THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION AND THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF MIDDLE SCHOOL AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

Michael E. Seckinger, Jr.
Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to investigate the relationship between time assigned to in-school suspension and the math and reading scores on the 2013-2014 Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) for 6th to 8th grade regular education, African American male students. Archival data from school databases were used for this study. Following IRB approval and with permission from each district superintendent, in-school suspension and CRCT score data were collected for 6th to 8th grade regular education, African American male students who had been assigned to 1 or more days of in-school suspension, sampled from 30 middle schools throughout the state of Georgia for a total sample size of 1546 students. Time assigned to in-school suspension, where students guilty of rules violations are temporarily partitioned from their classmates, served as the predictor variable in this research effort. As viewed through the lens of Critical Race Theory and Expectancy Theory, this study centered the statistical analysis on African American middle school male students due to research strongly indicating that students in this subgroup are currently experiencing discipline disproportionalities and growing achievement gaps. Scores on the reading and math CRCT, a collection of standardized tests used to assess grade-level mastery of reading and mathematics learning objectives, served as the criterion variable. Statistical analysis used separate Spearman's rho correlation (ρ) analysis (also referred to as Spearman rank correlation coefficient or Spearman r_s) to determine that there was a statistically significant relationship between the time assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the reading CRCT (r_s = -.123, $p < .0005$) and math CRCT (r_s = -.142, $p < .0005$).

Keywords: Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), exclusionary discipline, out-of-school suspension, in-school suspension, zero-tolerance policies

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List of Abbreviations

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Criterion Reference Competency Test (CRCT)

Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)

Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD)

Female Underprediction Effect (FUE)

Georgia Department of Education (Ga DOE)

Georgia Performance Standards (GPS)

In-school Suspension (ISS)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Learning Disability (LD)

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

National Council of Measurement in Education (NCME)

National Education Association (NEA)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

Out-of-school Suspension (OSS)

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Socio-economic Status (SES)

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Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to investigate the relationship between time assigned to in-school suspension and the math and reading scores on the 2013-2014 Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students. As viewed through the lens of Critical Race Theory and Expectancy Theory, this study centered the statistical analysis on African American middle school male students due to research strongly indicating that students in this subgroup are currently experiencing discipline disproportionalities and growing achievement gaps. In Chapter 1, background information regarding in-school suspension is provided along with the purpose of this research, problems guiding this research, the research questions and hypotheses, and why this research effort can increase the compendium of knowledge concerning in-school suspension and the impact that time assigned to in-school suspension can have on African American student achievement.

Background

When verbal reprimands and detentions fail to adequately address classroom misbehavior, schools for decades have attempted to safeguard the learning environment by employing exclusionary discipline in the form of suspensions and expulsions to remove misbehaving students from the classroom (Allman & Slate, 2011). Unfortunately, the use of exclusionary discipline in schools has been indicative of controversy, disappointment, and condemnation, with extensive research suggesting that exclusionary discipline (a) fails to correct classroom misbehavior (Allman & Slate, 2011; Blomberg, 2004); (b) is used disproportionately and inconsistently for males, minorities, and students with disabilities (Blomberg, 2004; Shah & Maxwell, 2012; Skiba, Horner, Chung, Raush, May, & Tobin, 2011; Sullivan, Klingbeil, & Van

Norman, 2013; Vincent, Sprague, & Tobin, 2012); (c) has adverse impacts on school climate and students' and parents' attitudes toward school (MacNeil & Prater, 2010; Rubin, 2012); (e) is significantly correlated with future dropouts, delinquency, and criminal activity (Allman & Slate, 2011; Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Xitao, 2011); and (f) negatively impacts academic achievement (Allman & Slate, 2011; Blomberg, 2004; Evans, 2011; Kralevich, Slate, Tejeda-Delgado, & Kelsey, 2010; Weathers, 2010).

As a result, in attempting to adapt to complex student behavior, address the growing concerns among school stakeholders and parents, and remain current with the most up-to-date research-backed discipline methods, school administrators are increasingly favoring in-school suspension as the primary discipline consequence for all but the most serious of school violations (Allman & Slate, 2011; Dickinson & Miller, 2006; Evans, 2011). For an increasing number of school administrators, in-school suspension simply deserves its rise in primacy because it provides a fair, non-draconian consequence for violating school rules while ensuring that the deviant student is provided the opportunity to stay current with classroom learning objectives (Allman & Slate, 2011; Dickinson & Miller, 2006; Evans, 2011). The current application of in-school suspension, however, is done with only "scant" research available that specifically targets the use of in-school suspension, especially in regard to any potential impact that in-school suspension may have on academic achievement (Evans, 2011; Weathers, 2010). Furthermore, when research efforts have included in-school suspension, the dominant focus has tended to be on out-of-school suspension, with in-school suspension often receiving only ancillary attention (Evans, 2011). As a result, despite the increasing use of in-school suspension, research has yet to disassociate in-school suspension from the negative impacts provided by the research on other types of exclusionary discipline (Evans, 2011; Weathers, 2010).

A key point of interest in this research effort is the potential impact that time assigned to in-school suspension has on Georgia's sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students' end-of-year reading and math Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT). For sixth to seventh graders, these tests determine class placement and provide school stakeholders quantifiable feedback as to the degree that students have successfully acquired the learning objectives specified in the Georgia Performance Standards (GaDOE). For eighth graders, the math and reading CRCT are additionally considered "high stakes" tests, due to the fact that passing scores on these two tests are a prerequisite for promotion to the ninth grade (Ga DOE).

Guided by the Critical Race Theory and Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964), this research effort further contends that any investigation into in-school suspension should take into consideration the potential for this discipline tool to impact student achievement due to procedural or substantive inequalities associated with gender, race, middle school students' emotional/psychological development, or disability status (Daniels, 2011; Leonardo, 2012; National Education Association [NEA], 2014; Weathers, 2010). As a result, while the number of days that Georgia middle school students are assigned to in-school suspension is statistically important, this research effort is further motivated by evidence in the research indicating the potential for the relationship between exclusionary discipline and student achievement to be moderated by (a) student gender (Sullivan et al., 2013; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008), (b) student race (Butler, Lewis, Morre, & Scott, 2012; Lee et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013), and (c) student disability status (Morrissey, Bohanon, & Fenning, 2010; Wei, Yu, & Shaver, 2014). This research position is especially important in Georgia, with data indicating that males, African American students, and students with

disabilities are assigned to in-school suspension in higher frequencies and for longer durations than their female, White, and non-disabled peers (Civil Rights Data Collection [CRDC], 2014).

In summation, the following factors guided this quantitative, correlational research effort: (a) a clear lack of research focusing on in-school suspension and potential impacts on student achievement (Evans, 2011; Weathers, 2010), (b) the inability of the current research on school discipline to disassociate in-school suspension from the deleterious effects associated with other forms of exclusionary discipline (Evans, 2011), and (c) research indicating that in-school suspension and other types of exclusionary discipline are used disproportionally by gender, race, and disability status, and are therefore potentially exacerbating existing achievement gaps among certain student subgroups (Blomberg, 2004; Shah & Maxwell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013; Vincent et al., 2012).

