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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS AMONG TEACHERS AND SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

A DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

SHARON K. PERRY

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY 2020

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ABSTRACT

The disproportionality in school staff's discipline practices toward racial minority students (Skiba et al., 2011) are linked to higher levels of suspension and expulsion rates. These practices are also connected to various negative outcomes relative to student achievement and even students completing secondary education (Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003). The public school population has increasingly become more racially and ethnically diverse; however school personnel, both administrators and teaching staff have largely remained homogenous and predominantly White. As a result, some research has indicated that school personnel's level of cultural responsiveness (CR) may impact their discipline practices. Examples of this have included staff being more prone to writing office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) for minority students and especially Black male students in comparison to White students (Anyon et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2011). Research has also documented a correlation between staff's level of cultural responsiveness and the use of exclusionary disciplinary practices (e.g., suspension and expulsion) with racial minority students according to Isaacs and Benjamin (1991), and Okonofua, Paunesku and Walton (2016). However, little research specifically has focused on staff discipline practices and the potential relationship with staff CR levels from the teacher's perspective.

Using a descriptive, non-experimental design, this study examines teachers' self-reported CR levels and discipline practices specifically through their issuance of ODRs to

students and the relationship to discipline patterns as it intersects with student and staff race, student gender, referral type and student grade level.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Exclusionary disciplinary practices in schools have increased significantly over the past few decades. According to Losen, Hodson, Keith, Michael, and Morrison (2015) and Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson (2002), this increase has disproportionately affected minority males, especially Black students. The establishment of zero tolerance policies has given further sanction to exclusionary discipline, which often leads to the removal of the student from the education environment (Skiba & Arredondo, 2014; Townsend, 2000). The rise in the use of suspension and expulsion of students from school has led to negative student outcomes, particularly for Black males. Raffaele-Mendez and Knoff (2003) assert that discipline practices leading to exclusion are connected to negative outcomes relative to student achievement, such as failure to complete secondary education. Youth who have been suspended or expelled are at increased risk of being held back a grade level, dropping out of school, or becoming involved in the juvenile justice system (Curran, 2016; Gregory, Hafen, Ruzek, Mikami, Allen & Pianta, 2016; Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010; Pflieger & Wiley, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011).

According to Wald and Losen (2003), there are several variables that operate and collectively support a complex system known as the “school to prison pipeline.” Some of the contributing variables include the following: school discipline practices, disability,

racism, academic failure, poverty, deficit thinking, school accountability, staff and administration bias and the teacher-student relationship (Bornstein, 2017; Casella, 2003; Gregory & Mosley, 2004; Monroe, 2005; Skiba, 2000; Skiba et al., 2002, as cited in Cole & Cohen, 2013). There is ample evidentiary literature that focuses on this systemic phenomenon, also called the “school to prison track” (McGrew, 2016; Monahan, VanDerhei, Bechtold, & Cauffman, 2014; Mowen & Brent 2016; Pesta, 2018; Sander, Patall, Amoscato, Fisher & Funk, 2012) with its many contributing variables. The literature indicates that there is a complex interaction between some of these variables stated above, including the impact on student exclusion practices, and a created path to the juvenile justice system (Leone, Hyman, Meisel & Raley, 2003; Skiba & Arredondo, 2014). National data on school children across the country from the 2009-2010 and 2011-2012 school years indicate the rate of suspensions for Black students was more than three times higher than that of White students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The urgency of this occurrence has become significant in that more recently, the federal government has identified school discipline policy as a national priority for education and juvenile justice reform (U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Accordingly, there is a critical need to reduce suspensions and expulsions, particularly among male students of color. Additionally, study findings that inform the development of alternative, non-exclusionary strategies for responding to misbehavior are critically needed (Reyes, Elias, Parker, & Rosenblatt, 2013). Some studies have been generated; however, the need exists to continue to contribute to this pool of research to obtain findings that lead to a positive impact on school discipline.

Further, some of the research has explored mitigating factors that may influence teacher discipline practices. To date, there has been limited focus on factors such as teachers self-reports of their own cultural sensitivity and responsiveness of teachers regarding minority students (Lustick, 2017; Siwatu, 2007; Vincent, Randall, Cartledge, Tobin, & Swain-Bradway, 2011; Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2004; Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2003) and how this variable may affect their ODR writing patterns among racial minority students (O'Brennan, Bradshaw, & Furlong, 2014). Furthermore, prior studies have been limited in exploring and obtaining findings on teacher's self-perceived levels of cultural responsiveness (CR) relating to discipline from the perspective of the educator (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Cooper, 2002; Saft & Pianta, 2001).

Therefore, the current study focuses on teachers in schools and their discipline practices, specifically regarding their issuance of ODRs to minority students (Lustick, 2017; Siwatu, 2007; Vincent et al., 2011). That focus includes teacher's self-reported CR levels and the impact of this variable on their discipline patterns as it intersects with student and staff race, student gender, referral type and student grade level. Discipline referrals are the typical point of entry leading to suspension and expulsion that often places students on the school-to-prison track (Curran, 2016; Gregory et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2002). Often, this practice begins the initial student involvement with the justice system. As stated, the existing research is limited in this topic; namely on the specific focus of the interconnection of teacher's self-reported CR levels, their discipline practices, and the impact on particularly students of color. In response, this researcher

examines teacher's self-perceived CR levels, the potential mitigating impact on discipline patterns of teachers and the student groups who tend to be most impacted by these discipline practices as displayed in the issuance of ODRs (Vincent et al., 2011; Weinstein et al., 2004; Weinstein et al., 2003).

Specifically, this research explores the interplay of a few variables that may mitigate decisions in teachers discipline practices as displayed in their actions to issue ODRs to students. The variables to be explored are intricately connected to teacher self-reports of their own CR levels, teacher race and student race and gender (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Cooper, 2002; Saft & Pianta, 2001).

Disproportionality in Exclusionary School Discipline

There is well-documented research on school discipline, both historical and more recent, that has emphasized the disparity in discipline practices along racial and gender lines (e.g., Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Brennan & Leaf, 2010; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba, Peterson & Williams, 1997; Vincent, Tobin, Hawken & Frank, 2012). Additionally, the notion that discipline tends to lead to higher levels of suspension and expulsion for minority male students (Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991; Okonofua, Paunesku & Walton, 2016) is highly substantiated in the literature. Prior studies that have explored the potential mitigating factor of teacher's ratings of their cultural responsiveness in discipline practices toward minority males are limited (Alter, Walker & Landers, 2013; Fowler, Banks, Anhalt, Der, & Kalis, 2008; Saft & Pianta, 2001). In order to decrease the discipline gap that exists for minority male students, evidenced-based research is needed to more thoroughly examine the teacher factors that influence discipline practices. It is

imperative that research considers multiple potential causal factors relating to school discipline to gain a better understanding of how to decrease the racial and gender disparity in school discipline.

As stated, too often, the origin of school failure frequently begins with excessively punitive discipline such as exclusion from the school setting (Curran, 2016; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Losen et al., 2015; Skiba & Arredondo, 2014). There is an urgent need then, to understand why teachers' views of students, particularly those who are culturally diverse and have racial identities different from them, seem to affect their disciplinary practices in the classroom (Anyon et al., 2014; O'Brennan et al., 2014).

There is also the notion that cultural mismatches between the race/ethnicity of the student and teacher (Blake, Smith, Marchbanks, Seibert, Wood & Kim, 2016; Monroe, 2006) can create conditions that impact discipline, and specifically toward minority males. Conversely, culturally responsive practices of staff and classroom climates intentionally created to consider culturally diverse students help to foster academic and behavioral excellence across student ethnic demographics (Cartledge, Singh, & Gibson, 2008; Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Serpell, Haying, Stevenson & Kern, 2009, as cited in Vincent et al., 2011).

Cultural responsiveness (CR), also referred to as cultural relevance as it relates to school staff, pertains to the staff's display of cultural inclusion that leads to a level of competence in skill at effectively working in a cross-cultural or multicultural setting (Gay, 2010). Researcher Gloria Ladson-Billings highlighted cultural responsiveness in education in the early 1990s (Gay, 2010). Ladson-Billings (1995a) described cultural

competence, which closely ties to culturally responsive practices as it relates to the educator as coming to know that “the student’s culture can be a vehicle for learning” (p 161). In her later reflections, Ladson-Billings (2006) conveyed that cultural competence ... “is helping students to recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices, while acquiring access to the wider culture” (p. 36). Teachers who have utilized culturally responsive practices with their students have an intentional focus of relating instruction to students’ cultural context. Also, teachers who have practiced cultural responsiveness typically have established the objective of encouraging their students to view and learn content, both academically and socially, within the framework of their home culture (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The practice of cultural responsiveness has been linked to having a more positive school climate (Koth, Bradshaw & Leaf, 2008; McLeod, 2011), as reported by staff and students (O’Brennan et al., 2014). Further, researchers have purported that staff who practice culturally responsive actions tend to issue fewer office discipline referrals, which then lead to a lesser occurrence of exclusionary discipline such as suspension and expulsion (Lustick, 2017; Monroe, 2006; Siwatu, 2007; Vincent et al., 2011; Weinstein et al., 2004).

Another relating factor addresses the quality of staff’s relationships with their students, which tended to influence disciplinary actions of staff. Specifically, the higher the status of relationship staff reported having with their students, the lesser the occurrence of punitive behavioral referrals written for students (Blake, Gregory, James, & Hasan, 2016; O’Brennan et al., 2014; Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010). There is also a connection between positive staff-student relationships and the use of alternative

discipline practices such as those that are restorative (Kline, 2016) and empathic (McBride, 2016; Okonofua et al., 2016) rather than punitive. These investigators note that the use of alternative discipline resulted in more positive outcomes for students. Restorative practices engagement, which places greater emphasis on restitution for the infraction versus punishing the behavior, tends to reduce gender and racial disparity in school discipline (Kline, 2016). As a result, alternative discipline practices are linked to more positive outcomes, notably for minority male students who are disproportionately suspended and expelled from school (Gregory, Clawson, Davis & Gerewitz, 2016).

This current study explores the level of staff's cultural responsiveness as it relates to the discipline of students, and of Black male students in particular. That previous studies indicate the positive impact cultural responsiveness can have on discipline practices (Gay, 2010; Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008; Weinstein et al., 2003; Weinstein et al., 2004), it is the hope of this researcher to add to the research specifically around this topic. Ultimately, the primary objective of findings from this study is to gain information that leads to a decrease in the discipline gap that negatively affects minority male students.

Background

Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) and Exclusion

Exclusion of students for discipline purposes has its origin in staff's disciplinary referral practices or office discipline referrals (ODRs). ODRs are administered to students in response to misbehavior that violate school policy. These referrals are used as a means of issuing a consequence to the student who has been determined to break or violate a

classroom rule or policy of the school (Ferguson, 2010; Vavrus & Cole, 2002). Skiba et al. (2011) purport the notion that too frequently, ODRs tend to be driven by minor infractions and subjective types of student misconduct. Examples of subjective categories include defiance and disrespectful behavior, rather than more objective behaviors such as physical aggression or bringing a weapon to school (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Nichols, 2004; Skiba et al., 2002). The subjective referral is a clear demonstration of disproportionate discipline along racial/ethnic and gender demographics, as subjective type referrals are more often issued to Black male students (Girvan, Gion, McIntosh & Smolkowski, 2017; Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Skiba et al., 2011; Wald & Losen, 2003). Additionally, ODRs that lead to exclusion are disproportionately higher among minority males- Black and Latino students, according to Skiba et al. (2011). Minority males tend to differ culturally and ethnically from a large percentage of school staff who administer discipline practices (Tyler, Boykin, Miller, & Hurley, 2006). Staff who write referrals in response to student misbehavior typically select from a category of behaviors or rule violations before submitting the referral to the principal's office. Often, the ensuing procedure requires the school administrator to review the referral and make decisions regarding what consequence will be meted out to the student (Anyon et al., 2014; Monroe, 2005). Male students of color tend to be issued harsher consequences in response to the same referral written for their White counterparts (Skiba et al., 2011). Additionally, the issuance of the referral to Black males is often in response to subjective offenses that are tied to teacher judgments of behavior (Girvan et al., 2017; Skiba et al., 2011).

Cultural Discontinuity

A related term associated with subjectivity and staff perception regarding discipline is “cultural discontinuity.” This concept connotes that the behavioral challenges (as well as academic challenges) that ethnic minorities experience in the school setting are related to perceived cultural discontinuity, or an incongruence between the students’ home life - and school-based experiences (Tyler et al., 2006). There has been however, little empirical inquiry into the existence and effects of cultural discontinuity for these students (Tyler et al., 2006; Tyler, Boykin & Walton, 2006). Tyler et al. (2006) further assert that ethnic minority students may have a different standard regarding what is considered appropriate behavior. These researchers posit that a discrepancy may exist between what minority students and school teachers/administrators view as acceptable standards for student behavior. For example, teachers who are unfamiliar with norms of culturally diverse youth may have the view that Black youth who display culturally normative behaviors in the classroom (e.g., freedom of expression) are behaving in a disrespectful or argumentative manner (Monroe, 2005; Weinstein et al., 2004, as cited by Bradshaw et al., 2010; Tyler et al., 2006). This incongruence may contribute to the overrepresentation of Black students, especially males, in the receipt of ODRs. In response to these challenges, some researchers and teachers believe that public education should be adapted, at least to some extent to incorporate the home culture of the students who are served in schools (Boykin, Tyler, Watkins-Lewis, & Kizzie, 2006; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Tyler, Boykin, & Walton, 2006; Tyler et al., 2008).

Once again, this idea points to the crucial need for further exploration of variables (e.g., teacher's CR levels) that possibly mitigate excessive and disparate punitive discipline practices toward ethnic minority males. Punitive punishment for male minority students often involves exclusion in the form of out of school suspensions and even expulsion (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Monroe, 2005; Skiba, et al., 2011).

Zero Tolerance Policies and Racial Disproportionality in Discipline

Zero tolerance policies were developed and put into practice in schools as a means to promote safety. The primary objective of these policies was to deter unsafe behaviors in schools through the use of harsh consequences such as suspension and expulsion. These policies were also used to serve as an automatic consequence for specific behavioral infractions (Curran, 2016). The underlying premise was that students who committed unsafe behaviors were used as an example to deter other students from engaging in similar behaviors. This was typically conducted by exacting stiff punishment for the infraction, regardless of the circumstances and context surrounding it (Reynolds et al. 2008; Skiba & Arredondo, 2014). Ironically, although the objective of zero tolerance policies was to create and maintain safer school environments, there is no empirical support to suggest that these policies promote safety, reduce or eliminate disruptive behavior or even improve school climate. The evidence is to the contrary; zero tolerance policies seem to have an opposite effect on the policies' goals. Researchers found that students who received harsh consequences such as suspensions, which typically began with receiving office discipline referrals were more likely to receive subsequent ODRs and additional suspensions. Tobin, Sugai, and Colvin (1996) found that this occurrence

tended to produce “frequent flyers” or students who repeatedly received ODRs leading to suspensions, in comparison to students who had not been suspended. These were disturbing findings given that the use of zero tolerance policies, which result in exclusion of students from educational opportunities, are risk factors for negative educational and life outcomes (Skiba & Arrendondo, 2014). Further, these policies disproportionately impact racial/ethnic minority youth, specifically Black males (Reynolds et al., 2008; Skiba & Arredondo, 2014).

School Factors Related to Discipline Disparities

Implicit Biases and ODRs

Implicit bias has also been explored as a potential contributing factor impacting the disparity in school discipline practices leading to exclusion (Staats, 2015-2016). Implicit bias refers to unconscious attitudes and beliefs that can impact one’s perspective, understanding, actions and decisions. It can surface involuntarily, and can be either positive or negative (Staats, Capatosto, Wright & Jackson, 2016). According to this definition, even individuals who would not overtly use racially motivated actions against minority students may do so as a result of influences that are not a part of their conscious awareness. Therefore, the potential for discriminatory practices among all individuals are not exempt from the influences of implicit biases as it relates to their perception of student behavior. This may be especially true regarding behaviors reportedly committed by racial minority males, such as disrespect or disruption, which generally are determined by subjective judgment (Dyke, 2016; Girvan et al., 2017; Skiba et al., 2011).

