Creative and Performing Arts Optional Program

Secondary Education Educator – Memphis City Schools (1999 – 2006)

- Taught in the curricular areas of Language Arts, Reading 180, and Algebra I at Bellevue Middle School and Frayser Middle/High School
- Designed and implemented curriculum content and classroom instructional strategies to meet the needs of students with multiple intelligences

- Served as middle school grade lead educator to assist professional school counselors with alignment of student schedules within set curricula to meet academic goals successfully

Professional Organizations

- Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society in Education
- Cambridge Who's Who Among Executives & Professionals in Education & Research
- National Alliance of Black School Educators
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development