Problem Statement

The use of in-school suspension in the middle and high schools has increased dramatically due to research indicating that (a) out-of-school suspension is associated with a plethora of negative impacts on student achievement, future classroom behavior, and student motivation (Allman & Slate, 2011; Blomberg, 2004; Vincent et al., 2012); (b) in-school suspension continues to replace the use of out-of-school suspension for the majority of classroom infractions (Allman & Slate, 2011; Morris & Howard, 2003); (c) in-school suspension appears to not create the transportation and supervision issues associated with out-of-school suspension and afterschool-detention (Morris & Howard, 2003); (d) in-school suspension retains the notion of rehabilitation not present in out-of-school suspension (Blomberg, 2004); and (e) research suggests in-school suspension can be more than a "holding-tank" for misbehaving students, by utilizing research-backed methodologies to address the root cause of the misbehavior, and ensure

that classroom learning objectives are achieved (Brown, 2007; Evans, 2011; Theriot & Dupper, 2010).

With that being said, the problem of this study addresses concerns that the increased use of in-school suspension is accompanied by (a) a clear lack of research focusing on in-school suspension and potential impacts on student achievement (Evans, 2011; Weathers, 2010), (b) inability of the current research on school discipline to disassociate in-school suspension from the negative impacts associated with other forms of exclusionary discipline (Evans, 2011), and (c) research indicating that in-school suspension and other types of exclusionary discipline are used disproportionally by gender, race, and disability status, therefore widening achievement gaps among certain student subgroups (Blomberg, 2004; Shah & Maxwell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013; Vincent et al., 2012).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to investigate the relationship between time assigned to in-school suspension and the math and reading scores on the 2013-2014 Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students. Following IRB approval and with permission from each district superintendent, in-school suspension and CRCT score data were collected for 1546 sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students in 30 Georgia middle schools who had been assigned to one or more days of in-school suspension. Time assigned to in-school suspension, where students guilty of rules violations are temporarily partitioned from their classmates, served as the predictor variable in this research effort. As viewed through the lens of Critical Race Theory and Expectancy Theory, this study centered the statistical analysis on sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students to determine the

degree that gender and race moderated the relationship between time assigned to in-school suspension and math and reading scores on the CRCT. Scores on the reading and math CRCT, a collection of standardized tests used to assess grade-level mastery of reading and mathematics learning objectives, served as the criterion variable.

Significance of the Study

Primarily, this study is significant because it seeks to fill a dearth in the available research specifically focusing on in-school suspension. As noted by Evans (2011), research on in-school suspension is "scant," with the great majority of research on exclusionary discipline focused on the impacts associated with out-of-school suspension and expulsion. In the review of literature, only two research efforts were discovered that investigated the potential impact in-school suspension had on academic achievement. Though the sample size was small and only focused on eighth grade students in an urban Atlanta school district, Weathers (2010) found that time assigned to in-school suspension significantly impacted standardized test scores. In a larger study, Kralevich, Slate, Tejeda-Delgado, and Kelsey (2010) found a significant difference between the reading and math achievement scores (as measured using end-of-year standardized tests) of students assigned to in-school suspension as compared to non-suspended peers in grades 7 and 8, but no significant difference for sixth grade students in either subject.

Second, this study seeks to fill a gap in the research in regard to whether in-school suspension can be partially disassociated from the negative impacts discussed in the research for out-of-school suspension. Research on the relationship between out-of-school suspension and academic achievement indicates that this widely used discipline tool tends to precipitate academic failure and induce student dropout (Allman & Slate, 2011; Lee et al., 2011). However, though in-school suspension is increasingly replacing the use of out-of-school suspension, the

research has yet to conclude whether the use of in-school suspension has similar impact on student achievement as out-of-school suspension has (Evans, 2011; Weathers 2010).

Last, this study is significant because it augments the available research indicating that all forms of exclusionary discipline, in-school suspension included, are used disproportionally by gender, race, and disability status, therefore widening achievement gaps among certain student subgroups (Blomberg, 2004; Shah & Maxwell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013; Vincent et al., 2012).

Research Questions

The research questions and hypotheses addressed in this study are the following:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 Reading CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 Math CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students?

Null Hypotheses

$H_0$1: There is no statistically significant correlation between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 Reading CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students.

$H_0$2: There is no statistically significant correlation between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 Math CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students.

Definitions

1. *Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT)* - The Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) were designed to measure how well students acquired the skills and knowledge outlined in Georgia's performance/content standards in reading, English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. As an assessment of academic achievement from the student level to the state level, CRCT results are used yearly to "diagnose individual student strengths and weaknesses as related to the instruction of the state standards, and to gauge the quality of education throughout Georgia" (GaDOE). Taken by all students in grades 1 through 8, the CRCT specifically targets Georgia students' acquisition of learning standards as defined in the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS), which is a formal set of learning standards adopted by Georgia and 43 other states (GaDOE).
2. *Exclusionary Discipline* - Any discipline tool that removes students from their regular academic placement. Most often, exclusionary discipline includes out-of-school suspension, in-school suspension, expulsion, and assignment to an alternative school setting (Evans, 2011: Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010b).
3. *Out-of-School Suspension* - The removal of a student from the school for a period not to exceed ten days (Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002).
4. *In-School Suspension* - In-school suspension encompasses three basic components: (a) students guilty of rules violations are removed from the classroom and their peers to a separate room/structure within the school, (b) in most instances, students assigned to in-school suspension are supervised by a paraprofessional, and (c) students assigned to in-

school suspension are able to complete classroom assignments with only limited assistance from the paraprofessional or classroom teacher (Allman & Slate, 2011).

5. *Zero-Tolerance Policies* - Originally a term coined in the law enforcement community, *zero-tolerance* became a fixture in the educational arena when President Bill Clinton signed the Gun Free Schools Act (1994) into law (Evans, 2011). To address the growing instances of drugs, weapons, and gang-related violence on school grounds, zero-tolerance programs were implemented to provide severe, immediate, and nonnegotiable consequences for rule violators, with little regard for age, gender, and socioeconomic status (Allman & Slate, 2011: Maag, 2012).
6. *Individuals with Disabilities Act (1994)* - Federal legislation that requires states to report yearly on the frequency, infraction type, and discipline tool used, all disaggregated by student race/ethnicity and disability status (i.e., such as the qualification for an Individual Education Plan) (Guardino, 2013).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The focus of this research explored whether a relationship exists between time assigned to in-school suspension and the math and reading scores on the 2013-2014 Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students. In Chapter 1, the articulated rationale for this study focused on (a) the increasing use of in-school suspension as a discipline tool in the absence of significant research backing (Evans, 2011; Weathers, 2010); (b) research indicating that in-school suspension and other types of exclusionary discipline are used disproportionally by gender, race, and disability status, therefore exacerbating achievement gaps among student subgroups (Blomberg, 2004; Shah & Maxwell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013; Vincent et al., 2012); and (c) the idea that in-school suspension has yet to separate itself from the negative impacts provided in the research associated with other types of exclusionary discipline (i.e., out-of-school suspension and expulsion) (Evans, 2011).