Prior research findings have suggested that school staff's perceptions of student behavior problems can be biased and are likely causal factors of disparate rates of ODRs (Girvan et al., 2017; Lau et al., 2004; Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016; Staats, 2015-2016). Chang and Sue (2003) compared student racial/ethnic demographic subgroups and indicated that staff often perceives Black and Latino students as aggressive, oppositional and threatening compared with White students. Implicit biases such as these perceptions of student behavior likely contribute to minority males having a higher propensity to receive ODRs, leading to racial disparities in school discipline (Girvan et al., 2017).

Some investigators have also noted that administrators' responses when dealing with discipline decisions can be inconsistent and subject to bias and influence by racial stereotypes (Hannon, Defina, & Bruch, 2013; Shaw & Braden, 1990). After an office referral is submitted, administrators are generally responsible for making the decision regarding consequences for the reported behavior infraction. Punishments for more serious and objective misconduct, such as bringing a firearm to school, are typically dictated by federal, state or district policy (Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990: 1991; Walton, 1995). Punishments for minor forms of misconduct, such as disruptive or defiant behavior, are generally dictated by the school or district administration. The disparity occurs, however, when the consequences for more subjective types of infractions are disproportionately applied for racial/minority students, even for the same behaviors (Skiba et al., 2011). Typically, the deciding factor depends upon the ethnicity and gender of the student. Black males overwhelmingly receive harsher consequences for even minor

infractions that very often are subjective (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Nichols, 2004; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Skiba et al., 2011; Vavrus & Cole, 2002).

Disproportionality in discipline also has affected other demographic groups, such as students with disabilities (Booker, & Mitchell, 2011; Bornstein, 2017; Leone et al., 2003; McFadden, Marsh, Price, & Hwang, 1992) and those who are culturally and linguistically diverse (Artiles & Harry, 2006; Cartledge, Singh, Gibson, 2008; Cartledge, & Kourea, 2008). Prior researchers have suggested that minority ethnic cultures do not value education as strongly as western cultures do, or that there is a disconnect between these groups due to student/teacher language differences (Schmeichel, 2012). The result has been the tendency to place culturally diverse students in special education classes, perhaps unnecessarily, due to linguistic and cultural differences (Artiles & Harry, 2006). Students with disabilities, similarly to the data reported for racial minority males, tend to receive comparatively higher referrals that often lead to suspension and expulsion compared with students who do not have disabilities (Skiba & Arredondo, 2014).

An additional factor that seems to influence actions of subjective discipline is implicit biases of staff and administrators. This factor can be shaped by perception, culture, and context (Monroe, 2006). A positive school climate spearheaded by school leadership that promotes culturally responsive practices among teachers and administrators can create an alternate scenario (Butler et al., 2012; Bustamente, Nelson & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Alternative approaches regarding school discipline can be less punitive e.g., “kind discipline” (Winkler, Walsh, de Blois, Maré, & Carvajal, 2017), empathic discipline (McBride, 2016; Okonofua, Paunesku & Walton,

2016) and restorative practices (Gregory et al., 2016; Kline, 2016). Each of these initiatives has been inextricably linked to reduced disparate and exclusionary discipline toward minority male students.

Staff Perception of Classroom/School Climate

The student's behavioral development can be influenced by external factors within the student's environment, including the school and classroom climate and the teacher's perception of student problem behavior (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Epstein, Atkins, Cullinan, Kutash, & Weaver, 2008; Jimerson & Furlong, 2006; Palardy & Rumberger, 2008). As stated, there tends to be an association with staff who intentionally operate to develop a positive climate in the school and classroom with higher levels of achievement and increased prosocial behaviors among students (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

Bandura (1997) argues that the social climate of the classroom and how teachers interact with students can impact the development of students' behavior. Social learning theory defines the classroom climate as a compilation of factors, including teacher-student social interactions, behavioral expectations, and the physical environment of the classroom (Freiberg, 1999; Mainhard, Brekelmanns, Brok, & Wubbels, 2011). As such, the attitudes and actions of the classroom teacher plays a critical role in fostering a positive classroom climate. An additional contributing factor is the teachers' skill and use of classroom management strategies, which can also influence staff's perception of students' behavior (Mainhard et al., 2011; O'Brennan et al., 2014). There is a link between increased appropriate student behavior and staff who develop and utilize classroom rules and have clear expectations for students (Epstein et al., 2008; Sugai &

Horner, 2006). Further, Koth et al. (2008) assert that when teachers incorporate the use of praise, student recognition, or special privileges, the tendency for prosocial behavior is the likely outcome.

The consistent use of behavior management strategies also tends to reduce the racial disparity of office discipline referrals. Tobin and Vincent (2011), in an examination of 46 schools across the United States, report a significant reduction in the disproportionality of referrals among Black and White students when teachers used effective classroom behavior management. The mitigating factor tended to be the teacher's regular use of positive reinforcement strategies in the classroom. Studies that show teachers' perception of classroom climate, staff-student relationships, and student behavioral functioning as positive, also reflect favorable outcomes regarding discipline practices of teachers (Alter et al., 2013; Fowler et al., 2008; Gregory et al., 2016; Townsend, 2000; Weinstein et al., 2004). Collective findings from the research points to the importance of teachers utilizing appropriate classroom and behavior management strategies. Therefore, staff's increase in knowledge and skills in these areas points to the necessity of teachers receiving preparation and training in classroom management techniques. Further, teachers' self-reflection and awareness of the potential impact of implicit biases in school discipline is another important area of attention. These factors: teacher's self-reflection, awareness of potential implicit biases, the impact of school/classroom climate and classroom management practices are associated with the teacher's level of cultural responsiveness (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Vincent et al., 2011).

There is a need, however, for additional research that systematically explores the relationship of these variables, teacher's self-rating of CR levels and the impact on discipline referrals, especially along racial and gender demographics (O'Brennan et al., 2014).

Problem Statement

There is evidence to suggest that students who receive high numbers of ODRs are at greater risk for exclusion from educational opportunities due to suspension and expulsion. According to Skiba et al. (2011), minority students, and specifically Black males, have the highest rate of ODRs than any other student demographic group. Black male students are therefore at greater risk of experiencing negative educational and life outcomes. Punitive discipline practices have their origin in discipline referrals; therefore, further exploration of the factors that tend to influence discipline practices of school staff is needed (Tobin & Vincent, 2011). Expanding the pool of research on this topic will add to the knowledge base, including what teacher variables prompt their writing of ODRs in response to student behaviors and notably students of color. The available research provides compelling evidence that higher numbers of office referrals leading to suspension and expulsion also tends to show a correlation between student exclusion and higher levels of poor educational outcomes among students. Correspondingly, poor educational outcomes have strong correlations with negative life outcomes, including higher dropout rates, higher rates of substance abuse, and increased involvement with the juvenile justice system (Marchbanks et al., 2015; Rausch, Skiba & Simmons, 2004). Further, involvement with the justice system as a youth tends to lead to increased

involvement with adult correctional facilities (Sander et al., 2012). In view of the evidence of significantly negative outcomes for students impacted by punitive discipline practices (Marchbanks et al., 2015; Skiba et al. 2011), there is an urgent need for further investigation of potential causal factors in discipline patterns of teachers, notably from the teacher's perspective. That researchers have readily endorsed cultural responsiveness among educators and the corresponding favorable impact on discipline outcomes for minority students (Lustick, 2017; Monroe & Obidah, 2004; Siwatu, 2011; Vincent et al., 2011), is cause for further examination of this variable in connection with racially disparate discipline. Reinke et al. (2008) and Saft and Pianta (2001) also assert that increased CR levels significantly changes the dynamic of staff's perceptions of culturally diverse students. This change then leads to more positive outcomes for Black male students specifically due to a decrease in the issuance of ODRS relating to punitive and exclusionary discipline. Overall, the significant outcome from these studies indicates that higher CR levels tend to lead to positive staff-student relationships, which serves to decrease discipline referrals for all students, including students of color (Baker, Grant, & Morlock, 2008; Fowler et al., 2008; Hughes & Cavell, 2010).

There is a need among teachers, especially those who serve culturally diverse students to increase their use of CR practices. Therefore, additional research on this topic is vital as information gleaned from such studies can assist leaders in public education develop systems that operate to increase cultural sensitivity and practices among educators (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; McLeod, 2011). Increasing CR levels of teachers overall has potential for quite positive results as it tends to lead to an increase in positive

staff-student relationships, which typically results in a decline in ODRs to all students, including racial minority students (Monroe, 2006; Siwatu, 2007; Vincent et al., 2011).

Researchers have tended to explore student discipline and potential impacting variables from the student's perspective. Accordingly, more research that examines discipline and mitigating or causal factors from the teacher's perspective is needed. Collectively, the exploration of this topic from various perspectives creates a broader pool of information from which to gain a clearer understanding of disproportioned discipline. Adding to existing findings helps to better define the current gaps that exists in school discipline, the potential variables that influence staff practices and reasons why discipline practices disproportionately impact students of color. Further, having a better understanding of how teachers' self-rated CR can lead to viable solutions that are within the school's control to implement is critical (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; McLeod, 2011).

Summary

While exclusionary discipline practices negatively impact all students, the impact has not been equal across all student demographic groups. Racial disparity in school discipline has been a consistent finding in research for at least the past three decades. Specifically, Black students have been disproportionately impacted by such practices (McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; McFadden et al., 1992; Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al, 2002; Wu, Pink, Crain & Moles, 1982). The recent focus in the educational literature on racial/gender discipline disproportionality has spurred the push to provide practical, alternative practices to school staff with the objective of limiting exclusionary discipline (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Gregory, Hafen et al., 2016; Gregory, Clawson et al.,

2016; Losen, 2014; Lustick, 2017; McIntosh, Girvan, Horner, & Smolkowski, 2014). The literature is replete with evidence of racial and gender disparity in school discipline practices. Some researchers have focused on exploring the rationale for this occurrence (Gregory & Mosley, 2004; Rausch et al., 2004). Additionally, more current research findings have indicated the negative educational and life outcomes for minority student populations as a result of discipline disproportionality (Gregory et al. 2010; Pflieger & Wiley, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011). However, few studies have focused on teacher factors, such as staff's perceived cultural response levels as an influencing factor in discipline practices (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lustick, 2017; Monroe, 2006; Weinstein et al., 2004) from the staff's perspective. This research gap highlights the need for adding to the existing literature, specifically on the impact of staff's CR levels and how knowledge of its impact on discipline practices may decrease racial and gender disproportionality. The objective of such research should be to extract findings that inform staff trainings and professional learning for school staff, for the expressed purpose of aiding the decline of excessive referrals issued to minority males (Gregory, Hafen et al., 2016).

Purpose of the Research

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the impact of teacher self-reported cultural response levels on discipline practices relating to patterns of discipline behavior displayed in the number and types of referrals teachers issued toward students of color, and especially Black males (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Osher et al., 2010; Skiba, Eckes, & Brown, 2010). Additionally, this research explores whether staff's reporting of

higher levels of CR is linked to a discipline pattern among teachers and specifically relating to the number and types of ODRs issued to all students, and specifically to Black males (Alter et al., 2013; Tyler, Boykin & Walton, 2006). This research analyzes the subsequent impact of staff's self-reported CR levels on staff/student racial status and discipline practices among school teachers. Finally, this study explores self-rated CR levels of teachers and trends in referrals issued by grade level in an elementary school district (Pigott & Cowen, 2000; Saft & Pianta, 2001).

The researcher also hopes to add to the body of literature on the topic of disparity in discipline practices in schools for the expressed purpose of helping to change its current trend. It is the belief of this principal investigator that higher levels of CR among teachers toward students of color may positively impact the disparity gap in student discipline if there is a better understanding of the relationship (Tyler, Boykin & Miller, 2006; Weinstein et al., 2004). Specifically, it is hypothesized that teachers who perceive themselves as having higher CR levels will tend to issue fewer ODRs to minority male students. To explore these assertions, this study seeks to answer the questions below.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a descriptive systematic pattern in teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the number of ODRs issued to Black students?

RQ2: Is there a descriptive pattern in teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the referral type (e.g., subjective/objective) issued to Black and White students?

RQ3: Does a descriptive pattern exist within teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the referral patterns for Black students when the race of the staff is White?

RQ4: Does a descriptive pattern exist within teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the trend of fewer referrals issued to students in lower grades (3-5) and more referrals issued to students in higher grades (6-8)?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of staff's practices in student discipline, it is necessary to explore factors that other researchers, both prior and current, have found to be related to student discipline. Therefore, this chapter, which examines the literature on school discipline, focuses on some of the variables that may influence staff in their practices in administering student discipline. The specific factors that are highlighted here and briefly reviewed include implicit biases, racial/cultural incongruence, racial stereotyping, and perception of aggression in minority males, staff perception of similarity between staff/student, labeling theory and quality of staff-student relationships. Additionally, culturally responsive levels of staff as perceived and reported by staff will be explored in greater length. This latter variable and its' potential impact on staff discipline practices, specifically toward racial/gender disparity are the primary entities of focus for this study.

Biases and Student Discipline

Some researchers stated that disparities in discipline practices relating to racial groups might be due to staff biases. In support of this assertion, the findings from some studies reported no significant differences in behavior of Black and White students (Fenning & Jenkins, 2018; Skiba et al., 2011; Staats, 2015-2016; Staats et al., 2016). Yet, Black students tended to receive harsher consequences for less severe behaviors and for

behaviors that can be defined as subjective in nature (Dyke, 2016; Girvan et al., 2017; McFadden et al., 1992; Shaw & Braden, 1990; Skiba et al., 2011). Skiba et al. (2002) explored the cause of racial disparities in exclusionary discipline practices and found that differences in suspension rates were impacted by differences in the prior rates of ODRs that were administered to students. Specifically, his findings showed that Black students were more likely to be issued ODRs than White students, which eventually led to the disparity rates in suspensions between Black and White students. Despite higher rates of referrals for Black students, research findings did not show a pattern of more severe behaviors presented by Black students (Skiba et al., 2011). Additionally, the data showed that there tended to be a discrepancy in the type of referral written to White students in comparison to Black students. White students were more likely to be referred to the office for objective types of behavior violations (O'Brennan et al., 2014). Some of the objective violations included smoking, using obscene language, committing acts of vandalism, and leaving school without permission. Black students were more likely to be referred for more subjective types of behavior violations, which included: defiance, disrespect, excessive noise and loitering (Girvan et al., 2017; Skiba et al., 2002).

In addition, implicit biases, which are defined as attitudes or stereotypes that may unconsciously impact one's understanding, actions, and decisions, may be a causal variable in racially disparate discipline practices. Considering that implicit bias can be in operation outside of one's conscious awareness, it may well be a mitigating factor in racially disparate discipline practices, thusly influenced by the perception that ethnic

minority male students simply “earn” harsher, more punitive punishment (Dyke, 2016; Skiba et al., 2011).

Cultural Incongruence and Racial Stereotyping

Some researchers (Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2011) have highlighted findings regarding impact of other variables on discipline practices. They have suggested that cultural mismatch and racial stereotyping may have contributed to staff discipline practices (Blake, Smith et al., 2016; Tyler et al., 2006; Tyler, Boykin & Walton, 2006; Tyler et al., 2008; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). Educators across the country have been predominately White and female, while the minority population among students in public schools has steadily increased. This cultural difference may have led to a misinterpretation of the behavior and the emotional presentation of ethnic minority students. This assertion has typically been made in reference to staff who, according to Townsend (2000), are unfamiliar with interactional patterns that characterize Black males (Boykin et al., 2006; Tyler et al., 2006; Tyler, Boykin & Walton, 2006; Tyler et al., 2008). Ferguson’s (2010) findings indicated that racial stereotyping even on a seemingly unconscious level, contributed to higher rates of referrals, and hence higher rates of punishment for Black students, especially Black male students. Another study by Vavrus and Cole (2002) examined videotaped interactions among students and teachers and found that ODRs were more often the “violations of unspoken and unwritten rules of linguistic conduct” (p. 91). Results of these studies also indicated that those who received such referrals were more often students of color. A review by Fenning and Rose (2007) from the ethnographic data indicated that disproportionality in discipline occurs due to

some staff's perception that some students do not "fit" into the norm of the school (Alter et al., 2013; Balfanz et al., 2014; Fenning & Rose, 2007).