To ascertain what the research provides in regard to exclusionary discipline in general and in-school suspension specifically, the targeted research in this chapter is divided into five broad categories: (1) the increasing use of in-school suspension over out-of-school suspension, (2) variances in how in-school suspension programs are structured, (3) the degree to which gender, race, and disability status moderate the relationship between exclusionary discipline and student achievement, (4) the degree to which in-school suspension compares with other exclusionary discipline practices, and (5) the validity and reliability of the Georgia CRCT as a measure of academic achievement.

As discussed in Chapter 1, exclusionary discipline was defined as any discipline tool that removes students from their regular academic placement (Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010). By convention, there are four primary types of exclusionary discipline: expulsion, out-of-school suspension, in-school suspension, and alternative school settings (Evans, 2011). With much of the research on exclusionary discipline failing to distinguish between in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension, the main emphasis of this literature review centers on the use of suspensions in general and on in-school suspension specifically when the particular research study differentiates between out-of-school suspension and in-school suspension. Though this author does not assume that the impacts of in-school suspension are identical to the impacts of other types of exclusionary discipline, especially expulsion and out-of-school suspension, available literature on existing in-school suspension programs and student experiences supports the grouping of in-school suspension with the other types of exclusionary discipline practices (Evans, 2011; Weathers, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

As determined through a review of the literature, the theories of behaviorism and constructivism, V. H. Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory, and the Critical Race Theory all soundly predicate research on the use of in-school suspension. Behaviorist researchers Chin, Dowdy, Jimerson, and Rime (2012) noted that in-school suspension has the capability to address the misbehavior of deviant students so long as there is an "absence of specific behavioral deficits." Alternatively, constructivists such as Chu Chih and Ju Chen (2010) posited that in-school suspension can be a successful discipline tool because it puts the deviant student in the position of "integrating new understandings with past experiences" (p. 65). Put simply, according to noted constructivists, misbehaving students can learn to take ownership of

their deviant classroom behavior, predict the consequences of that deviant behavior, and ultimately adjust their behavior accordingly (Chu Chih & Ju Chen, 2010; Ültanir, 2012).

As presented by Vroom (1964), Expectancy Theory predicts that students will perform a specific behavior if (1) the specific behavior is expected, (2) the specific behavior is within the students' capabilities, (3) opportunities are provided for the students to demonstrate the behavior, and (4) positive reinforcements are provided to the students for their efforts. Malouff and Sims (1996), in researching strategies to prevent student plagiarism, noted that Vroom's Expectancy Theory offers a good framework for investigating student behavior by positing that if a particular behavior is likely to lead to "personally meaningful negative consequences," the student would be less likely to carry it out (p. 58).

However, embedded within the Expectancy Theory is an understanding that expectations placed on students, behavioral or otherwise, need to be applied fairly, enforced consistently, and fully-defined (Malouff & Sims, 1996). Therefore, what can be pulled from Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory is that when school discipline strategies/techniques are ambiguous, are deemed "pointless" by the students, are too difficult for students to follow, and are applied disproportionately or unevenly, they are destined to be ultimately ineffective at best, and injurious at worst (Malouff & Sims, 1996; Vroom, 1964; Weathers, 2010).

In Weathers' (2010) investigation of in-school suspension, Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory was discussed in regard to middle school students' abilities to meet classroom behavior expectations. As posited by Expectancy Theory, motivation to provide non-disruptive classroom behavior stems from the student's expectation that particular behaviors will result in certain outcomes; that positive or negative values can be clearly attributed to the behaviors; and that the student has the mental, physical, and emotional *ability* to successfully perform the

desired behavior (Vroom, 1964; Weathers, 2010). This aspect of Expectancy Theory is especially important for school administrators of middle school adolescent students who are rapidly changing physically and emotionally, and have ethical/moral decision-making paradigms that are underdeveloped, in flux, and easily swayed (National Education Association [NEA], 2014).

Further underpinning for this research effort on in-school suspension centers on the Critical Race Theory. Originating in the 1980s from discourses involving the treatment of different races in the workplace, Critical Race Theory became applicable in the discipline of education in the mid-1990s as racial differences in schooling became more apparent (Leonardo, 2012). According to Leonardo (2012), "Race and racism permeate the entire educational enterprise" and must be considered in implementing school policies, discipline or otherwise (p. 428).

Heilig, Brown, and Brown (2012) discussed Critical Race Theory in their investigation of the subtle ways social studies learning standards in Texas can adequately address one race while marginalizing another. As an interpretative framework, Critical Race Theory "can challenge the dominant ideology of standards, tests, and accountability, including claims about the objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equality of opportunity purportedly embedded in systems of high-stakes testing" (Heilig, Brown, & Brown, 2012, p. 407).

Daniels (2011) noted that "changing demographics, the violence of poverty, and a continually unstable economy have brought inequity to the forefront" and predicate the need to determine how these challenges influence the classroom (p. 211). In regard to school discipline and in-school suspension, the Critical Race Theory emphasizes that substantive or procedural

inequality, in the form of racial, gender, or socioeconomic differences, can significantly impact the interactions of school discipline efforts and must be addressed in pedagogical research efforts (Daniels, 2011).

History of In-School Suspension

The increased use of in-school suspension is fueled by a growing concern among researchers and school administrators that out-of-school suspension is fraught with negative impacts on student motivation, attitude toward school, and academic achievement, while doing little to curtail classroom misbehavior (Blomberg, 2004; Evans, 2011). Defined as "the removal of a student from the school environment for a period not to exceed ten days" (Mendez et al., 2002, p. 259), out-of-school suspension became a primary discipline tool as drugs, gangs, and violence began to permeate American schools (Blomberg, 2004).

Originally, out-of-school suspension was used to (a) enforce zero-tolerance policies, (b) remove disruptive students from the classroom, (c) alert parents to student misbehavior, (d) protect teachers and other students from violent acts, and (e) provide temporary relief for frustrated teachers (Allman & Slate, 2011; Iselin, 2010). According to the research, the decline in popularity, among administrators and researchers, of out-of-school suspension is associated with five major factors.

First, though intended to address the most serious of classroom infractions, schools are facing greater scrutiny and litigation because the most common application of out-of-school suspension is for minor/nonviolent infractions (Blomberg, 2004). Mendez, Knoff, and Ferron (2002) discussed that classroom insubordination was the rationale for the majority of out-of-school suspension referrals in a large school district in Florida. Blomberg (2004) added that in analyzing school districts where out-of-school suspension was the most prevalent discipline

tool, strong correlations between the classroom infraction and the "appropriately weighted punishment" were rare (p. 3).

Second, the literature suggests that out-of-school suspension is ineffective in reducing student misconduct (Allman & Slate, 2011; Blomberg, 2004). Vincent, Sprague, and Tobin (2012) noted in their research effort that when students were removed from the school with no efforts to address educational concerns, students tended to become more alienated and distrust their teachers, and had a greater likelihood of participating in criminal activity. When surveyed, 69% of suspended students felt that the suspension "was of little use," and 32% voiced an expectation that they would be suspended again (Blomberg, 2004, p. 3). Dickinson and Miller (2006) noted that out-of-school suspension not only fails to prevent future class misconduct, it can irreparably damage the suspended student's psyche and challenge that student's feelings of being an accepted member of the school.