When the educator's perception of a "class misfit" was combined with anxiety relating to the need to maintain control of the classroom, staff tended to resort to labeling students. Specifically, students who did not comply with unwritten norms tended to become labeled as "a troublemaker" or "dangerous" (Deschenes, Cuban & Tyack, 2001; Noguera, 1995; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015). These labels have led to perceptions that such students are maladaptive in their behavior, which tended to result in higher rates of referrals for "labeled" students in comparison to students who did not receive such labels. Conversely, researchers purport that an increase in staff's cultural responsiveness levels (Irvine, 2003; Lustick, 2017; Monroe & Obidah, 2004; Monroe, 2006; Siwatu, 2007; Siwatu, 2011; Vincent et al., 2011) as well as in positive staff-student relationships (Fowler et al., 2008; Gregory, Hafen et al., 2016; Hughes & Cavell, 2010; Koth et al., 2008; Reinke et al., 2008; Saft & Pianta, 2001) radically changes the dynamic of staff's perceptions of culturally diverse students. This change then leads to more positive outcomes for Black male students relating to punitive and exclusionary discipline.

Minority Males and Aggression

The literature on student discipline frequently addresses the behavior infraction of student aggression and office referrals. Consistently among these findings is that teachers state that male students behave more aggressively in the classroom and school setting compared with female students (Craig & Pepler, 2003; Kellam, Ling, Merisca, Brown, & Ialongo, 1998). Aggressive behaviors generally are punished with ODRs, which result in

male students in the school setting tending to receive more office discipline referrals. Increased ODRs eventually lead to increased exclusion through suspensions and expulsion, which results in lessened opportunities for educational access (Balfanz et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2011). Black students of either gender are perceived and reported to be more aggressive in their behavior displayed at school (Thomas et al., 2008) but especially male students. Powers, Bierman and The Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group (2013) conducted a study of 4,096 first through third graders from 27 schools, exploring peer relationships and students' responses to the effect of disruptive behaviors in the classroom. The findings suggested that early exposure to aggression and excessive disruption tends to desensitize young children to disruption and aggression. These findings fuel the notion that positive classrooms, school climates and well-managed classrooms are critical in that they tend to promote prosocial behavior early in the student's education. Positive class climates also tend to produce more positive peer relationships, as well as staff-student relationships (Gregory, Hafen et al., 2016; Koth et al., 2008; Reinke et al., 2008). As stated previously, increased positive staff-student relationships tend to decrease punitive discipline leading to exclusion and negative life outcomes, which are especially prevalent among Black male students (Saft & Pianta, 2001).

Labeling Theory

Labeling theory is frequently discussed in connection with deviant behavior and is associated with the concepts of self-fulfilling prophecy and stereotyping (Becker, 1963; Ferguson, 2010). Self-fulfilling prophecy is a prediction that can directly or indirectly

cause itself to become true. Behavior that is influenced by expectations held strongly and long enough may eventually come true although at its' origin, may have been false. For example, in a study by Hirschfield (2008), the researcher posits that teachers of minority male high school students, notably in alternative schools, due to a “dominant image of black males as criminals and prisoners, many school authorities view chronically disobedient black boys as ‘bound for jail’ and ‘unsalvageable” (p. 92). Frequently, these students succumb to self-fulfilling prophecy or negative stereotyping in this context and often become involved in the juvenile justice system (Ferguson, 2010; Hirschfield, 2008).

Researchers have used labeling theory to explore student school experiences specifically relating to discipline and exclusion. Studies have shown that Black students are more likely to be labeled as “frequent flyers” or those who constantly receive discipline (Kennedy-Lewis & Murphy, 2016) in comparison to their White peers. Minority students are also more likely to be disciplined for behavior viewed as deviant from the norm (Balfanz et al., 2014; Hirschfield, 2008). Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) found through a series of experiments that Kindergarten-12th grade teachers were more likely to attribute misbehavior among Black students to internal causes. Additionally, teachers were more likely to label a Black middle school student engaging in misbehavior as a “troublemaker” than a White middle school student engaging in misbehavior. The difference in teachers’ perception of Black and White students led them to tend to discipline Black students more harshly than White students for the same offenses (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015).

Labeling theory, as applied to Black males who more frequently receive ODRs leading to suspension, indicates that there is a strong likelihood that school staff “sees” these students as deviant and therefore warrant harsh discipline (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Ferguson, 2010). Teachers’ implicit bias also impacts their perception of student behavior based on their characterization of minority students. Black male students particularly may be labeled as “inherently bad” or lacking in the ability to exhibit behavior that aligns with the standard expectations of the dominant culture in the school setting (Ferguson, 2010; Hirschfield, 2008). This perception may lead to excessive issuance of ODRs leading to suspension or expulsion for these students (Kennedy-Lewis & Murphy, 2016). This labeling process tends to contribute to a poor outcome for the student, primarily due to staff biases and unfavorable perceptions of the student, and negative self- perceptions of the student possibly as a result of the reflection of the student appraisal of others (Becker, 1963; Kennedy-Lewis & Murphy, 2016).

Staff-Student Relationships and Student Discipline

Another plausible variable that appears to impact discipline practices among school staff is staff-student relationships. A pool of research documents the probable correlation between positive staff-student relationships and a lesser occurrence in student discipline referrals (Alter et al., 2013; Fowler et al., 2008; Gregory, Hafen et al., 2016). Additionally, a potentially related factor is the teacher’s perception of a student’s externalizing behaviors which may be influenced by teacher-student racial ethnicity status. The concept of congruency relating to teacher-student race/ethnicity tends to influence the status and quality of staff-student relationship according to some

researchers (Alter et al., 2013; Fowler et al., 2008; Gregory, Hafen et al., 2016; Hughes & Cavell, 2010; Koth et al., 2008; Reinke et al.; Saft & Pianta, 2001). Specifically, higher congruency levels in teacher-student race tend to result in increased levels of positive staff-student relationships as reported by staff. Positive staff-student relationships tend to impact the level of prosocial behaviors displayed by students in the classroom, thereby decreasing the level of staff discipline toward students (Gregory, Hafen et al., 2016, Saft & Pianta, 2001).

Conversely, some studies tended to show a connection between the externalization of student negative behaviors and poor staff-student relationships, per staff ratings (Alter et al., 2013; Boykin et al., 2006; Tyler et al, 2006; Tyler, Boykin & Walton, 2006). Findings from some of these studies suggested that the quality of the teacher-student relationship tended to predict children's successful school adjustment. Having a relationship with a teacher characterized by warmth, trust, and low degrees of conflict was associated with positive school outcomes (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; 2006).

Staff-Student Similarities and Relationships

Studies that focus more on the characteristics of teachers as they relate to student discipline outcomes (rather than student characteristics) show a variety of findings in the data that tends to influence staff discipline practices. Such data includes teacher's attitudes and beliefs about race as they relate to student achievement and behavior (Palardy & Rumberger, 2008; Saft & Pianta, 2001; Wayne & Youngs, 2003). Findings from Saft and Pianta's research (2001) indicate that staff and teachers tend to view themselves as having more positive relationships with students who are most similar to

themselves. Specifically, staff tends to report that students who are of the same gender and racial/ethnic background as themselves, are those with whom they report having more positive staff-student relationships (Hannon et al., 2013). Further, students classified as having a higher similarity status with staff tended to receive less discipline (Saft & Pianta, 2001). Most teachers across the country are White and female. Following this logical pattern of thinking, the research findings from the study would indicate that the demographic groups who are rated with the least amount of favor would be minority male students (Townsend, 2000; Vincent, Tobin, Hawken, & Frank, 2012). Not only would these groups tend to be rated less favorably than their White female student counterparts, but they also would tend to receive more discipline referrals (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Monroe, 2005).

Cultural Responsiveness among School Staff

Cultural Responsiveness and Discipline

Cultural response levels of staff and the relationship to student discipline, in addition to being studied within the context of this current study, has also been the focus of studies by prior researchers. The literature documents a correlation between staff's level of cultural responsiveness and disciplinary practices in general and specifically toward racial minority students (Fowler et al., 2008; Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991). While the data consistently document such practices with regard to Black males, there are gaps in the research literature exploring other variables and the impact on particular racial/ethnic subgroups and gender disparities in school discipline. For instance, some researchers have investigated the role of cultural responsiveness from the student's

perspective, few studies have focused on the staff's perspective regarding their self-reported levels of CR and the possible relationship of these ratings to classroom discipline practices. Further, a void exists in research on student discipline regarding its' focus on the referring staff's racial classification, and self-reported cultural responsiveness (Boykin et al., 2006; Tyler et al., 2006; Tyler, Boykin & Walton, 2006) levels and staff-student relationship levels (Alter et al., 2013). Finally, little of the research has focused on the impact of these variables specifically relating to staff referral patterns such as the type of referral issued and staff/student racial/gender status (Alter et al., 2013; Fenning, & Rose, 2007; Losen et al., 2015; Osher et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2010; Vincent et al., 2011). Overall, few research studies have been comprehensive and detailed on this topic specifically as it relates to school staff's perception of CR levels and the impact on discipline.

The literature however has some representation regarding cultural response and academic performance of students (Gay, 2010; Kea, Campbell-Whatley & Richards, 2006; Tyler et al., 2006; Tyler, Boykin & Walton, 2006). Findings are similar to what pertains to discipline practices: increased levels in staff-student congruency and staff cultural responsiveness equates to improved academic and overall school performance among all students (O'Brennan et al., 2014).

Gaps in the Literature

While the data consistently document disproportionality and race- with a notable focus on Black males, there are substantial gaps in the research literature exploring other variables' impact on disparities in school discipline. As previously noted, while some

researchers have investigated the role of CR from the student's perspective, fewer studies have focused on the staff's perspective regarding self-reported levels of cultural responsiveness and the relationship to discipline practices. Additionally, there are other areas lacking empirical examination that possibly lend information to concerns in disparate school discipline.

One such area involves a focus on staff discipline practices and the impact of student grade levels. While prior studies exist (McIntosh, Brigid Flannery, Sugai, Braun, & Cochrane, 2008; Vincent et al., 2012), there has been less focus on discipline practices and the grade level as a variable (such as elementary vs. middle vs. high school), and the impact of cultural responsiveness at varying grade levels on exclusionary discipline and specifically on minority males. Another aspect that can be explored relating to grade levels is the potential variance of staff-student relationships and discipline patterns. In general, teacher-student relationships tend to be more positive in the early elementary grades, versus in middle and secondary grades (Baker et al., 2008; Blake, Gregory, James, & Hasan, 2016; Boykin et al., 2006).

There are limited comprehensive investigations of school disciplinary processes at the local school or district level. The void here pertains to a deficit in details of early student infractions that lead to more serious discipline consequences (Powers et al., 2013; Skiba et al., 2011). The impact of CR practices on student behavior at varying grade levels, and whether there is an effect on racially related staff referral patterns is another potential area of study to mine relevant information.

The source from which such investigations have occurred is another factor that is worth noting relating to the scarcity of data. Although some studies exist, empirical investigations of school disciplinary processes appear to heavily rely on national databases, (e.g., the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). However, a more comprehensive look at the impact and relationship of specific variables (e.g., teacher/student demographics pertaining to gender and ethnicity, self-rated cultural responsiveness levels, referral frequency, referral type, and teacher-student relationships), may provide practical information to counteract negative discipline practices, particularly referrals written by classroom teachers (Anyon et al., 2014; Fowler et al. 2008; Siwatu, 2011).

The large, national aggregate studies provide detailed perspective on exclusionary practices (e.g., suspensions or expulsions), but offer minimal information about the origin of the initial infraction. Knowledge about the initial source of the infraction can lead to the referral data about teachers' views of their own cultural responsiveness and the impact it has on students relating to discipline. This revelation may add important information about teachers to the national dialogue on school discipline.

Correspondingly, more data and analysis at the local school level's databases of ODRs that perhaps offers a richer, more detailed view of the student's infractions is needed to supplement national data collected by federal agencies. National aggregate studies may not generalize directly to other education locations, specifically at the local school level where discipline decisions are impacted by local district policy and state educational mandates (Skiba et al., 2011). Finally, little research has been added to the literature pool

on the impact of cultural responsiveness, the salience of race and the impact of these variables on discipline practices among school staff (Alter et al., 2013; Fowler et al., 2008; Okonofua et al., 2016; Vincent et al., 2011).

This current research, through the use of a quantitative methodology and non-experimental design explores some of these areas relating to the effect of discipline on specifically Black male students. There is a comparatively small Latino population within the school district site for this study. Therefore, the discipline data on this demographic group will be included within the minority or students of color (SOC) population. There will be more of an emphasis however on Black students, particularly Black males, in terms of the primary exploration of this study.

Summary

For more than three decades, the research on school discipline practices as it relates to disproportionality in school exclusionary discipline along racial and gender demographics has been well documented. However, there has been relatively limited focus on school practices that can mitigate and address these issues of equity. As cited in this literature review, researchers have focused on racial and gender disparity in discipline (Skiba et al., 2011), and the strong link of such practices to higher levels of suspension and expulsion rates for minority males (Balfanz et al., 2014; Flanagan 2007; Losen, 2014). Additionally, these studies have shown the connection of exclusionary discipline to various negative outcomes relative to student achievement and student status of completing secondary education (Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003).

Several variables have been studied that possibly impact discipline practices. Some of the variables were briefly discussed in this literature review and include implicit biases- staff and perceptions of minority students (Girvan et al., 2017; Fenning & Jenkins, 2018; McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; McIntosh et al., 2014; Staats, 2015-2016; Wu et al., 1982). Discrepancy in the type of referral issued and the link to racial affiliation-(e.g. Black students tended to receive more subjective types of referrals whereas White students tended to receive referrals for objective behavior infractions) was also represented in studies (McFadden et al., 1992; Shaw & Brade, 1990; Skiba et al., 2011). Other variables that researchers focused on regarding discipline are racial stereotyping; cultural incongruency and the perception of heightened aggressive behavior among minorities (e.g., specifically that Black males tend to be perceived as more aggressive in their behavior than other demographic groups) (Craig & Pepler, 2003; Kellam et al., 1998). Labeling theory is also a factor stated in the literature as a potentially mitigating variable in school discipline (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Kennedy-Lewis & Murphy, 2016). Self-perceived cultural response levels and staff-student relationships additionally are variables discussed in this literature review, as they relate to referral trends toward minority students (Alter et al., 2013; Anyon et al., 2016; Fowler et al., 2008; Siwatu, 2011; Vincent et al., 2011). More specifically, Saft and Pianti's (2001) research findings have asserted that staff tended to view themselves as having more positive relationships with students who are most similar to them, and correspondingly tend to issue fewer referrals to these students. Fowler et al. (2008) and Siwatu (2011) posited that higher culturally responsive levels among staff positively influences staff discipline practices.

According to Boykin et al. (2006) and Tyler, Boykin & Walton (2006), the impact of cultural congruence pertains to both academics and behavior relating to discipline. Specifically, increased levels of cultural knowledge, sensitivity and response, tend to serve to decrease the amount and level of discipline referrals to culturally diverse students (Alter et al., 2013; Fowler et al., 2008; Okonofua et al. 2016; Vincent et al., 2011).

Additional relating areas narrated in the literature review included the difference in information potentially obtained from larger national aggregate studies (e.g., the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014) versus local school/school district research that tends to focus on the original source of the discipline referral. Locally focused studies may also readily generalize to the local school-school district relating to applying the data for solutions to discipline concerns (Skiba et al., 2011).

Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of this study is to descriptively explore teachers' self-reports of their cultural responsiveness with aggregated patterns of ODRs issued to 3rd-8th grade students and disaggregated by race/ethnicity, with a specific focus on examining referrals among Black males (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Fowler et al., 2008). Additionally, this study descriptively examines teacher race and ODR patterns including type of referral (objective/subjective), disaggregated by student gender, race and grade level. Furthermore, this research can contribute to the literature that has largely focused on the problem of discipline disproportionality and centered on an examination of student behavior (Fenning & Rose, 2007; McIntosh et al., 2014; Pflieger, & Wiley, 2012;

Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003), but less so on teacher variables that may have an impact on ODR patterns. More research is needed to guide solutions and alternative forms of discipline that are not exclusionary in nature.

The Role of Cultural Responsivity among Teachers

There is a literature base that documents the effectiveness of prevention-oriented and nonpunitive alternative forms of discipline that do not involve exclusionary practices (Anyon et al., 2014; Gregory, Clawson et al., 2016; Kline, 2016; Winkler et al., 2017). Additionally, these cited research studies note the positive impact of staff's higher levels of CR on discipline practices, particularly toward minority students (Schmeichel, 2012; Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991). Some of these studies show that higher CR levels correspond to more positive practices and specifically a decrease relating to student discipline referrals (Cooper, 2002; Irvine, 2003; Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991). The same studies also suggest that higher CR among staff positively impacts staff-student relationships, which is a crucial factor in discipline practices. Overall, the salient findings from these studies are that higher teacher and school staff cultural response levels lead to positive staff-student relationships, which serves to decrease discipline referrals for all students, including students of color (Baker et al., 2008; Fowler et al., 2008; Hughes & Cavell, 2010). Therefore, the current study builds on this literature by incorporating a nonexperimental descriptive design (Johnson, 2001; Wilson, 2013). It is a quantitative descriptive design in that it utilizes basic descriptive statistics: the mean, range and percentiles to analyze survey research data and quantified discipline referral data from the study site's Schoolwide Information System (May et al., 2006). Additionally, research

questions are utilized, as they provide the guiding framework to help obtain the data sought for purposes of this study (Wilson, 2013).