Third, research on out-of school suspension highlights a disproportionate use of out-of-school suspension along gender and racial lines (Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010; Skiba et al., 2011). In demographic reviews of the use of out-of-school suspension, Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, and Tobin (2011) and Blomberg (2004) found that African American males were more than twice as likely to receive out-of-school suspension then Caucasian males for the same infraction.

Fourth, in an era that puts tremendous demands on administrators and teachers to increase test scores, out-of-school suspension often removes students who are already struggling academically from much-needed school supports and services (Blomberg, 2004). In researching the relationship between out-of-school suspension and academic achievement, researchers continue to report that this discipline tool may promote greater instances of

academic failure and dropout rates (Allman & Slate, 2011). Lee, Cornell, Gregory, and Xitao (2011) revealed that schools with high suspension rates also have relatively high dropout rates.

Last, in addition to pedagogical and psychological concerns, out-of-school suspension increases the due process workloads of already overworked teachers and school administrators by (a) requiring the teacher to heavily document classroom misbehaviors so as to "build a case" against the deviant student, and (b) forcing school administrators to prepare the necessary documentation and due diligence for the potential litigation and backlash that increasingly come with suspending a student (Dickinson & Miller, 2006).

Increased Use of In-School Suspension

As the frequency of out-of-school suspension declines for all but the most extreme school violations, school administrators are increasingly shifting to in-school suspension programs as their primary discipline model (Allman & Slate, 2011; Dickinson & Miller, 2006). Operantly defined as a discipline tool whereby the student is removed from the classroom and assigned to another room within the same school for a period ranging from part of a day to 3-5 days (Allman & Slate, 2011; Blomberg, 2004), the research indicates several reasons why in-school suspension is increasingly replacing out-of-school suspension.

First, according to Morris and Howard (2003), in-school suspension addresses classroom misbehavior by (a) avoiding the transportation and supervision issues associated with out-of-school suspension and afterschool-detention, (b) avoiding the emotional fervor that comes with the use of corporal punishment, and (c) avoiding the use of out-of-school suspension for minor infractions such as skipping class.

Second, to researchers and administrators, the concept of in-school suspension retains the notion of rehabilitation absent in out-of-school suspension (Blomberg, 2004). Blomberg

(2004) provided case examples of schools using in-school suspension as a rehabilitation effort "so effectively that it changes the discipline climate and suspension rates in their school" (p. 5).

Third, shifting from out-of-school suspension to in-school suspension allows administrators to quickly reduce their out-of-school suspension numbers (Allman & Slate, 2011). Blomberg (2004) found that because out-of-school suspension was often viewed as a "vacation" by its participants, in-school suspension became preferred since at a minimum it removed the participant's personal freedom. In fact, though school administrators have available to them multiple models of in-school suspension to select from, a nationwide analysis of current practices revealed that most in-school suspension programs are indicative of student isolation, only limited contact with classroom teachers, and assignments that must be completed without support or guidance (Allman & Slate, 2011). Dickinson and Miller (2006) found that the primary task with which principals charged their in-school suspension programs was the discipline of deviant students, not notable instruction.

Models of In-School Suspension Programs

Morris and Howard (2003) identified four popular in-school suspension models: punitive, academic, therapeutic, and individual.

The punitive model, most often used in schools today, reflects an administrative belief that excluding the misbehaving student from the classroom serves as a punishment effective in preventing future misbehavior while at the same time protecting the learning environment of the classroom (Morris & Howard, 2003). Characteristics unique to the punitive model include (a) assigned students serve from 2 to 10 days, (b) the in-school suspension room is highly restrictive, with supervised restroom breaks and no talking, and (c) while most schools provide students assigned to in-school suspension the opportunity to complete classroom assignments, some also

require participants to do "punitive work" such as picking up trash or other custodial tasks (Morris & Howard, 2003, p. 157).

While the punitive model is derived from a belief that classroom misbehavior stems from deviant efforts to "cause trouble," the academic model posits that classroom misbehavior is often a result of academic frustration and learning difficulties (Morris & Howard, 2003, p. 157). From this point of view, any discipline tool that incorporates strategies to improve academic skills will also improve classroom behavior (Morris & Howard, 2003). Characteristics of the academic model include (a) students assigned to in-school suspension are accessed in regard to any potential learning difficulties, (b) academic support resources and individual instruction are provided, and (c) the in-school suspension teacher is trained in diagnosing learning difficulties and addressing deficiencies in basic skills (Morris & Howard, 2003; Short, 1988).

In the therapeutic model, classroom misbehavior is perceived to be a result of specific problems the student experiences (Morris & Howard, 2003). According to this model, classroom misbehavior is best addressed by an in-school suspension model that enables students to "own" their mistakes, take responsibility for their actions, and learn specific problem-solving skills (Morris & Howard, 2003). Key features of therapeutic in-school suspension models include (a) specific efforts to improve student self-image, communication skills, and conflict resolution; (b) counseling sessions (individual, peer, and group); (c) available training for in-school suspension teachers and parents; and (d) continuation of the monitoring of student behavior after the student returns to the classroom (Morris & Howard, 2003; Short, 1988).

Some researchers recommend a hybrid or individual in-school suspension model (Sheets, 1996). According to these researchers, the complexity of student misbehavior transcends any one discipline approach and is best addressed by an in-school suspension model that seeks to alter

classroom misbehavior through a combined program that takes into consideration the student's individual needs (Sheets, 1996). As discussed in Sheets (1996), what separates this model from the others is that time is taken to evaluate the individual student to accurately ascertain the proper approach.

Moderating Variables and Exclusionary Discipline

As discussed in Chapter 1, the quantitative methodology used in this research effort seeks to ascertain the degree that student race/ethnicity, gender, and disability status moderate the relationship between middle-school students' time assigned to in-school suspension and their scores on the Georgia math and reading CRCT. However, while these variables do not work independently of one another, in this literature review each variable will be targeted in isolation of the others so as to better understand its relationship to exclusionary discipline and academic achievement.

Exclusionary discipline and gender. To understand what the research states in regard to the degree that gender moderates the relationship between exclusionary discipline and academic achievement, sources selected for this literature review focused on (a) the disproportional use of exclusionary discipline on male students, (b) the way that gender influences the relationship between academic achievement and classroom behavior, (c) gender differences in regard to what motivates students to participate in disruptive classroom behavior, (d) the gender influence on the disproportional use of exclusionary discipline along racial and ethnic lines, and (e) gender differences on standardized test scores.

Despite a large number of research efforts focusing on gender differences in education and how exclusionary discipline rates change across school levels among male and female students (Hay, 2000; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Sullivan et al., 2013), researchers have identified a

number of gaps in the literature including (a) only a small number of studies focusing on Hispanic/Latino students of both genders, (b) a dearth of studies on female students (most research focuses on disproportionalities experienced by Black males), and (c) a scarcity of school-level comparisons of discipline disproportionalities, including middle schools (Skiba et al., 2011).

A multitude of research indicates a significant disproportionality in the use of exclusionary discipline along gender lines, with virtually every study presenting disciplinary data by gender showing that boys are more likely to receive exclusionary discipline than girls (Mendez et al., 2002; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Sullivan et al., 2013; Wallace et al., 2008). Mendez et al. (2002) and Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson (2002) cited research showing male students being suspended at greater than a 4 to 1 ratio to female students.

Further, the overrepresentation of boys receiving exclusionary discipline maintains when student race is included in the analysis (Skiba et al., 2002). At both middle and high school levels, Skiba et al. (2002) discussed "a consistent ordering in the likelihood of suspension from most to least: Black males, White males, Black females, and White females" (p. 320).

Though the vast amount of research highlights that disruptive students are often underperforming academically, especially at the middle school level (Fleming, Harachi, Cortes, Abbott, & Catalano, 2004), the research also indicates that the relationship between academic achievement and classroom behavior is different for males and females (Hay, 2000; Tobin & Sugai, 1999). For example, Tobin and Sugai (1999) discovered that as male students' grade point averages (GPA) decrease, the probability of fighting, harassing, and threats of violence increase. Hay (2000) revealed that achievement in mathematics was a greater indicator for the possibility of receiving exclusionary discipline for boys than for girls. According to Hay, success in

mathematics shows alignment with a male's sense of masculine status and future career potential more than it does for his female peers. As a result, failure in mathematics among male students leads to a greater degree of "disconnectedness" from school, which in turn increases the potential for males to present disruptive behavior in the classroom (Hay, 2002).

With girls outperforming boys in all subjects and grade levels (Duckworth & Seligman 2006) and being outnumbered by over a 4 to 1 ratio by boys in receiving exclusionary discipline (Mendez et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2002), researchers are attempting to ascertain if there are significant gender differences in regard to students' self-control and self-discipline (Duckworth & Seligman 2006). For example, Duckworth and Seligman (2006) analyzed middle school students in regard to the range of behaviors deemed to require self-discipline and found that female students scored significantly higher than boys in resisting impulsivity, inhibiting behavior, and following rules. Furthermore, girls significantly outperformed boys in their ability to sustain classroom effort and focus despite "boredom, fatigue, and innumerable distractions" (p. 199). Thus, the greater ability of girls to maintain positive behavior in the classroom, as discovered by Duckworth and Seligman, can at a minimum partially explain their underrepresentation in exclusionary discipline cases.

While Duckworth and Seligman (2006) cited psychological differences among male and female students that influenced academic achievement and classroom behavior, Kovalik (2008) posited that biological differences among the two genders explains variances in classroom performance and misbehavior among male and female students, and these differences are amplified when schools continue to create "gender-neutral classroom/school environments" (Kovalik, 2008, p. 2). For example, Kovalik (2008) found that (a) male and female students responded differently to teacher tone and volume, (b) classroom seating proximity affected male

students' visual and auditory abilities to remain engaged in the lesson more so than females, and (c) schools did not provide/encourage the necessary "risk-taking" that may be hardwired into the brains of male students.

In regard to the body of research seeking to explain why students participate in disruptive classroom behavior, the great majority of research focuses on males "due to the perception that girls in general pose less risk for behavior problems given their greater academic achievement" (Blake, Butler, Lewis, & Darensbourg, 2010). However, researchers have discovered that adolescents' motivations behind disruptive classroom behavior do differ significantly along gender lines (Hay, 2000). Hay (2000) provided support for Cohen's (1955) masculine self-image hypothesis by noting that while girls present disruptive classroom behavior for reasons more associated with emotional instability and peer rejection, boys' disruptive behavior is more linked to a masculine identity. For example, Hay noted that male students in abusive homes tend to model in the classroom the aggressive behavior present in the household while female students exposed to domestic violence exhibit classroom behavior more indicative of anxiety and depression. Blake et al. (2010), in discussing specific risk factors for exclusionary discipline, revealed that while boys most often reported physical aggression as the reason for being suspended, girls were more likely to report infractions such as gum chewing, defiance, and failure to comply with a prior minor discipline sanction. It must be noted that research conducted by Blake, Butler, Lewis, and Darensbourg (2010) suggested that the classroom behavior of Black females is challenging "traditional standards of femininity" (p. 91). These authors noted that Black females are now more likely to receive exclusionary discipline for fighting and other acts of physical aggression than White and Hispanic females.

Research suggests that student gender may moderate the relationship between race and school discipline (Wallace et al., 2008; Skiba et al., 2002). Thus, the strength of the relationship between race and exclusionary discipline may vary depending on the disruptive students' gender (Wallace et al., 2008; Blake et al., 2011). In researching race, gender, and school discipline, Wallace et al. (2008) and Blake et al. (2011) discovered that the strength of the relationship between exclusionary discipline and race is influenced by the students' gender, with Black males having higher suspension rates than White males, and Black females having higher suspension rates than Hispanic and White females. However, Wallace et al. found a "lack of consistency" in the research on gender, race, and exclusionary discipline, especially with more recent studies reporting that suspension rates among Black females may be trending higher than both White males and White females.

Challenging research that females do not perform as well on standardized tests as males, Scafidi and Bui (2010) found no significant differences by gender in scores on math standardized tests taken nationwide in grades 8, 10, and 12. Downey and Vogt Yuan (2005) discovered that boys had a "modest" advantage in math scores over girls in high school, but only a slight one in middle school. Further, when there were differences between boys' and girls' math scores, these differences tended to be reflected in the upper tail of the performance deviation (Downey & Vogt Yuan, 2005) and were further pronounced when comparing gifted students with students of average ability (Preckel, Goetz, Pekrun, & Klein, 2008).

Strand, Deary, and Smith (2006) reviewed gender differences on verbal, non-verbal, and quantitative standardized test scores for more than 320,000 middle grade students and found that when compared to boys, the mean verbal reasoning scores for girls were significantly higher (2.2 standard points) and nonverbal reasoning scores were slightly higher (.3 standard points).

Though boys scored .7 standard points higher in quantitative reasoning, Strand et al. (2006) were most concerned with the significant differences along gender lines in the standard deviations of scores. For the majority of the tests, boys were overrepresented in both the upper and lower extremes, suggesting that boys made up the lowest and highest performers on standardized tests measuring reasoning (Strand, Deary, & Smith, 2006).

Though questions still remain on whether girls perform as well as boys on math tests, research is clear that girls do outperform boys on standardized tests measuring reading and verbal ability (Downey & Vogt Yuan, 2005), thus forcing researchers to ponder why boys and girls perform better on some standardized tests than others. Among the leading hypotheses presented by researchers is that gender differences in activities outside the classroom influence scores on standardized tests (Downey & Vogt Yuan, 2005). Unlike boys, girls are less likely to engage in extracurricular activities that promote math skills, such as critical thinking and logical analysis, but are more likely to engage in activities that promote reading and writing skills (Downey & Vogt Yuan, 2005). Kling, Noftle, and Robins (2013) evaluated why girls score lower than boys on the SAT despite earning higher grades in the classroom, a pattern they referred to as the female underprediction effect (FUE). According to these researchers, classroom performance conscientiousness mediates the link between gender and underprediction (Kling, Noftle, & Robins, 2013). Thus, the FUE can be at least partially explained by girls being more conscientious in regard to their classroom performance than boys, despite their underperformance on standardized tests (Kling et al., 2013).