The research questions relate to whether teachers' self-reported CR levels show descriptive patterns in discipline practices relating to ODRs issued to racial/ethnic minority students. Specifically, the research questions are designed to examine teachers' discipline practices through investigating ODRs as measured in number and type of referral categorized as objective (e.g., vandalism, smoking) versus subjective (e.g., disrespect, defiance) (Skiba et al., 2011) are explored. The patterns in referrals written based on teachers' race, students' race and gender are also explored. Data of cultural responsiveness is based on information from teacher participants who reported their own perceived cultural responsivity as it relates to all students, including culturally diverse students. The research probes that help frame this study and guide the data collection process are incorporated in the following questions and the process of obtaining answers to them.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a descriptive systematic pattern in teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the number of ODRs issued to Black students?

RQ2: Is there a descriptive pattern in teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the referral type (e.g., subjective/objective) issued to Black and White students?

RQ3: Does a descriptive pattern exist within teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the referral patterns for Black students when the race of the staff is White?

RQ4: Does a descriptive pattern exist within teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the trend of fewer referrals issued to students in lower grades (3-5) and more referrals issued to students in higher grades (6-8)?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter begins with a summary of the research setting, and a rationale for the research design selected for this study. Background information on specific school/district demographics is provided. Specifically, a description of the targeted participants, information on student demographics, teacher demographics and specific descriptive variables obtained from data sources are described. Participant recruitment procedures, information regarding informed consent, confidentiality, participants' involvement and a detailed description of the participant coding process are also included in this section. Finally, the process of data collection, instruments used, their psychometric properties, the hypotheses asserted relating to the research questions and the statistical measures used for the purpose of data analysis are included in this section. The data collection process is discussed in detail.

Description of the Setting/Context

This study was conducted in a suburban school district of a large city in the Midwest region of the country that serves children in grades Pre-K through 8. The district has maintained four school buildings for the past 14 years until the end of 2015-2016 school term. Currently, three buildings comprise the district's schools divided into grade centers as follows: Pre-K-2 (the primary building), 3-5 (the intermediate building) and 6-8 (the junior high building). The reported reason for the closing of one school building

was financial deficits. The total enrollment for the district as of June 2013 was 1,934 students, and by August 2018 term, there was a total of 2,001 students registered. Over the five-year period, student enrollment increased slightly but steadily.

Student Demographics

Race. The racial composition as of June 2018 was: 49% Black or African American, 29% White, 14% Hispanic, 7% two or more racial groups, and 0.4% Asian. Additionally, the data on the White and Black student population since June 2013 showed a trend of the White student population slowly declining while the Black student population slowly increased over the five-year period.

Income. Likewise, the percentage of students in the district considered low income followed a similar but rapidly increasing pattern during this time period. Since 2013, this rate grew from below 28 % to 31% by 2018. Students met the low-income criteria if their status included any of the following: received or lived in a household that received public assistance from SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), or TANF (Targeted Assistance for Needy Families), classified as homeless, qualified for Head Start, a foster child, or lived in a household that met the income requirements (USDA guidelines) to receive free or reduced-price lunch.

Homelessness. The school district follows the McKinney-Vento guidelines for determining homelessness of a student (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012; Miller, 2011). During the past three years, the total number of students registered as homeless had averaged around 60. By December 2018, this number had increased to 74 or 4% of students being registered as homeless.

Disabilities. Students with disabilities reached 17% by December 2018 as indicated by the number of students in the district with an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Staff Demographics

There was a total of 155 certified staff employed by the district and the ethnic breakdown in 2018 was as follows: 87% White, 7% Black or African American, 2% Hispanic, 2% two or more races and 1% Asian. The staff is approximately 86% female and 14% male. Over the five-year period, these percentages have ranged from 88% to 90% for Whites, 6.5% - 8% percent for Black or African American, 2% percent for Hispanics, and <1% - 1% percent for Asian staff, (Illinois School Report Card: - ISBE Data Library, 2017-2018).

Procedures

Ethics/Obtain Proper Permission

The researcher followed ethical protocols. Approval was obtained from the school district's Board of Education and the superintendent for conducting research within the school district and a signed document was obtained indicating approval. Consent was also verbally received from the building principals of each school participating in the study. Additionally, approval from Loyola University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct research with human subjects was procured.

Creation of a Study Participant Pool

As an employee in the district in which this research was conducted, the researcher had access to the list of certified teachers employed in the 3rd-5th and the 6th-

8th grade buildings in the district where the research was being conducted. Certified teachers were the only staff recruited as prospective participants for this study because they have the authority to refer students to the office for discipline reasons (Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Further, the instrument used to obtain data on participant's reported levels of cultural responsiveness was designed for teachers, specifically for educators who develop instructional curriculum for the classroom setting and who are in a primary position to develop relationships with student learners.

An IT personnel, a noncertified employee of the district was enlisted to assign a code to each certified teacher listed as a prospective participant. This step was included because the researcher also is a school psychologist in the district and knows many of the prospective participants. Therefore, a code system was put in place so that the researcher could not identify the teacher participants. Specifically, the purpose for the assigned code was three-fold and enabled: (1) de-identification of the participants for the purpose of confidentiality involved with protecting the teachers; identities: (2) participants' access to the online survey and the demographic questionnaire for completion; and (3) the "coded" participants' surveys and demographic responses to be matched to the discipline referral-writer's data as information from the same individual without divulging the referral-writer's identity to the principal investigator. In other words, the code permitted a matching of the two sets of data sourced from the same participant: the survey-takers' results and the referrals issued by the referral writers.

Originally, there was a total of 109 teachers listed as part of the potential pool of study participants who were coded as follows: Ts1, Ts2, Ts3 ... Ts109. Due to the school

year ending and staff changes occurring (e.g., teachers no longer employed by the district), that number declined from 109 to a total of 99 teachers who were ultimately among those in the participant pool of study participants. Ten emails returned to the sender as undeliverable.

Recruitment of Study Participants

Once the overall participant pool was created using the confidential procedures described above, the researcher proceeded with recruiting potential study participants using a convenience sampling. The potential pool of 99 certified teachers of 3rd-8th grade students were recruited using the following steps. First, the participant recruitment letter (see Appendix B) was sent via the district email to each certified teacher in the grades specified. The invitation provided information about the research study, its rationale and what participating in this study entailed. It also included information about the voluntary status of participation, risks, the shielding of participant identity and how data would be kept confidential. Second, two weeks after recruitment invitations were emailed, the Consent to Participate in a Research Study document was sent by the IT personnel also via district email individually by name to all 3rd-8th grade teachers. The consent letter included the assigned participant code. Therefore, once the coding process occurred, the researcher did not have access to teacher names or identity and required the IT Personnel's involvement with this procedure. It was noted also in the consent letter that the IT personnel had a specific role to assign codes to enable the gathering and matching of the data prior to the researcher receiving the data to ensure that the participant's identity remained unknown to the researcher.

The next step involved the IT personnel supplying codes to participants in reference to the participant as “survey-taker” and “referral-writer” and matching both sets of data generated by the participant. The IT personnel then obtained the referral data from SWIS, assigned the same code to the participant referral-writer so that it matched the code of the survey-taker as the same participant. When the IT Personnel completed this procedure, only the researcher was able to view the demographic and survey responses data. The IT personnel sent the “coded” referral data to the PI. This allowed the researcher to have only de-identified demographic and survey responses, and de-identified discipline referral data written by the participants for analysis. Again, the IT Personnel’s role in this research was code assigning to prospective participants (enabling code-matching of de-identified results from the two data sets) (see Appendix C, Consent to Participate relative to the role of the IT personnel in this study). The consent document also provided a more thorough explanation of each aspect, process and actions requested of the participant, as well as a detailed description of the procedures in this study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

This system of code-assignment to participants was multi-purposeful in its use. The process provided a means of disclosing the racial and gender status of participants without revealing the participant’s name or identity. It also created a means of protecting participant responses and aided in ensuring confidentiality of the participants. At this point, the data were anonymous to the researcher since the identity of the participants was not known.

Data Collection

Once the participants were given their unique code as described, they were permitted access to take the culturally responsive survey and demographic questionnaire. Data were collected from three distinct sources and obtained to be used only for purposes of this study. The three sources used for data collection included: an online culturally responsive survey - The Culturally Responsive Teaching Competencies Scales - (CRTCS), a 4-item questionnaire probing demographic information of the participant- Demographic Questionnaire, and discipline referral data from the school district's web-based service- School-Wide Information System (SWIS). This service permits entering, organization and monitoring of office discipline referrals (ODRs) issued by staff to students (May et al., 2006). There was a three-week window in which the CRTCS Scale and the Demographic Questionnaire were available for respondents to complete. Participants were informed that the time to complete the online survey and questionnaire should take not more than 20 minutes. All participants' active involvement in this study is outlined next.

First, each participant accessed the online culturally responsive survey via the assigned code and completed the 45-item CRTCS Scales administered on Survey Monkey, an online vehicle for gathering data from participants through the use of surveys. The survey used in this study was self-administered and probed participant's perceived levels of cultural responsiveness (CR) in relationship to their students and particularly culturally diverse students. Completion of the survey involved reading a series of items relating to teacher curriculum development and instructional practices that

intentionally are inclusive of and considers cultural diversity among students. With each item, participants were asked to select their level of agreement with the item posed. Each item presented an option choice of seven responses.

Second, participants completed the Demographic Questionnaire, which required each participant filling-in a response to each probe. This questionnaire was brief and presented four specific questions asking respondents to provide information to the following: grade(s) level taught, number of years of teaching experience, gender and racial affiliation. The Demographic Questionnaire was accessible on Survey Monkey and was available to be completed at the same time participants took the culturally responsive survey. The same participant-issued code allowing access to the CRTCS survey also permitted participants to access the demographic questionnaire on Survey Monkey. The code also served to de-identify participants such that their responses on both instruments could not be connected to their identity by the researcher, who only had access to participants' coded information.

The third source of data collected was discipline referrals accessed from SWIS, the web-based service the district utilizes for organization and storage of ODRs issued by study participants to 3rd-8th grade students from September 2018 through March 2019. Since the referral data had to be matched to the survey and demographic questionnaire data as information from the same participant, the IT personnel completed matching the two data sets via the assigned codes. The de-identified referral data was then sent electronically to the researcher. This information included various variables to be examined pertaining to the referrals. Specifically, referral data gathered from this source

enabled examining variables that included race and gender of the referring teacher; race and gender of the student who received the referral; grade level of the student; and referral type: objective (e.g., vandalism, truancy, or physical aggression) or subjective (e.g., defiance, disrespect). Each of these variables explored was examined through the potential impact of participants' self-reported CR levels.

Measures/Instrumentation

Culturally Responsive Teaching Competencies Scales

The researcher used the Culturally Responsive Teaching Competencies Scales (CRTCS) (Siwatu, 2007) as the online survey in this study to obtain information on participant's self-perceived levels of cultural responsiveness (CR). The CRTCS is a 45-item self-assessment scale, developed by Kamau Oginga Siwatu in 2006. Based on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997) for its framework, Siwatu, (2007) posited that competencies measured on the scale incorporate essential skills and knowledge that are clearly identifiable among teachers who engage in culturally responsive interactions with students. The CRTCS was designed with items to have a dual focus: teacher self-efficacy and expected student behavior outcome based upon teacher practices and interactions relating to cultural response actions toward students. For purposes of this study, the CRTCS was administered as a single-focused scale with all items presented pertaining to cultural responsiveness and specifically, how participants self-report their CR levels.

The CRTCS requires participants to rate their level of agreement regarding the need to engage in specific culturally responsive practices akin to students' culture, and whether these practices assist student success educationally (Siwatu, 2007). Participants

were asked to list their self-reported responses through selection on a Likert scale. The response selection offered a range of options on the Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Participants' responses to each of the items on the CRTCS were totaled and a mean score was computed for all participants based upon their level of agreement or disagreement to items on the survey. Please see Appendix D for the CRTCS items.

The CRTC Scale is designed such that the rated scale outcome results in a higher CR score when participants respond that they have a higher level of agreement with the items presented, and therefore a stronger agreement with engaging in the cultural response practices represented by the survey items (Siwatu, 2007, 2011).

According to Siwatu (2007, 2011) study, participants who tended to respond with higher levels of agreement and certainty to the scale items e.g., with a rating of 5 or higher on a 7-point scale typically showed outcomes associated with higher levels of culturally responsive teaching and service practices to students (Siwatu, 2007; Siwatu, Frazier, Osaghae, & Starker, 2011). Conversely, Siwatu's research (2007, 2011) indicated that participants who tended to respond with lower levels of agreement and certainty to the scale items, e.g., obtained a rating of 3 or less on the CRTCS, typically showed outcomes associated with a lesser to almost non-existing level of CR practices in teaching and service practices to students. Accordingly, the outcome of Siwatu's findings resulted in a division of study participants into a category of higher response levels based upon the CRTC \bar{x} score of 5 or higher, or lower response levels based upon a \bar{x} score of 3 or lower.

Psychometric Properties: CRTCS

Most of the psychometric analysis for the CRTCS measure concerns the issue of internal consistency reliability. The internal consistency reliability was assessed by calculating alpha coefficient, which can range from .0 to 1.0. Measures of .70 are deemed respectable. The items that pertained to expectancy outcome proved to be a reliable measure. Internal reliability for the 15-item scale was .96, as estimated by Cronbach's alpha. The items that focused more on efficacy did not show as high of a measure; the internal reliability for the 30-item scale was .64, as estimated by Cronbach's alpha (Siwatu, 2008; Siwatu, 2011; Siwatu, Polydore & Starker, 2009; Siwatu, & Starker, 2010). Content validity is addressed when the items in a scale or measure accurately represent the phenomenon being measured, suggesting that it is not a statistical property as much as it is a qualitative judgment. Regarding the CRTCS, its author conducted extensive reviews and consulted with acknowledged experts to define subscales, identify item content, and refine item wording (Siwatu, 2008; Siwatu, 2011; Siwatu, Polydore, & Starker, 2009; Siwatu, & Starker, 2010).

Demographic Questionnaire

Participants also responded to four questions on the Demographic Questionnaire on Survey Monkey, which was developed by the researcher and taken during the time they completed the culturally responsive survey. Completion of the Demographic Questionnaire provided pertinent information about each participant that was relative to the study's purpose and design. The specific questions asked respondents to provide information relating to the following: grade(s) level(s) taught, years of teaching

experience, gender, and racial affiliation. These demographic variables were obtained and examined for purposes of addressing some of the research questions. Aggregate results from the 21 participants are displayed in Demographic Tables and in the Teacher Demographics Charts 1-4, and cross comparison of years taught by ODRs issued in Table 5, Participant by CRTCS x Score by Years Taught by Referral #s in Chapter IV, Results.

Discipline Referrals

The researcher also obtained information on staff-issued discipline referrals given to 3rd-8th grade students during the period of September 2018 through March 2019. This data was accessed from SWIS- the online system the district utilizes to store and monitor ODRs issued to students (May et al., 2006).

The data obtained from the discipline referral source included the following: race, gender, grade level and the specific behavior infraction categories. The SWIS data accessed also permitted this researcher to explore the data relative to the type of referral administered by teachers (May et al., 2006). This information enabled the researcher to determine if the behavior infraction was classified as an objective infraction such as vandalism or physical aggression, or a subjective infraction such as disrespect or defiance (Skiba et al., 2011). Further, the researcher was able to explore a possible connection between the teacher's perceived cultural responsive levels (high or low) and discipline patterns evidenced by the number of referrals, type of referrals- objective or subjective issued to students with a specific focus on the race of the student and teacher. Finally, the collected data enabled a comparison of referrals issued to students by grade level and whether teachers' self-reported CR levels evidenced any pattern on the trend of ODRs

issued by grade level. Collectively, the data from the three sources: information from the CRTCS survey, Demographic Questionnaire and discipline referrals through SWIS were combined for analysis purposes and supplied information to answer the research questions for this study.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a descriptive systematic pattern in teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the number of ODRs issued to Black students?