Niederle and Vesterlund (2010) presented findings suggesting that the gender gap in regard to the upper extreme scores on math standardized tests was a reflection not of female students' math skills, but of the differential manner in which they approach "competitive test-

taking environments" (Niederle & Vesterlund, 2010, p. 130). These researchers contended that males responded more fluently and aggressively to the inherent incentives and rewards imbedded within competitive standardized tests environments than females (Niederle & Vesterlund, 2010).

Exclusionary discipline and race. As with gender, the research indicates student race may have a significant moderating effect on the relationship between exclusionary discipline and middle school students' academic achievement (Skiba et al., 2011). Therefore, to better understand the relationships between exclusionary discipline, academic achievement, and race, selected research studies for this literature review focused on (a) the disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline on students of certain races/ethnicities, (b) exclusionary discipline and zero-tolerance policies, and (c) exclusionary discipline and the widening achievement gap between student subgroups.

Research has reported the disproportionate application of exclusionary discipline on minority students for more than 25 years (Butler et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2011). In a national study, researchers found that though low-income African American males made up only 17% of nationwide school enrollment, they accounted for 32% of the students that were being suspended (Butler et al., 2012). Skiba et al. (2011) reported that African American students had three times the risk of receiving exclusionary discipline as White students. Mendez and Knoff (2003) discovered through analyzing exclusionary discipline in 142 large, diverse schools in Florida, that almost half of the African American males in the middle schools had been suspended. Shah and Maxwell (2012) revealed that while one in 20 White students were suspended, one in six African American students were suspended, and one in four for African American students with disabilities. Further, while the gap between Black and White suspension rates differs significantly by state (1% difference in Indiana compared to a 21.3% difference in

Illinois), some school districts reported that one out of every two of their African American students is expected to be suspended in a given school year (Shah & Maxwell, 2012).

Skiba et al. (2011) posited that this disproportionality is a product of a disproportionality in the number of office referrals African American students received. In analyzing a database of 364 elementary and middle schools, these researchers noted that African American students were overrepresented in office referrals at all school levels (Skiba et al., 2011). Furthermore, evidence in the research suggests that certain student subgroups receive harsher discipline than their peers. Vincent et al. (2012) highlighted that African American students were 3.75 times more likely than White students to be suspended for minor misbehaviors such as class disruption, non-compliance, simple defiance, and inappropriate language. Furthermore, in middle schools, African American students were more likely than White students to receive exclusionary discipline for bullying, lying, cheating, and tardiness (Vincent et al., 2012).

Guardino (2013) and Noguera (2003) discovered that the disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline was not limited to African Americans, with evidence showing that Native Americans and Hispanics are also over-represented in both office referrals and suspensions. Vincent et al. (2012) noted that when compared to White students, Hispanic students were more likely to be suspended for nonviolent and minor misbehaviors, especially non-compliance. However, Skiba et al. (2011) found that Latino/Hispanic overrepresentation in exclusionary discipline has been inconsistently reported in the research, with some research studies indicating that Latino students may be overrepresented in middle schools but underrepresented in elementary schools. A possible explanation for gaps in the research regarding the disproportional use of exclusionary discipline for certain minority groups is the growing achievement gap between African Americans and students of other races (Skiba et al., 2011). Guided by efforts to

address the achievement gap, the great majority of research in regard to the disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline tends to be aimed at African Americans, especially African American males (Skiba et al., 2011).

In attempting to explain the disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline on minority students, a commonly tested hypothesis is that minority students, especially African American males, simply misbehave more frequently than students of other races (Skiba et al., 2002). Though findings from researchers consistently report a significant relationship between low socioeconomic status and classroom conduct for students at all levels and races (Campbell, Pungello, Miller-Johnson, Burchinal, & Ramey, 2001; Molnar, Cerda, Roberts, & Buka, 2008; Spencer, Kohn, & Woods, 2002), when statistically controlling for socioeconomic status, researchers continue to report evidence that rejects the hypothesis that African Americans exhibit higher frequencies of classroom misbehavior (Blomberg, 2004; Skiba et al., 2002; Wallace, 2008).

After reviewing discipline data for over 11,000 middle-school students, Skiba et al. (2002) discussed that when controlling for socioeconomic status, though boys were consistently cited more frequently than girls for classroom misbehavior, there was no statistical evidence showing that members of one race misbehaved in the classroom more than others. However, while Skiba et al. (2002) did not find that African American students committed more cases of classroom misbehavior, they did find significant variation by race for the specific misbehaviors that prompted the office referrals. For example, while White students most often received exclusionary discipline for vandalism, smoking, and skipping class, African American students were most often cited for disrespect, loitering, and obscene language (Skiba et al., 2002). These results suggest that African American students tend to commit classroom misbehaviors that rely

more on the subjective interpretations of the referrers, and that these subjective interpretations as to the seriousness of the misbehavior may be adversely influenced by teacher/administrator inexperience, cultural "mismatches," biases, and prejudices (Arcia, 2007; Skiba et al., 2002; Vincent et al., 2012).

Without evidence in the research to accept the hypothesis that African American students provide higher frequencies of classroom misbehavior or commit more serious offenses, alternative explanations in the research for the disproportionality tend to center on teachers' lack of cultural competence and racial stereotyping (McFadden & Marsh, 1992; Shah & Maxwell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba, Reynolds, Graham, Sheras, Conoley, & Garcia-Vazquez, 2006; Texas Appleseed, 2007; Townsend, 2000). Skiba et al. (2011) documented evidence that racial stereotypes held by teachers and administrators, oftentimes not self-recognized, contributed to biased interpretations as to which behaviors deserved office referrals. Arcia (2007) found that disproportional use of exclusionary discipline was mitigated in schools with more experienced teachers, suggesting that teacher experience led to a greater understanding of student behavior and higher levels of student achievement.

Townsend (2000) noted that a shortage of African American teachers created significant cultural and socio-economic differences between school faculties and minority students, which led to student disengagement and subsequent misbehavior. For example, school instructional goals and activities selected by non-minority teachers were often unfamiliar to African American students, and types of verbal and nonverbal communications that were culturally normative among African Americans were often deemed as disrespectful or defiant by non-African American teachers (Townsend, 2000).

Research has also indicated that school-level characteristics can at least partially explain disproportionalities in the use of exclusionary discipline (Advancement Project and Civil Rights Project Harvard University, 2000; Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2011; Texas Appleseed, 2007). Texas Appleseed (2007) found that multi-tiered discipline models, adequate teaching training, available community resources, and the use of research-based programs targeting all students were effective in reducing discipline disproportionalities.

Arcia (2007) highlighted that African American students were more likely to be suspended in schools that (a) suspended a large number of non-African American students, (b) had significant academic achievement gaps between African American students and non-African American students, and (c) had educators with low average numbers of years of experience. Watts and Erevelles (2004) noted that discipline disproportionalities can be reduced by schools providing more opportunities for cooperative learning, peer counseling/mediation, and academic interventions.

Originally a term coined in the law enforcement community, *zero-tolerance* became a fixture in the educational arena when President Bill Clinton signed the Gun Free Schools Act (1994) into law (Evans, 2011). To address the growing instances of drugs, weapons, and gang-related violence on school grounds, zero-tolerance programs earned initial support from educators and researchers because they provided severe, immediate, and nonnegotiable consequences for rule violators, with little regard for age, gender, and socioeconomic status (Allman & Slate, 2011; Magg, 2012). However, while the intent of the bill was to increase school safety, the original bill included language that allowed administrators the discretionary freedom to modify the policy, which ultimately led to the expansion of zero-tolerance policies for non-violent offenses (Evans, 2011).

Described as “ambiguous,” “poorly defined,” and “broad,” federal zero-tolerance initiatives made it virtually impossible for school administrators to stay fluent with the current legislation and its mandates so as to “maintain consistency of educational law with school policy and discipline implementation” (Allman & Slate, 2011, p. 4). Iselin (2010) noted that school administrators freely admitted to not understanding zero-tolerance policies and instead relied primarily on student characteristics such as age/grade, gender, prior conduct problems, the seriousness of the threat to school property and/or other students, and whether a parent was home to provide supervision. Furthermore, research indicates that a by-product of adopting zero-tolerance was a sharp increase in suspension rates and a significant expansion of qualifying infractions (Allman & Slate, 2011; Magg, 2012; Suarez, 2010). Allman and Slate (2011) found that after a Chicago school district implemented zero-tolerance initiatives, suspension rates increased by 51% because suspensions were being assigned for tobacco possession, small fights, and minor classroom disturbances. Evans (2011) provided specific cases in which a middle school girl was arrested and removed from the school for having a steak knife in her lunch box and an elementary student suspended for passing out mints the teacher believed looked like drugs.

According to the American Psychological Association’s (2008) report on zero-tolerance, this policy (a) is ineffective in improving school safety and school climate, (b) contradicts what research states in regard to child development and behavior, and (c) simply does not improve student behavior. Furthermore, the increasing number of schools adopting zero-tolerance policies, the expansion of qualifying infractions, and the generous latitudes provided to administrators are not only increasing the number of suspensions in general, but are also

significantly increasing the disproportional use of exclusionary discipline for minority students (Advancement Project and Civil Rights Project Harvard University, 2000; Skiba et al., 2006).

Skiba (2006) and Advancement Project and Civil Rights Project Harvard University (2000) discussed that following zero-tolerance implementation, disproportionality of exclusionary discipline increased for African Americans, Latino students, and students with disabilities. According to the research, this can be explained by data showing that the overrepresentation of minority students, especially African Americans, in exclusionary discipline increases when these punishments are simply used more frequently (Advancement Project and Civil Rights Project Harvard University, 2000; Skiba et al., 2006).

In research on school violence, Ashford, Queen, Algozzine, and Mitchell (2008) cited a common perception among media, stakeholders, and some parents that schools are violent locales where students are in constant danger from violence at the hands of their classmates. As a result, this perception of school violence among policymakers and school stakeholders tends to drive zero-tolerance initiatives, with resultant higher suspension rates (Ashford, Queen, Algozzine, & Mitchell, 2008). However, contrary to those advocating zero-tolerance policies, research indicates that these fears are unfounded and that schools are extremely safe locations, with the great majority of deviant behavior falling into the categories of "noncompliance" or "poor peer interactions" (Ashford et al., 2008, p. 223).

Research indicates that, in and of itself, the use of exclusionary discipline carries with it the risks of lowering student self-esteem, increasing later delinquency and involvement with the juvenile justice system, fostering a sense of rejection, and weakening the school-student bond, which in turn negatively impacts academic achievement (Evans, 2011; Skiba et al., 2011; Wallace et al., 2008). Further, these impacts are exacerbated when exclusionary discipline is

disproportionally applied to a large number of young people, thus at least partially explaining the widening academic gap between sections of the school-age population (Wallace et al., 2008).

Defined as a disparity in academic performance between groups of students, the "achievement gap" is present in grade point averages, standardized test scores, dropout rates, class selections, and college entrance rates (Education Week, 2014). As discussed in Education Week (2014), findings by the National Center for Education Statistics in 2011 show that African American and Hispanic students scored below White students by an average of more than 20 test-score points, or two grade levels, on the NAEP math and reading assessments at fourth and eighth grades (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011). Furthermore, White and Asian American students were at least twice as likely to take classes considered academically rigorous than Black and Hispanic students, with fewer than 10% of Black or Hispanic students enrolled in courses considered to be rigorous (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2009). In regard to the Georgia CRCT (Criterion Referenced Competency Tests), Benson (2010) found that despite the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, an achievement gap remained on all tests between eighth grade African American and White students.

In regard to the mathematics achievement gap, Flores (2013) found that by eighth grade, 91% of African Americans and 87% of Hispanics were considered not proficient in mathematics tests provided by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Further, research indicates that African American students in the 12th grade can be expected to perform as well on math standardized tests as White students in the eighth grade (Flores, 2013).

The complexity of the achievement gap is highlighted by a lack of consensus in the research as to what factor or factors contribute most to the gap between White students and certain minority groups (Williams, 2011). Most research on the achievement gap focuses on the

student's socioeconomic status (Mattison & Aber, 2007; Williams, 2011). The available research did conclude that (a) students from low-SES households develop math skills more slowly than students from higher SES groups (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2009); (b) students' initial reading competence is correlated with parents' literacy levels, number of books in the house, and parent stress levels (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008); and (c) students from low-SES households are slower in acquiring language skills, are slower in letter recognition, have a decreased phonological awareness, and are at a higher risk for developing reading disabilities (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008).

Research also provides evidence that school-based factors may contribute more to SES differences than family factors (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). There is evidence in the research that academic disparities exist because minorities often have less access to highly-qualified and experienced teachers, are targeted with low expectations in the classroom, and are often placed in schools where funding per student is relatively low (Flores, 2013). Mattison and Aber (2007) stated that African American and Latino students' lower mathematics and reading scores had more to do with the school's racial climate and discipline records. Furthermore, that research on achievement gaps between student subgroups overemphasizes specific student and family characteristics such as attitudes towards school, intelligence, and socioeconomic status and underemphasizes the importance of school climate and discipline (Mattison & Aber, 2007). Findings in this research study suggest that positive perceptions of a school's climate in regard to racial fairness are associated with higher achievement and fewer suspensions for both African American and White students (Mattison & Aber, 2007).

According to Mattison and Aber (2007), discipline disproportionalities and racial unfairness impact African American students the most by increasing their sense of alienation,

encouraging them to internally illegitimatize school, and impacting their belief that academic work is worth their effort.