RQ2: Is there a descriptive pattern in teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the referral type (e.g., subjective/objective) issued to Black and White students?

RQ3: Does a descriptive pattern exist within teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the referral patterns for Black students when the race of the staff is White?

RQ4: Does a descriptive pattern exist within teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the trend of fewer referrals issued to students in lower grades (3-5) and more referrals issued to students in higher grades (6-8)?

Data Analysis

The responses from the CRTCS survey were examined to determine each participant's self-reported CR level. The significance of ascertaining the participant's self-rated cultural responsiveness level was due to the vital role of this data as central to the underlying premise of this study. Obtaining this information enabled the examination of each participant's CR level cross referenced with issued ODRs for potential patterns relating to participant discipline practices as outlined by each research question.

As stated, because of the three sets of data collected, the researcher was able to examine the teacher's perceived cultural responsive levels (higher or lower) and discipline patterns evidenced by the number of referrals issued to Black students: (research question 1), type of referrals - subjective/objective issued to Black and White students: (research question 2), and referrals issued with a specific focus on the race of the student and teacher: (research question 3). Finally, the collected data enabled exploring a pattern of discipline practices by a comparison of numbers of referrals issued to students by grade level and whether teachers' self-reported CR levels evidenced any pattern on the trend of ODRs issued by grade level: (research question 4).

This researcher used descriptive statistics, the mean and range scores to determine whether a pattern existed between the participants' identified status of high, mid, or low CR levels and the number of referrals written to students, and notably Black male students. The original objective for the current study relating to CR levels was to utilize a division of scores with categories consistent with Siwatu's model of cultural response levels- higher ($\bar{x} = 5$ or more) or lower ($\bar{x} = 3$ or less). However, due to participant's responses on the CRTCS in this current research, this researcher developed three categories in which participants' responses were divided: low-based upon a score of 1-3 (LCRL), mid = a score of 4-5 (MCRL), and high = a score of 6-7 (HCRL). The division of three versus two specific categories relating to CR levels was determined from data outcomes from participants' survey responses.

The ODRs issued by the participant (staff) within the specified six-month time period was examined and based on the number of referrals pertaining to each variable examined, the mean was calculated.

The participant's CR level (high, mid or low), based upon his/her responses on the CRTCS survey, was compared to the number of referrals issued by the participant during the specified time period. This association of (self-rated CR levels) was applied to the various variables pertaining to ODRs issued to students as indicated in each research question and examined for existing patterns. As much of the literature indicated, this researcher posited that cultural responsiveness practiced toward students would be a positive mitigating factor in existing discipline trends.

This researcher's hypothesis regarding research question one was that the teacher's level of cultural responsiveness should manifest in a descriptive pattern toward students resulting in a more positive outcome relating to numbers of ODRs issued to Black students (Alter, et al., 2013; Blake et al., 2016; Fowler et al., 2008; Gregory, Hafen et al., 2016; O'Brennan et al., 2014). This researcher also predicted relating to research question 2 that the types of referrals (objective/subjective) written to Black and White students, participants' CR levels should result in a definitive pattern such that a more positive outcome would manifest in types of referrals issued to students by race (Fenning & Rose, 2007; McFadden et al., 1992; Shaw & Braden, 1990; Skiba et al., 2011). The researcher's hypothesis for research question 3 was that CR levels should show a definitive pattern relating to student race as a mitigating agent on White teachers' referral numbers to Black students (Blake et al., 2016; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Monroe, 2006).

Lastly, the variable of student grade level and whether CR levels of teachers showed a pattern relating to the number of referrals issued to students by grade level was examined. The trend in the literature typically indicated that higher-grade students receive higher numbers of referrals (Losen & Skiba, 2012; McIntosh et al., 2008; Vincent et al., 2012). Consistent with much of the study findings, this researcher made the prediction associated with research question 4 that teachers who self-report higher CR levels would have no significant difference discipline trends. Specifically, the number of referrals issued to higher grade students: 6th, 7th, or 8th, versus lower grade students: 3rd, 4th, or 5th would be consistent with prior research findings (Losen & Skiba, 2012; McIntosh et al., 2008; Vincent et al., 2012). The findings from both data sources: participants self-reported CR levels obtained from the CRTS survey and participants' discipline referrals issued to students during the specified time period provided to source to explore outcomes relating to each research question.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Participant Demographics

Twenty-one participants consented to take part in this study out of the 99 potential participants recruited, and for whom the researcher permitted coded identification to access the study components. Data from the online Demographic Questionnaire solicited information specific to participant's gender, race, teaching experience, and grade level taught and is presented first. Aggregate results from the 21 participants are displayed in the Teacher Demographics Table 1 below.

Table 1 shows the number and percentages of survey participants divided by their responses relating to gender, race/ethnicity, grade-level taught and years of teaching experience.

Table 1

Summary of Teacher Demographics

Variables	(n)	(n)				
Gender	Female	Male				
	81% (17)	19% (4)				
Race	White	TOC				
	76.19% (16)	23.81% (5)				
Grade taught	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
	19.05% (4)	14.29% (3)	19.05% (4)	43. (9)	38.10% (8)	33.33% (7)
Years Taught	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+	
	23.1% (5)	23.1% (5)	4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	38.10% (8)	

Note: (n) = number of participants: 21; TOC=Teachers of Color and are collapsed categories for racial/ethnic minorities to ensure confidentiality due to low numbers of potential participants who identify as racial/ethnic minorities.

Among the respondents, the largest percentage of the participants reported a gender and racial self-identification of female (n = 17, 80.95%) and White (n = 16, 76.19%). Four identified as male, and five reported a racial or ethnic affiliation categorized as a teacher of color (TOC) shown in Table 1. Additional demographic information from the 4-item questionnaire included grade-level(s) taught. Participants inclusively were comprised of certified teachers who instruct 3rd-8th grade students. The number of respondents (n) and corresponding percentages of participants who teach each grade level are indicated in Table 1. Additionally, some respondents reported that they teach students in more than one grade level. Shown in Table 2 is a depiction of the number of teachers who reported teaching students in one or multi-grade levels.

Eight participants reported teaching students in the 3rd-5th grade building and two of them responded that they teach students in multiple grade-levels, including one who reported teaching students in 4th-8th grades. These eight participants self-reported a division of instruction by grades as shown in Table 2. Likewise, 13 teachers reported teaching students in the 6th-8th grade building, of which four indicated that they teach multiple grade levels that included students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. The majority of respondents who reported teaching 3rd-5th grade students indicated that they teach only one grade level: $n = 5$. Similarly, nine of the 13 respondents - a majority, who reported instructing in the 6th-8th grade building also claimed to teach only one grade level as depicted in Table 2.

Table 2

Expanded Demographics by Grade(s) Taught

Grade Level	3 rd -5 th , n=8
Single Grade	5
Multiple Grades (3 rd – 5 th)	2
Multiple Grades (4 th – 5 th)	1
Grade Level	6 th -8 th , n=13
Single Grade	9
Multiple Grades (6 th – 8 th)	4

Note: (n) = number of participants: Total: $n = 21$.

The final demographic question pertained to the years of teaching experience and was posed in clusters of years taught as indicated. Demographic data for this variable was also illustrated in Table 1 and was included to explore potential patterns between participants' years of teaching experience and the number of referrals issued to students overall. Participants reporting the highest number of years taught was the group most

represented in the sample, specifically the 21 or more years-cluster. The group that was least represented in the sample was the cluster with a moderate number of years teaching, which was the category of 11-15 years teaching. The “year clusters” representing the number of years taught by participants and the percentages for each “cluster” was indicated in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of Teacher Demographics - By Years Taught

Years Taught	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+
N:	23.1% (5)	23.1% (5)	4.76% (1)	9.52% (2)	38.10% (8)

The researcher examined referrals issued compared to participants’ years of experience. Results indicated that teachers who have less-than-10 years to a mid-range number of years of experience tended to issue higher numbers of referrals to students in the sample (6 -10 years) teachers issued 9.25 ODRs and (11-15 years) teachers issued 33 ODRs. This latter cluster (11-15 years) must be qualified as there was only one respondent in this category who issued a high number of referrals to students. Therefore statistically, the researcher could not conclusively determine that this mid-range cluster issued the highest number of referrals to students. Participants’ mean CRTCS scores and average number of referrals by respondents’ years of experience by cluster are depicted in Table 4.

Table 4

Participant/ \bar{x} CRTCS Score by Experience and Average Referrals Issued

Number of years	<i>n</i>	Mean CRTCS Score	Number of referrals
1-5	5	6.1	8.5
6-10	5	6.0	9.25
11-15	1	6.4	33
16-20	2	6.6	1.5
21+	8	5.9	8

Note. *n* = number of participants. Referrals written were not gathered for all participants, **so the averages represent the referral information that was present.**

Participants' referral data available to cross-reference with teachers' years of experience included 13 respondents of the total sample of 21 participants, which was the Mean (X%) of the total sample. This was due to the occurrence that for eight of the participants, discipline data was not accessible or nonexistent as noted in the Methodology section.

Cultural Responsiveness (CR): Self-Ratings

The next presented information covers the results from the culturally responsive survey. The Culturally Responsive Teaching Competencies Scales (CRTCS), a 45-item survey, was completed via Survey Monkey to obtain self-reported data of teachers' perceived levels of cultural responsiveness (CR). As depicted in Table 5, the total mean score was 6.0 (\bar{x} = 6.0). Additionally, participants' range scores varied from 1-7 to 6-7, which is also indicated in Table 5 below.

Table 5

CRTCS Participant's Individual Overall Mean and Range Score

Mean Scores		Range Scores	
Participant #	Mean \bar{x}	Participant #	Range
Ts98	5.9	Ts98	1 – 7
Ts43	5.1	Ts43	2 – 7
Ts99	5.5	Ts99	1 – 7
Ts47	5.6	Ts47	3 – 7
Ts81	5.6	Ts81	2 – 7
Ts107	5.6	Ts107	3 – 7
Ts40	5.8	Ts40	3 – 7
Ts16	5.9	Ts16	4 – 7
Ts78	6.0	Ts78	3 – 7
Ts09	6.0	Ts09	4 – 7
Ts44	6.1	Ts44	1 – 7
Ts19	6.2	Ts19	1 – 7
Ts63	6.2	Ts63	2 – 7
Ts35	6.2	Ts35	4 – 7
Ts94	6.4	Ts94	4 – 7
Ts56	6.4	Ts56	1 – 7
Ts49	6.6	Ts49	4 – 7
Ts26	6.6	Ts26	6 – 7
Ts02	6.6	Ts02	2 – 7
Ts86	6.8	Ts86	6 – 7
Ts109	6.9	Ts109	5 – 7

Note. n = 21, aggregate Mean of total sample: \bar{X} = 6.0.

It should be noted that the mean score computed for each participant was based on self-rated responses to the 45-items on the CRTCS as depicted in Figure 1, Individual Cultural Responsiveness (CR) Scores.

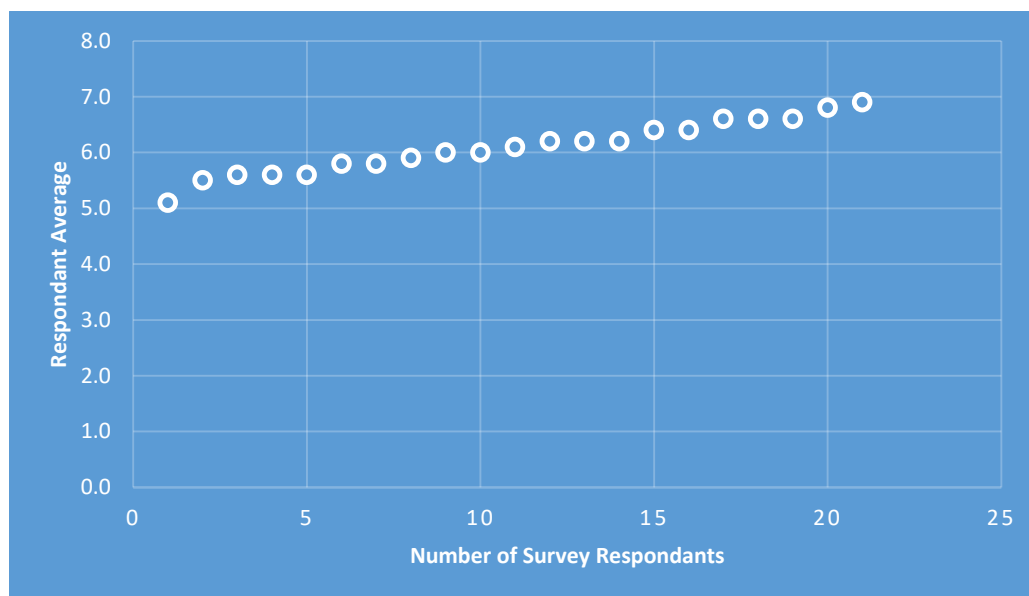
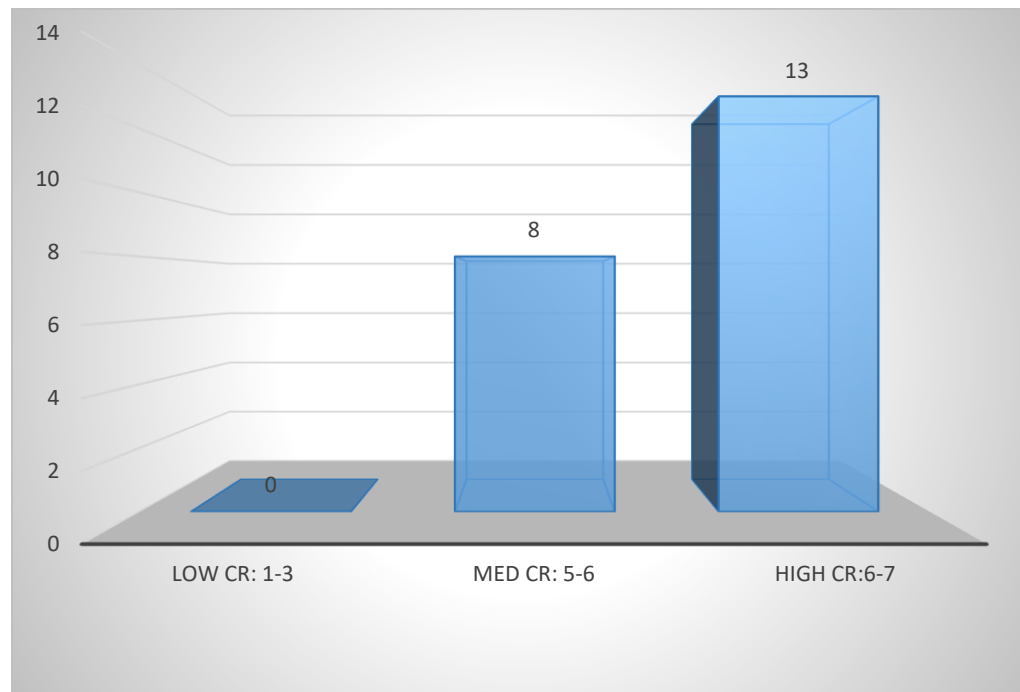


Figure 1. Respondents' Cultural Responsiveness Scores - CRTCS

The aggregate mean score of $\bar{x} = 6.0$, based upon Siwatu's (2007, 2011) categorization of participant responses, would be considered a high self-rating of cultural responsiveness for the total sample of participants.

The three categories of high, mid and low represent the CR levels in the current study. There were no participants in the sample who rated themselves as low in cultural responsiveness on the CRTCS. Specifically, the findings showed when the scores from the survey were computed to derive a mean score, no score was less than $\bar{x} = 5.1$. The 21 participants' actual results were as follows: eight participants' responses had mean scores between $\bar{x} = 5.1 - 5.9$. The remaining 13 participants had mean scores between $\bar{x} = 6.0 - 6.9$. Therefore, on the basis of the responders' self-reported results, the participants' CR levels corresponded to a category rating of either mid ($\bar{x} = 5.0 - 6.0$), or high ($\bar{x} = 6.1 - 7$) ratings for the entire sample. See the Participant Culturally Responsive Individual

Score depicted in Figure 1 and the Participant Culturally Responsive Rank shown in Figure 2.



Note. N = 21: Participants CR Levels by Rank: Low, Med and High per Mean Score

Figure 2. Culturally Responsive Rank by Mean Score

Discipline Referrals

The third set of data presented in this section involves office discipline referral (ODRs) obtained from the district's School-Wide Information System (SWIS), which is a data base that allows systematic organization and monitoring of staff-issued ODRs (May, et al., 2006). Examination of the ODRs issued to 3rd-8th grade students during the months of September 2018 through March 2019 yielded descriptive findings related to patterns of ODRs cross-referenced with self-rated CR levels. These examination of ODRs include: ODRs by student race, ODR categorized as objective vs. subjective offenses, ODRs by

teacher race, ODRs written for Black students, and ODRs by grade level. Each variable cross-associated with ODRs and CR levels is explored to answer the research questions.

CR Levels and ODRs Issued to Black Students: Research Question #1

Thirteen teachers issued 119 ODRs to 3rd to 8th grade students during the designated time period. The referrals were examined and compared to the following variables posed in each research question. In response to RQ1: Is there a systematic pattern found in teachers' self-reported cultural response levels and the number of ODRs issue to Black students?

The 13 participant survey-takers through assignment of unique coding were accurately matched as referral writers. The findings showed that per teacher self-rating, those classified as having high levels of cultural responsiveness (HCRL) issued the highest number of referrals to all students and did not indicate the expected hypothesized pattern that teachers with high self-reported CR levels would issue the lowest number of ODRs to Black students. Eight of the 13 responders who rated their CR level as high wrote the highest number of referrals to Black students (n = 75 or 63%) and notably to Black male students (n = 54 or 45%). Also, five participants who self-rated their CR levels in the mid (MCRL) category issued 29% or 35 of the ODRs to Black students. The results illustrated in Table 6 below showed that teachers who self-identified having HCRL wrote more referrals to all students than those who rated themselves having CR levels in the mid-range (MCRL).

Table 6

CRTCS Ratings Crossed with Referrals Issue by Student Race

	White- Male	White - Female	Black - Male	Black- Female	Total
Med CR	1	1	28	7	37
High CR	6	1	54	21	82

Note. Total Referrals (n = 119)

Among the total referrals (n = 119) issued to 3rd-8th grade students during the designated period, 110 or 92% of the ODRs were issued to Black students: male: (n= 82 or 69%) and female: (n = 28 or 24%). Based upon the findings in response to RQ1, the results did not indicate an existing descriptive pattern that participants' self-reported higher CR levels resulted in fewer referrals issued to Black students as predicted. An important note to consider is that there were more participants in actual numbers who self-rated their CR levels in the high (HCRL) category, therefore it is a reasonable assumption that participants classified as HCRL would issue a higher number of referrals overall than participants who self-rated their CR levels in the mid (MCRL) category. Also noteworthy however is that the data showed racial disparities in referrals at a higher rate than expected given the proportion of Black students in the student study population. Black students comprised 49% of the student study population but received 92% of the total ODRs issued during the study period. This statistic was particularly remarkable for Black male students who received 69% of the ODRs written during the study period. See student demographics in number and percentages disaggregated by race in the Methods section.

Teachers who self-rated having HCRL also issued more referrals to White male students: (n = 6). Nine ODRs or 7.56% in total were issued to White students-males: (n = 7) and females: (n = 2), who comprised 29% of the student study population. Referrals issued to White students were, overall for the sample, much less than those issued to Black students per the comparison of the percentage of White students with the percentage of ODRs issued to them. The findings that teachers who rated themselves having HCRL issued higher numbers of referrals to students overall and therefore to Black students showed to be consistent but counter to the researcher's prediction. Again, with this stated observation, this researcher concedes that due to the low sample size and that there were more participants classified as having HCRL, this data is interpreted with caution, and not with boldly asserted conclusions.

Table 7

HCRL/MCRL Referrals and Mean Scores

HCRL	#Referrals	MCRL	#Referrals
TS49	1	TS47	6
TS94	33	TS40	11
TS56	6	TS81	1
TS35	8	TS98	14
TS26	4	TS16	5
TS86	3		
TS9	25		
TS2	2		
$\bar{x}=10.25$		$\bar{x}=7.4$	

Note. (n =13): Individual participant referral numbers and HCRL/MCRL mean score.

CR Level/Referral Type and Student Race: Research Question #2

Referrals issued by 13 participant survey-takers were examined and compared to the following variables posed in RQ2: Is there a descriptive pattern in teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the referral type (e.g., subjective/objective) issued to Black and White students? The results showed that teachers who self-reported having higher CR levels (HCRL) issued higher numbers of ODRs to students, including the highest number of subjective referrals to Black students. This finding was counter to the researcher's hypothesized assertion that teachers self-reported HCRL status would result in a descriptive pattern of subjective ODRs being the lowest type issued to students, with no disparity in ODR proportions between Black and White students.

Table 8

CR Levels by Referral Type and Student Race

	White - Objective	White - Subjective	Black - Objective	Black- Subjective	Total
Med CR	2 4%	1 2%	20 51%	24 43%	47 39%
High CR	2 3%	4 6%	32 44%	34 47%	72 61%
Total Referrals	4	5	52	58	119

Note. Total Referrals: (n = 119 - Objective: 56; Subjective: 63).

The data shown in Table 8 indicated that teachers wrote more referrals classified as subjective to students overall (n = 63 or 53%). Survey respondents self-rated having HCRL issued higher numbers of ODRs to all students (n = 72 or 61%). More subjective ODRs were issued to Black students (n = 58 or 49%) by the combined self-raters having HCRL and MCRL versus subjective ODRs issued to White students (n = 5 or 4%) by the

combined (HCRL and MCRL) raters. Counter to this researcher's predictions, participants who self-rated having HCRL issued 34 of the 63 (54%) subjective ODRs to Black students - the highest single category of ODRs issued compared to 4 (6%) subjective ODRs issued to White students. It should be noted that Black students comprised 49%, and White students were 29% of the total student population in this study. Therefore, student population percentages disaggregated by race presumes a greater portion of ODRs issued to Black than White students. However, the data indicated that Black students received a disproportionately higher percentage of ODRs, including subjective referrals when cross-referenced with their population percentage, and compared to the percentage of subjective ODRs to White students when cross-reference by White student's population percentage. The researcher's proposed expectation overall was not evidenced by these findings.

Teachers who self-reported having MCRL actually issued fewer referrals to students ($n = 47$ or 39%) and fewer subjective ODRs to White students ($n = 1$) versus ODRs issued classified as objective ($n = 2$). While this finding of subjective referrals to White was not substantial, it was consistent with the researcher's expected hypothesis. Conversely, the MCRL group also issued a higher number of subjective ODRs to Black students ($n = 24$) compared to the number of objective ODRs ($n = 20$). Again, the difference of this finding, although not substantial in magnitude, was also counter to the researcher's prediction of fewer subjective ODRs issued to all students, including Black student resulting from teachers moderate to higher CR levels. While HCRL-categorized teachers issued more ODRs than teachers categorized having MCRL, the overall trend,

counter to prediction, showed higher subjective ODRs issued to Black students. Again, the researcher makes cautious interpretations of the study findings related to drawing conclusions due to the low sample size.

White Teachers CR Levels and ODRs to Black Students: Research Question #3

The referrals written to Black students based upon the race and CR level of the referral-writer were examined. The researcher investigated the relationship of ODRs issued to Black students by White teachers framed by RQ3: Does a descriptive pattern exist within teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the referral patterns for Black students when the race of the staff is White?

Sixteen participants self-identified a racial affiliation as White, based upon their responses on the Demographic Questionnaire. Disaggregated data by CR levels of teachers who self-identified as White, showed that five respondents: ($n = 5$ or 31.25%) self-reported CR levels as MCRL status - ($\bar{x} = 5.0 - 5.9$). The additional participants' ($n = 11$ or 68.75) self-rated responses indicated CR levels as high: HCRL - ($\bar{x} = 6.0 - 7$). Eight respondents who classified as having higher CR levels or HCRL status issued 82 ODRs to Black students. White teachers, inclusive of those self-rated having HCRL and MCRL status combined, issued a total of 110 ODRs or 91% to Black students: 85 or 77% to Black males and 25 or 21% to Black female students. Contrary to what this researcher predicted, participants who self-rated as HCRL status issued the largest number of ODRs to both White and Black students: 75 or 63% were issued to Black students overall, with 55 or 46% issued to Black males and 20 or 24% issued to Black female students. In contrast, from both HCRL and MCRL status respondents, a total of nine ODRs or 7.56%

was issued to White students: seven or 6% to White males and two or 2% to White females. Six ODRs were issued to White males by teachers who self-rated as HCRL or higher CR status. A noteworthy statement references information pertaining to student and staff numbers. The total student study population disaggregated by student race: Black student population is 49% and the White student population is 29%. The number of Teachers self-rated having HCRL and identified as referral-writer ($n = 8$), exceeds the number self-rated having MCRL and who issued referrals is ($n = 5$). Therefore, ODRs issued to Black students by responders self-reported having HCRL versus having MCRL would be higher based on the increased numbers/percentages in both areas. Table 9 shows data of White referral-writers cross-referenced by CR levels on student race.

Table 9

Referrals by CR Levels, White Staff and Student Race

	White	Black	White Male	White Female	Black Male	Black Female	Total
Med CR	2	35	1	1	30	5	37
	2%	29%	1%	1%	25%	4%	31%
High CR	7	75	6	1	55	20	82
	6%	63%	5%	1%	46%	24%	69%

Note. White Staff CR Levels: HCRL - ($n = 8$), MCRL - ($n = 5$).

ODRs by Grade Level: Research Question #4

This researcher examined referral data in relationship to student grade level to determine whether a trend exist in discipline practices by grade level and teachers CR levels. This is the focus framed by RQ4: Does a descriptive pattern exist within teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the trend of fewer referrals issued to students in lower grades (3-5) and more referrals issued to students in higher grades (6-8)?

Referrals written and grade levels depicted in the Table 9 below extend beyond the 21-participant sampling in this study, but include referrals made by all staff from the two buildings during the designated time period.

There was a reported total of 1,789 referrals issued to 3rd-8th grade students between September 2018 and March 2019 within the district of study, with a total enrollment of students within these grades of 1,357 during the same time period. The researcher asserted that grade 3, followed by grade 4 would receive the fewest referrals, and notably fewer ODRs than grades 7 and 8. Once again, the findings were partially counter to this statement. The data indicated that during the designated 6-month time period, 4th grade students received the highest number of referrals - (408) among all grade levels explored, although the enrollment of 4th graders totaled 210 students during this time period - which reflected the lowest enrollment among students in 3rd-8th grade. Students in 3rd grade received the fewest number of referrals (185) during the 6-month time period as predicted. Also, 8th grade students received the second highest number of ODRs (322), followed by 7th grade students (312) relating to ODRs issued by staff during the designated time period. See results of Referrals by Grade Level in Table 10 below.

Table 10

CR Levels/Referrals/Student Enrollment by Grade (9/18 -3/19)

	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	Total
#Referrals	185	408	301	261	312	322	1789
Enrollment	211	210	211	254	240	231	1357
Med CR	n=4	n=1	n=2	n=4	n=5	n=3	n=19
High CR-	n=4	n=2	n=2	n=4	n=3	n=4	n=19
Grade taught: 3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th		
N	(4)	(3)	(4)	(9)	(8)	(7)	

Note. n = 38. Participant grade levels taught exceed (n = 21) due to multiple grades taught.

Summary of the Results

Twenty-one participants took part in this study and responded to the four questions on the Demographic Questionnaire and the 45-item culturally responsive survey. Additionally, referral data that thirteen participants issued to 3rd-8th grade students during the period from September 2018 through March 2019 were explored and cross-related to the demographic data and survey responses to answer the four research questions.

There were 13, majority female (80.95%) and White (76.19%) study participants who gained the status of “survey-taker” and were able to be matched as the same individual for the status of “referral writer.” Each responder taught at least in one grade level that was inclusively 3rd-8th grade, including teachers who taught multiple grade levels; and each participant ranged in time of work experience from 1 to 21+ years. Data

solicited by each demographic question was useful information to obtain for purposes of examining the findings this research.

Research question one probed whether a systematic pattern existed between teachers' self-reported cultural response levels and the number of ODRs issued to Black students. The findings showed that teacher self-rating resulting in a HCRL status, did not mitigate a pattern of fewer referrals to Black students, counter to what was postulated. Among the 13 participants (HCRL and MCRL) collectively, there was a total of 119 ODRs issued to all students with 110 of the referrals written to Black student during the designated time period.

Research question two sought to explore whether a descriptive pattern existed between teachers' self-reported CR levels and the type of referral issued to Black and White students: objective vs. subjective. The findings again were in contrast to the researcher's assertion. The CR levels as self-rated by thirteen participants, whether the rating was high- HCRL or mid-level MCRL, did not evidence a pattern of decreasing the number of subjective referrals issued to Black students. Contrarily, participants who self-rated a HCRL status issued more referrals classified as subjective to Black students overall.

It is note-worthy information that for this research, there were 49% Black 3rd-8th graders enrolled vs. 29% White students enrolled in this school district during the time period over which this data was collected. Information on referrals issued by type and race can be viewed in Table 7.

Research question three was developed to help explore data outcomes pertaining to existing descriptive patterns in self-perceived CR levels of respondents relating to ODRs issued to Black students by White teachers. The 16 White respondents issued a total of 91 ODRs to Black students and eleven respondents classified as having higher CR levels or HCRL, issued the highest number of referrals to Black students. Once again, CR levels- even higher levels as self-reported by respondents- appeared to not show a decrease in the number of referrals issued by White teachers to Black students. See these results in Table 9, Referrals by CR Levels/White Staff and Student Race.

Lastly, research question four examined whether a descriptive pattern existed in teachers' self-rated CR levels had on the trend that lower grade students receive fewer referrals than higher grade students among 3rd-8th graders. CR levels of participants did not appear to impact the trend of ODRs issued to students by grade level.

Years of teaching experience as a demographic variable was included and examined to determine if teachers' years of experience affected the number of referrals issued to students in general. While 21+ years' experience group was the group most represented in the study, groups who reported middle-range experience (6-10 years and 11-15 years) issued the highest number of referrals to 3rd-8th grade students during the designated time period.

Findings from this current study after analysis of the data, yielded information in some areas that was counter to this researcher's hypotheses and predictions.

Table 11

Summation of the Findings: Status of Expected Research Outcomes

	Yes	No	Partially
RQ1: Is there a descriptive systematic pattern found in teachers' self-reported cultural responsiveness and the number of ODRs issued to Black students?		X	
RQ2: Is there a descriptive pattern in teacher's self-reported cultural responsiveness of teachers and the referral type (e.g. objective/ subjective) issued to Black and White students?		X	
RQ3: Does a descriptive pattern exist within teacher's self reported cultural responsiveness and the referral patterns for Black students when the race of the staff is White?		X	
RQ4: Does a descriptive pattern exist within teacher's cultural responsiveness and the trend of fewer ODRs issued to students on lower grades (3 – 5) versus students in higher grades (6- 8)?			X

Assertions and further commentary on the results and probable rationale regarding outcomes are shared in the Discussion Chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to explore the effect of teacher's cultural responsiveness CR toward students and its impact on staff discipline practices examined by race and gender. Staff's level of CR, as it relates to the discipline of students, and to Black male students in particular was further examined, as previous studies indicated the positive impact CR can have on discipline practices (Cartledge, & Gibson, 2008; Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Ladson-Billings 1995a; Siwatu, 2007; Vincent et al., 2011). Ultimately, the primary objective of the findings used from this study was to gain information that leads to a decrease in the discipline disproportionality that negatively affects minority male students. This emphasis was not only specifically targeted within the school district of study, but also in general, on a broader level as this is a critical issue that affects this demographic of student populations across this country and warrants more involvement of school leadership (Bustamente et al., 2009; Butler et al., 2012; Leithwood & Riehle, 2005).

The subsequent information in this chapter includes discussion on the study findings, limitations of the study, implications and proposed areas of study for future research.

Study Findings

Twenty-one participants - certified teachers of 3rd-8th grade students employed in a public school district comprised the sample for this research.

The findings of the study were counter to what the researcher predicted. To begin, the researcher initially examined participants CR levels, based upon their self-rated responses on the CRTCS survey. The finding that all 21 participants perceived themselves as having a higher CR status, based upon each of their computed mean scores, did not match participants' discipline actions in each of the four areas explored. This researcher found this outcome to be interesting and puzzling in view of participants' actual discipline outcomes toward students in this study.

As stated, this trend of seemingly minimal to "no impact" on teachers' discipline practices in spite of participant's self-rating of higher CR appeared to be prevalent in the current findings. In other words, the higher level of CR in which participants self-rated did not appear to match a more positive discipline practice, notably toward students of color (Blake et al., 2016; Tyler et al., 2006; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). The current outcome was unlike the findings of several studies on this topic. Therefore, the researcher, although in agreement with results of prior study outcomes regarding the relationship of CR levels of teachers and a lesser degree of racial disproportionate discipline, was interested in exploring some plausible reasons why the current findings did not tend to match those found in several previous research studies on the same or similar topic (Anyon et al., 2016; Gregory, Hafen et al., 2016; Lustick, 2017; Monroe, 2006; Siwatu, 2007; 2011; Vincent et al., 2011).

This researcher engaged in an examination of the study findings to help determine why the outcome from participants' self-perceived CR levels as reported did not seem to match their discipline practices. Regarding the notion of incongruence with participants' reported CR levels and their actual discipline practices during this study's time period (Blake et al., 2016), this researcher purported that there might be few rationales to consider as possible explanations.

One rationale may be that participants are not aware of a possible disconnection between their self-perceived knowledge of cultural responsiveness and the actual application of that knowledge in practice toward culturally diverse students (Blake et al., 2016; Tyler et al., 2008; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). A related term associated with subjectivity in discipline (relating to research question two), and the perception of teachers and students regarding discipline is "cultural discontinuity." This concept connotes that the behavioral challenges ethnic minorities experience in the school setting are related to perceived cultural discontinuity, or an incongruence between the student's home life and school-based experiences (Tyler et al., 2006; Tyler, Boykin & Walton, 2006). These researchers posit that a discrepancy or incongruence may exist between what minority students and teachers/administrators view as acceptable standards for student behavior (Hirschfield, 2008). An example may include staff unfamiliar with norms of culturally diverse youth and may have the view, albeit subjective, that Black youth who display culturally normative behaviors in the classroom (e.g., freedom of expression) are behaving in a disrespectful or argumentative manner (Monroe, 2005; Weinstein et al., 2004, as cited by Bradshaw et al., 2010; Tyler et al., 2006). In response

to these challenges, some researchers and teachers believe that education should be adapted to "match" the cultures students bring with them from home (Boykin et al., 2006; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Tyler, Boykin & Walton, 2006; Tyler et al., 2008).

Once again, this idea points to the crucial need for further exploration of variables (e.g., teacher's level of cultural responsiveness, cultural discontinuity and implicit bias) that possibly mitigates excessive and disparate punitive discipline practices toward ethnic minority males. For instance, educators who are predominately White and female in this country may not be as familiar with interactional patterns that characterize many Black males, for example (Boykin et al., 2006, Tyler et al., 2006; Tyler et al., 2008). This lack of knowledge of a behavior unique to a particular culture may lead to misinterpretations of the behavior presentation from individuals with a diverse cultural background. Yet, teachers, when confronted with what is perceived as student behavioral violations, may feel compelled to address the behavior from a position of power associated with a traditional disciplinary paradigm and not necessarily from a posture of cultural sensitivity. Cultural sensitivity or responsiveness dictates actions that minimize cultural conflicts and promotes responding in a manner that considers behavior interactions that are cultural-specific and not necessarily rule violations (Siwatu & Starker, 2010).

Another rationale may be related to implicit bias (Girvan et al., 2017; Staats, 2015-2016; Staats et al., 2016). Implicit bias has also been explored as a potential contributing factor impacting the disparity in school discipline practices (Girvan et al., 2017; Staats et al., 2016) and may address the disparate findings relating to self-perceived

CR levels among the study participants and their actual discipline practices, notably toward Black male students. Implicit bias is generally defined as the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Operating outside of our conscious awareness, implicit biases are pervasive, can be activated involuntarily, and without awareness or intentional control (Staats et al., 2016; Fenning & Jenkins, 2018). According to this definition, even individuals who would not overtly use racially motivated actions against minority students, such as educators who rate themselves as having higher levels of CR, may do so as a result of influences that are not a part of conscious awareness. Considering that implicit bias can be in operation outside of one's conscious awareness, it may well be a mitigating factor in racially disparate discipline practices, thusly influenced by the perception that ethnic minority male students simply "earn" harsher, more punitive punishment (Smolkowski et al., 2016; Staats, 2015-2016). Prior findings in research have suggested that school staff's perceptions of student behavior problems can be biased and are likely causal factors in ODRs (Girvan et al., 2017; Lau et al., 2004; Smolkowski et al., 2016; Staats, 2015-2016). Therefore, the potential for discriminatory practices among individuals, including the study participants, are not exempt from the influences of implicit bias as it relates to their perception of student behavior (Dyke, 2016; Skiba et al., 2011).

Limitations of this Study

Participant Status and Study Generalizability

In view of these results, limitations should be considered in the interpretation and generalization of the findings. First, the data collected from this study represents a mostly White, female sample of teachers. A study that explores this topic would be more effective if the sample included more teachers from varied cultural, racial and linguistical backgrounds (Cooper, 2002). As a result, this researcher was not able to determine if teachers of color (TOCs) would present a similar or different pattern relating to discipline practices toward students of color primarily, and notably Black male students.

Second, this study utilized a small number of participants within the sample population, which became even smaller when these data were further disaggregated to examine patterns of ODRs by race of the student, teacher and self-ratings of cultural responsiveness. Also, the interpretation based on visual examination of the descriptive statistics and, due to the small sample size, did not permit the calculation of inferential statistics to determine whether statistical significance existed. Due to various factors including staff changes as a result of no longer being employed in the district and the limited number of teachers who agreed to be participants, in part due to data collection during the summer, significantly impeded the actual sample size. The 99 prospective participants who received invitations to participate and whom the researcher hoped would comprise the sample, or at least a larger percentage of this number, were reduced to only 21, or 21% of the teaching staff who actually participated in this study, which is a low overall number overall and may not be a representative sample of teachers in the district.

Creswell (2014) discusses the notion of response bias, which is the effect of those who do not respond on survey estimates, and the subsequent impact on the study outcome (Fowler, 2009). According to Creswell, if those omitted had responded, their responses could have a significantly different result on overall findings (p. 162). Due to having a small sample size, the ability to obtain meaningful results was probably inhibited. Also, it is difficult for the researcher to assert with confidence that the current findings represent the major trend of disparate racial and gender discipline so prevalent in the research literature on this topic, in spite of the participants' self-reporting of higher CR levels. An additional limitation pertains to the setting in which this research took place. The study site was a predominantly middle-class suburban school district, located in the mid-western region of the country (Illinois School Report Card: ISBE Data Library, 2016-2017).

Resultantly, questions relative to this study's findings generalizability to other school settings that are comprised of different demographics are valid. Specifically, the findings of this proposed study may not be replicable within an urban or rural school setting with families of a different social economic status. Also, the findings from this study may not be congruent within school districts where the teaching staff widely varies from this school district's staff. Such examples can include schools with a predominantly minority teaching staff, or schools with a very high racially homogenous student population. Staffing patterns in large urban cities and primarily in inner city sections where the student and families served are largely of color, also tend to have a significantly larger representation of teachers of color. Further, this study, conducted in

the mid-western region of the country, may not readily generalize to other regions of the country. This may be due to demographics that simply vary with the location or region of the country.

Potential Researcher Bias

An additional limitation of this study is that it was conducted and its findings reported by a single researcher. This action limits the opportunity for additional perspectives in the interpretation of data. Also, all individuals have a value system with concurrent attitudes, biases and even prejudices. As such, the personality, life experiences, and worldview of the investigator may bring biases to the data collection and interpretation process and assertions relating to findings and a rationale for outcomes based upon personal bias.

Additionally, within quantitative studies, the researcher is cautioned regarding potential threats to validity. Creswell (2014) asserts that internal validity threats can include experiences of the participants that can potentially be an inhibitor to the researcher regarding the ability to draw accurate inferences from the data (p. 174). One threat of internal validity can be attributed to history - meaning due to the timing or the passing of time through the course of the study, events can occur that may influence the study outcome. In this instance, the failure to engage participants and obtain the online survey results before the end of the school term probably impacted the sample size. The recommendation the researcher could have taken would have been to better modulate the timing of data collection. This action was beyond the control of the researcher in that

approval to conduct the research did not occur in a time frame to permit all procedures to align in order to collect data sooner.

Last, this study used a non-experimental design, therefore no casual conclusions could be drawn using the results as there was no control group to which the findings could be compared (Creswell, 2014, p. 168).

Study Implications

Although the current study outcomes are subject to several limitations discussed above, the current author believes that this study offers a valuable contribution to the research on discipline practices of school educators. There are not comparatively many studies in literature on school discipline that have examined school staff's CR levels cross-referenced with various variables, such as descriptive patterns that focus on understanding teacher race and referral numbers and type, and discipline patterns of teachers based on their race toward students by race and gender (Fowler et al., 2008; Hughes & Cavell, 2010), especially from the teacher's perspective. This researcher asserts that the findings from this current study cannot nor should not be discounted because of sample size. There is merit and validity to the findings in the current study when one considers the high consistency of racial and gender disparity in discipline, toward Black students. Although the sample size is small, the level of presenting disproportionality of ODRs written to Black students, even when accounting for the variance in percentages between total students Black and White population, is quite evident. Many study findings posited that Black students, and notably Black male students receive higher numbers of referrals and more ODRs that are classified as

subjective, compared to their White peers (McFadden et al., 1992; Shaw & Brade, 1990; Skiba et al., 2011).

The “counter” results of the findings from the current research relates to teachers’ CR levels in association with racial and gender discipline. The results from the current study regarding the effects of CR levels among teachers deviated from that which much of the research on CR level posited (Baker et al., 2008; Fowler, et al. 2008; Hughes & Cavell, 2010; Siwatu et al., 2009; Siwatu, & Starker, 2010).

However, as stated previously, areas, e.g., implicit bias: (Fenning & Jenkins, 2018; Girvan et al., 2017; Staats et al., 2016); cultural discontinuity: (Tyler et al., 2006; Tyler, Boykin & Walton, 2006); and cultural incongruency: (Monroe, 2005; Weinstein et al., 2004, as cited by Bradshaw et al., 2010; Tyler et al., 2006), may serve to be mitigating factors that in effect, “override” the positive influence of higher CR levels among teachers. Additionally, the significant seeming incompatibility of teachers’ perceived CR levels and negative discipline practices toward minority students in this study findings may result from a lack in staff’s cultural knowledge which may lead to an excessive response to student misbehavior. As previously stated, lesser classroom management skills and less than positive classroom/school climates (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Epstein, Atkins, Cullinan, Kutash, & Weaver, 2008; Sugai & Horner, 2006, teamed with a lacking in staff/student relationship can create conditions of staff responding to students punitively, from a position of power and not from one of cultural sensitivity in their discipline practices (Siwatu & Starker, 2010; Tyler et al., 2008).

Implications for Practice

The results from this research can be utilized to impact staff's level of cultural sensitivity, knowledge and response through the development of training curriculums in other schools and districts throughout the country (Lustick, 2017; Siwatu, 2011; Weinstein et al., 2003). One significant benefit of CR training is the increase in staff self-awareness to cultural diversity. Trainings can stimulate staff to engage in self-examination of their levels of cultural knowledge, sensitivity and practices relating to working with children from diverse cultural backgrounds, whether racially or linguistically. These training sessions can be designed for public school personnel who work directly with minority students such as teachers, teaching assistants and support staff (Siwatu, 2011; Siwatu et al., 2009; Siwatu et al., 2011). Additionally, educators such as school administrators who make decisions about discipline policy and how discipline is meted out to students, also tend to benefit from increased knowledge on this topic and specifically how these findings can be practically applied. Likewise, educators in general stand to benefit from the study's findings overall. Specific information gathered from this data has the strong potential to be useful in developing alternative discipline practices, e.g., restorative practices (Gregory et al., 2016; Kline, 2016) and empathic discipline (Okonofua & Paunesku, 2016). Information gained will be crucial and key to effecting changes. Knowledge of staff's perception of culturally diverse students (Gregory & Mosely, 2004), beliefs and biases about ethnic minorities (Girvan et al., 2017; Staats, 2015-2016), and how these beliefs may impact the discipline of minority children aids in the development of positive discipline programs. Additionally, the

teachers' discovery of their self-assessed CR levels can be utilized to develop trainings created specifically to address these types of needs among staff. Efforts to increase the levels of cultural sensitivity, cultural knowledge and responsiveness among staff directly benefit those who are recipients of such training (Fowler et al., 2008; Okonofua et al., 2016; Siwatu, 2011).

Proposed Areas of Study for Future Research

Future research specifically aimed at producing findings relating to the beneficial impact of improving school climate and factors that help to establish more positive staff-student relationships should yield higher efficacy rates (Blake et al., 2010; Fowler et al., 2008; Hughes & Cavell, 2010). As public school children increasingly become more diverse, knowledge of cultural differences and how to respond to those differences in positive ways becomes critical. Specifically, the teacher's level of response to various cultural practices and increase in skills to interact and build more positive relationships with diverse students theoretically will positively impact student functioning and overall educational outcomes. Since prior studies collectively have posited the merits of increased knowledge of diverse cultures, developing positive staff-student relationships (Alter et al., 2013; Gregory, Hafen et al., 2016; O'Brennan et al., 2014) and building positive class and school climates (Gregory, Hafen et al., 2016; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Mainhard et al., 2011; Palardy & Rumberger, 2008; Tobin & Vincent, 2011), more evidenced-based research that effectively teaches staff the skills to build, develop and grow in these stated areas is critically needed.

Relative to other minority groups, the need also exists to expand the focus of study to other individuals of color such as Hispanic/Latino and Native American students relating to school discipline practices. While few studies indicate that Latino male students also tend to be a high-targeted demographic group for disproportionate discipline, the research pool is quite limited on discipline practices toward Latino students (Skiba & Horner, 2011; Brown & Di Tillio, 2013). Likewise, the specific variables that are potentially causal factors on discipline such as cultural responsiveness, staff-student relationships, grade level variation, and staff perceptions require a more thorough exploration relating to these minority groups.

Last, a highly intentional, focused area of need is the development of alternative discipline practices, e.g. restorative practices, (Gregory et al., 2016; Kline, 2016) and empathic discipline (McBride, 2016; Okonofua & Paunesku, 2016) that are positive and not punitive in practice. This also includes PBIS supports, which focus on the development of proactive school-wide discipline systems that provide multiple levels of intervention to address behavior (Netzel & Eber, 2003). Further studies examining school-wide PBIS interventions or Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) would be beneficial when these findings are used to support the needs of all students, including those labeled “frequent flyers relating to ODRs.” Districts have begun addressing exclusionary discipline rates and disproportionality with the required implementation of restorative justice practices as required by recent changes in the Illinois School Code with the 2016 enactment of Senate Bill 100. As a result, the Illinois State Board of Education

is making resources available to schools on alternative discipline techniques and culturally responsible practices in teaching (retrieved from <https://www.isbe.net/discipline>).

Summary

This study was meant to dig deeper into the conundrum that is school discipline. Research indicates that disparities exist in the way that Black and White students are disciplined, both objectively, subjectively and in comparatively excessive number of ODRs issued to Black students, notably males (Curran, 2016; Skiba et al., 2011; Vincent et al., 2011).

Literature has consistently revealed a need for change in this area, to negate the long-lasting negative effects of punitive discipline on Black students and notably males (Dyke, 2016; Girvan et al., 2017; McFadden et al., 1992; Skiba et al., 2011). The researcher's questions sought to investigate if teachers self-reported cultural responsiveness levels would result in a mitigating factor within various variables in school discipline. Specifically, the efforts from this research probed to see if the variable of cultural responsiveness would make a difference in the racial and gender disparate practices among teachers in a school district. Ultimately, the results were generally contraindicative to the outcomes the researcher was expecting. In this study, limitations have to be considered, including the lack of experimental design (no control group), small sample size and researcher bias.

It is noteworthy to share that the topic of school discipline relating to racial and gender disproportionality is complex and multi-faceted relating to its creation. Specifically, there tends to be contributing factors additional to CR that "feed"

racial/gender discipline practices, some of which are highlighted in Chapter 2-Literature Review. Variables such as implicit biases (Fenning & Jenkins, 2018; Skiba et al., 2011; Staats, 2015-2016; Staats et al., 2016), racial/cultural incongruence (Tyler et al., 2008; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005), racial stereotyping (Ferguson, 2010), labeling leading to staff perception of students as behaviorally maladaptive (Deschenes, Cuban & Tyack, 2001; Noguera, 1995; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015) and “class misfit” (Alter et al., 2013; Balfanz et al., 2014; Fenning & Rose, 2007), quality of staff-student relationships (Alter et al., 2013; Fowler et al., 2008; Gregory, Hafen et al., 2016) and classroom/school climate (Gregory et al., 2016; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Townsend, 2000; Weinstein et al., 2004) to name some, also impact disparate school discipline.

This researcher firmly believes that actions toward the development and use of alternative practices in lieu of traditional practices will result in monumental reform in discipline practices (Fowler et al., 2008; Okonofua et al., 2016; Siwatu, 2011). This development is crucial and key to effecting the changes in disparate racial and gender discipline that school systems in this nation so desperately require. Knowledge of staff’s perception of culturally diverse students and the need for staff development on the topic, (Gregory & Mosely, 2004), beliefs and biases about ethnic minorities (Staats, 2015-2016) and how these beliefs may impact the discipline of minority children aids in the development of positive discipline programs.

APPENDIX A

KEY TERMS

Disproportionate Student Discipline, Staff Discipline Practices, Suspensions, Expulsion, Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs), Zero Tolerance Policies, Cultural Diversity, Cultural Responsiveness, Staff-Student Relationships, Staff-Student Similarities, Implicit Bias, School/Classroom Climate, Cultural Discontinuity, Cultural Congruency, Labeling Theory, Racial Stereotyping, Minority Male Aggression, Restorative Practices, Empathic Discipline

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

My name is Sharon Perry and I am a doctoral student in school psychology at Loyola University in Chicago. I am interested in exploring through research study, school discipline practices and the potentially influencing factors of cultural responsive levels on staff discipline practices. In efforts to complete my dissertation, I am contacting you to be a part of this study because of your role in working with students and having authority to administer discipline referrals. I am conducting my research under the supervision of my dissertation director, Dr. Pamela Fenning, Professor of Psychology in the School of Education at Loyola University.

I am requesting that you take part in completing an online survey with questions pertaining to cultural awareness, cultural diversity and teaching practices. Additionally, you will be asked to complete a brief, 4-item demographic questionnaire. Your participation in this study may potentially contribute to information that will positively impact discipline disproportionality relating to racial/ethnic and gender demographics.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You will not be penalized in any way should you decline to participate. Responding to the online survey and demographic questionnaire should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete. You will not be identified personally in any written reports of this research project. Procedures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of your responses.

If you would like more information regarding the purpose of this study or if you have an interest in participating, please contact Sharon Perry at sperry5@luc.edu. If you have additional questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the Loyola University Chicago Compliance Office at 773-508-2471.

APPENDIX C

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Dear School District Educator,

You are being asked to take part in a research study conducted by Sharon Perry as part of a Doctoral Dissertation in the field of School Psychology. This research is under the supervision of Dr. Pamela Fenning, Faculty sponsor in the department of Psychology at Loyola University Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because as teachers, you have experience in instruction and relating to students from diverse cultures. Therefore, the information that your unique position enables you to provide is of value relative to what is being explored in this study.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in this research study.

Statement of Consent: By completing the survey/questionnaire, you are agreeing to participate in this research study.

What the study is about:

The purpose of this study is to explore self-reported culturally responsive levels among staff and as the impact on discipline practices among staff. Specifically, the study design entails surveying 109 certified teachers of 3rd through 8th grade students using a self-administered online survey. The survey items address self-perceived levels of cultural responsiveness and diverse students. The survey items ask for staff's views about whether this information impacts instruction, student learning and staff- student relationships. Participants also are asked to complete a 4-item questionnaire that pertains to your years of experience as an educator in this district, whether your experience included teaching diverse students, and your racial and gender affiliation.

Additionally, data will be gathered on discipline referrals issued by participants spanning a six-month period from SWIS, the online system the district uses to collect and store information on discipline referrals. The information viewed from referrals will include race/ethnicity, gender, grade level of students and referral type. This study's purpose is to explore a possible relationship between staff's self-reported levels of cultural responsiveness and their discipline practices, and if race and gender impact discipline practices toward students and specifically minority male students. I hope to be able to contribute to the existing literature on this topic particularly as it relates to minority student populations.

What you will be asked to do:

If you agree to be a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete the following:

- Self-administered Online Survey and Brief Demographic Questionnaire on Survey Monkey.

As a participant, you will be emailed a code that enables you to access the survey and demographic questionnaire. You will be asked to respond on the survey by replying to items on a scale that poses 1 of 7 options (Likert-type scale). The questionnaire consists of 4 items to which you are asked to provide information. Completion of the survey and questionnaire should take no more than 20 minutes. You will have up to 3 weeks to complete the survey and questionnaire.

Risks and benefits:

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study beyond those experienced in everyday life, or risks one takes in daily use of the internet. The potential benefits in participating may not be of direct benefit to you. However, the experience may serve as a catalyst for stimulating your ideas as an educator who works with a diverse population of students.

Additionally, the outcome of this research may be a valuable contribution to the literature on this topic, which potentially aids in improving discipline practices in our public schools by potentially decreasing exclusion and increasing positive educational access to specific student groups.

Confidentiality:

As a study participant, you will be given a code to access the online survey and questionnaire, which will be emailed to you by an IT personnel involved for this purpose. Also, your identity will be coded so that your responses on the survey and questionnaire cannot be connected to you by the Principal Investigator- Sharon Perry, nor by certified colleagues or administrators to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Names of staff will not appear on the survey or questionnaire before or after completion. The PI will have access only to de-identified responses from the survey and questionnaire. Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used.

Additionally, the PI will not have access to names of staff who issue discipline referrals obtained from SWIS records for the stated time period for this study purposes. The participant “referral writers” will be coded by the IT personnel and matched to the coded survey- taker participant and will not be identifiable regarding your name or identity to the PI. Further, the referral data collected relating to the student will not include the student’s name or identification: only the student’s race, gender and grade will be accessible to the PI.

As data is being collected, it will be safeguarded by being stored in an electronic file in database only accessible to the PI. The data will only be used for purpose of this research study.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you are free to decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Also, you are free to withdraw from participation in this study at any time. Once the anonymous survey and questionnaire is completed and submitted, the researcher will be unable to extract anonymous data from the database should the participant wish to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about this survey or study, please contact Sharon Perry: sperry5@luc.edu, or Dr. Pamela Fenning: pfenning@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Loyola University- Office of Research Services: 773-508-2689.

APPENDIX D
ONLINE SURVEY - CRTCS

Cultural Responsive Teaching Competencies Scale

The Cultural Responsive Teaching Competencies Scale- CRTCS is a 45-item self-assessment, developed by Kamau Oginga Siwatu in 2006. The CRTCS has a dual focus: teacher self-efficacy, which 30-items on the Scale utilizes to ascertain teacher's self-reported self- efficacy relating to cultural responsiveness practices. The second emphasis of the Scale is expected outcome of students as a result of teacher cultural response practices and interactions. The Scale devotes 15-items that focuses primarily on expected student outcomes as perceived by teachers based upon their reporting on the Scale. The CRTCS was administered to study participants as an online survey. The purpose for its use was to obtain self-reported data from study participants relating to their perceived status of culturally responsive levels toward all students, and especially culturally diverse students.

Some of the studies conducted on the CRTC to assess internal reliability include the following: Siwatu (2008); Siwatu (2011); Siwatu, Polydore, & Starker (2009); Siwatu & Starker (2010).

Cultural Responsive Teaching Competencies Scale (CRTCS)

Self-Efficacy/Expected Outcome Scale	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Complete v. Agree
1. Adapt instructions to meet the needs of my students.							
2. Obtain information about my students 'academic strengths							
3. Determine whether my students feel comfortable competing with other students							
4. Identify ways how students communicate at home may differ from the school's culture and norms							
5. Implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture							
6. Assess student learning using various types of assessments							
7. Build a sense of trust in my students							
8. Establish positive home-school relations							
9. Use my students' cultural background to help make learning meaningful							
10. Use my students' prior knowledge to help them make sense of new information							
11. Obtain information about my student's academic strengths and weaknesses							
12. Teach students about their culture's contribution to science							
13. Greet English language learners with a phrase in their native language							
14. Design a classroom environment using displays that reflects variety of cultures							
15. Identify ways that standardized test maybe biased against linguistically diverse students							
16. Communicate with parents regarding their child's educational progress							
17. Help students to develop positive relationships with their classmates							
18. Revise instructional material to include better representation of cultural groups							
19. Critically examine the curriculum to determine whether it reinforces negative cultural stereotypes							
20. Design a lesson that shows how of the cultural groups have made use of mathematics.							
21. Model classrooms to enhance English language learners understanding.							
22. Communicate with the parents of English Language Learners regarding their child's achievement.							

Self-Efficacy/Expected Outcome Scale	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Completely Agree
23. Use examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds.							
24. Explain new concepts using examples that are taken from my students' everyday lives.							
25. Obtain information regarding my students' academic interest.							
26. Use the interests of my students to make learning meaningful for them.							
27. Design instruction that matches the academic levels/needs of my students							
28. Develop relationships with my students							
29. Help students feel like important members of the classroom							
30. Learn about the culture of my culturally diverse students to aid in building positive relationships with them							
31. A positive teacher-student relationship can be established by building a sense of trust in my students.							
32. Incorporating a variety of teaching methods will help my students be successful.							
33. Developing a community of learners when my class consists of students from diverse cultural backgrounds will promote positive interactions between students.							
34. Acknowledging the ways that the school culture is different from my students' home culture will minimize the likelihood of discipline problems.							
35. Revising instructional material to include a better representation of the students' cultural group will foster positive self-images.							
36. Providing English language learners with visual aids will enhance their understanding of assignments.							
37. Students will develop an appreciation for their culture when they are taught about the contributions their culture has made over time.							
38. The likelihood of student-teacher misunderstandings decreases when my students' cultural background is understood.							
39. Establishing positive home-school relations will increase parental involvement.							
40. Assessing student learning using a variety of assessment procedures will provide a better picture of what they have learned.							
41. The frequency that students' abilities are didn't misdiagnosed will decrease when their unique							

Self-Efficacy/Expected Outcome Scale	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Completely Agree
cultural differences and biases in assessments are considered.							
42. Students' self-esteem can be enhanced with their cultural background is valued by the teacher.							
43. Helping students from diverse cultural backgrounds succeed in school increase their confidence in their academic ability.							
44. Students' academic achievement will increase when they are provided with an unbiased access to the necessary Learning resources.							
45. When students see themselves in the pictures that are displayed in the classroom, they develop a positive self-identity.							

APPENDIX E
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Information about you:

What grade(s) do you teach?

3rd ___; 4th ___; 5th ___; 6th ___; 7th ___; 8th ___

How many years of teaching experience do you have?

1-5 years ___; 6-10 years ___; 11-15years ___; 16-20 years ___; 21+ years ___

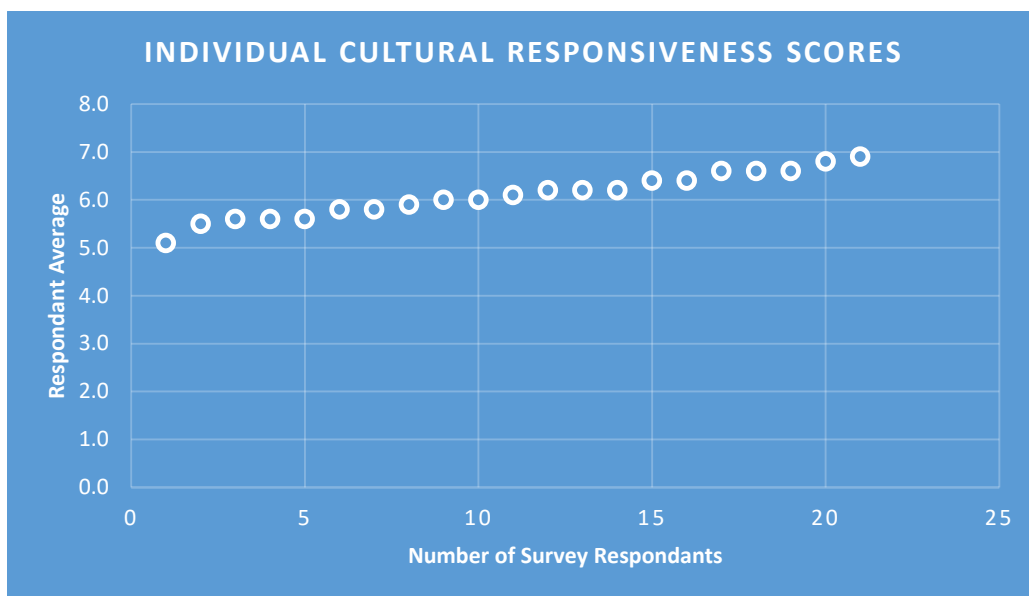
What is your gender? Male Female

What is your race/ethnicity?

- African American (Black)
- Latino (Mexican, Latin American, Puerto Rican)
- White (Caucasian)
- Asian
- Native American
- Bi-Racial/Multiracial

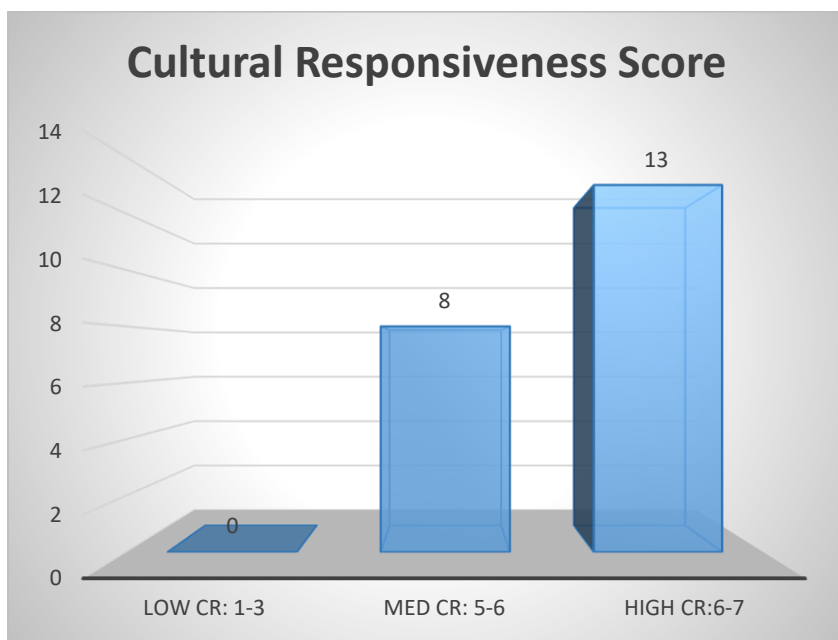
APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANT CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS MEAN SCORES - CRTCS



APPENDIX G

PARTICIPANT CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS RANK - CRTCS



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VITA

Sharon Perry currently resides in Indiana with her husband of 32 years and has two young adult children. Sharon is the seventh child of 13 children from the same parents. She was born in Chicago, attended Chicago Public Schools through high school and the University of Illinois-Champaign/Urbana on scholarships, earning a B.S. degree in Psychology. In 1990, Ms. Perry earned a Masters' Degree in School Psychology, Type 73 Certification within one and a half years from Governors State University in Illinois. In 2016, Ms. Perry pursued a doctoral degree in School Psychology in the School of Education at Loyola University Chicago, completing in January 2020.

Ms. Perry, currently employed in Homewood School District for the past five years, has worked in the field of education over 20 years as a school psychologist working with students and committees to improve the achievement status of minority students and those with educational disabilities. Ms. Perry has also worked in community mental health agencies as an advocate for individuals with developmental disabilities, mental illness and families negatively impacted by poverty.

After the birth of her first child, Ms. Perry left full-time employment and worked as a Contractual School Psychologist. During a nine-year residency in Colorado, she, along with her husband started Oak Tree Ministries – now Oak Tree Leadership, an organization that develops educational training materials, conducts seminars for schools, leadership development for businesses and churches on a national and international level,

counseling and marriage enrichment services. Ms. Perry is passionate about involvement that raises the standard of living for minority and marginalized individuals within our communities.

DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT COMMITTEE

The Doctoral Research Project submitted by Sharon K. Perry has been read and approved by the following committee:

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