In summation, trends in the research suggest that the relationship between school discipline and the achievement gap may be more significant than the impact of the students' socioeconomic status (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Cope, Korsmo, & Wilkens, 2011; Kinsler, 2013; Mattison & Aber, 2007). According to Cope, Korsmo, and Wilkens (2011), the one prevailing fact is that when students were removed from the classroom due to exclusionary discipline, they increasingly fell behind their peers.

Exclusionary discipline and student disability. In addition to research highlighting the disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline by gender and race/ethnicity, considerable evidence garnered over the last decade indicates that students with disabilities are also overrepresented in the ranks of suspended students (Guardino, 2013; Sullivan et al., 2013). With the intent to highlight discipline proportionalities among students with disabilities, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 required states to report yearly on the frequency, infraction type, and discipline tool used, all disaggregated by student race/ethnicity and disability status (i.e., such as the qualification for an Individual Education Plan) (Guardino, 2013). Despite the implementation of IDEA, however, there is evidence in the research that students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be suspended as students without disabilities, and trends suggest this number is increasing (Barnhart, Franklin, & Alleman, 2008); Civil Rights Data Collection [CRDC], 2014;.

Wagner, Newman, and Cameto (2004) found that since the 1980s, suspension rates for students with Emotional Behavior Disorders (EBD) increased by 13%, with 15% increases for students identified with Other Health Impairments (OHI). The research of Vincent et al. (2012)

reaffirmed the results of the CRDC (2012) and further indicated that not only are disabled students subject to suspension more frequently, but they are also removed from the classroom for longer durations. In addition, students suffering from depression, mental illness, and emotional and behavior disorders tend to be at the highest risk of being suspended (Vincent et al., 2013).

Discipline disproportionalities evident for non-disabled African American, Latino, Native American, and male students in general also apply to students in these subgroups who have been identified as disabled (CRDC, 2012; Guardino, 2013). In a research effort using Chi-Square tests to determine overrepresentation in exclusionary discipline by student race/ethnicity and disability status, Vincent et al. (2012) discovered that while White students with disabilities are underrepresented in all types of exclusionary discipline, Hispanic students are significantly overrepresented in in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions, and African American students are significantly overrepresented in out-of-school suspensions.

In attempting to explain the overrepresentation of students with disabilities in exclusionary discipline, researchers commonly reported that students with disabilities did engage in disruptive classroom behaviors more frequently than non-disabled students (Wei et al., 2014). Wei, Yu, and Shaver (2014) reported that students with emotional disorders (ED), attention deficit/hyperactive disorders (ADD & ADHD), and learning disabilities (LD) had lower parent-reported social skills, slower growth in math and reading skills, and significantly higher risk of presenting externalizing behavior problems such as risk-taking, aggression, and delinquency.

Zhang, Katsiyannis, and Herbst (2004) linked the overrepresentation of suspensions for students with disabilities to zero-tolerance initiatives, and added that students with disabilities often had poor social skills, were impulsive, and were less adept at avoiding detection than their non-disabled peers.

Morrissey, Bohanon, and Fenning (2010) cited the increasing inclusion of special education students in regular education classrooms for the overrepresentation of special needs students in suspensions by noting that teachers with little to no special education training were now encumbered with the task of teaching students with "increased academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs" (p. 27). Furthermore, schools still tend to be "reactive" and "punitive" instead of proactive in regard to their school discipline (Morrissey et al., 2010).

According to Dickinson and Miller (2006), any instruction provided in in-school suspension programs will be insufficient for students already struggling academically due to an identified disability. Further, a lack of "reintegration services" in most in-school suspension programs is partially at fault for the disproportionately high recidivism among special education students, due to special education students rarely receiving the required attention and services necessary to bring them up to date with the learning objectives that were covered in their absences (Dickinson & Miller, 2006).

In-School Suspension/Exclusionary Discipline

Literature in regard to exclusionary discipline in general and in-school suspension specifically will focus on (a) the degree in-school suspension separates itself from the negative impacts associated with out-of-school suspension and expulsion, (b) in-school suspension and school climate, (c) in-school suspension and student/parent attitudes towards school, and (d) miscellaneous student, administrator, and school-level characteristics associated with in-school suspension.

In-school suspension and school climate. Though schools are correctly recognizing that learning objectives cannot be mastered in classrooms that are unsafe, disorderly, and distraction-filled, many schools are overzealous in their efforts to address student misbehavior, with

detrimental impacts on their school's climate (e.g., Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010; Rubin, 2012; Sharkey & Fenning, 2012).

Drewery and Kecskemeti (2010) found that while the duration of time assigned to in-school suspension did impact students' attitudes towards school, the greatest impact was the damage the suspension had on the relationships between the suspended student and his/her teachers. However, Sharkey and Fenning (2012) noted that schools with high suspension rates had a punitive, toxic climate because efforts to teach deviant students alternative behaviors and decision-making paradigms were rare, thus creating a cycle of classroom misbehavior and assignment to in-school suspension.

While Morrison, Anthony, Storino, and Dillon (2001) posited a relationship between the severity of the disciplinary action and "increased socioemotional impairment" (p. 3), Rubin (2012) cited the inability of exclusionary practices such as in-school suspension to be effective because these discipline tools are built upon the principles of compliance and control. When students are subjected to suspension, their independence is ignored, and they in return become disengaged, mentally and academically. According to Rubin (2012), the "denial of autonomy" faced by suspended students brings about feelings of helplessness, isolation, and resistance. These feelings are then expressed in defiance and power struggles with the teacher. Thus, as discussed by Rubin (2012), suspended students will never fully engage in the classroom, build academic competence, feel safe and secure, and exhibit prosocial behaviors. Solutions do not lie with removing students from the classroom, but come from utilizing disciplinary tools that include elements of power sharing, collaboration with the student, and positive reinforcements (Rubin, 2012).

Attitudes and in-school suspension. MacNeil and Prater (2010) found that school administrators and teachers do agree on the validity of in-school suspension yet also found a lack of agreement among these school employees as to the specific violations that deserve in-school suspension. When presented with a specific violation, school administrators more often than teachers labeled the infraction as "minor" or "not a problem" and thus undeserving of suspension (MacNeil & Prater, 2010, p. 5). Morrison et al. (2001) provided similar results in that rarely is there a consensus among school administrators and teachers as to what qualifies as a "suspendable" offense.

In regard to student attitudes towards in-school suspension, when surveyed, students state that (a) suspensions are harsh and are applied too liberally, (b) are applied without supporting evidence, and (c) are ultimately not helpful in preventing future misbehavior (Iselin, 2010). Morrison et al. (2001) found that after suspension, students (a) were more pessimistic regarding their ability to avoid future suspensions, (b) had less concern for fellow classmates, and (c) were more likely to build strong relationships with peers that carried similar negative opinions towards school. However, these researchers also noted that prior to suspension these students reported frequent incidences of severe family discord, failing grade point averages, and higher levels of anger and resentment (Morrison, Anthony, Storino, & Dillon, 2001).

In regard to parent attitudes and in-school suspension, MacNeil and Prater (2010) suggested that parent attitudes in regard to the use of suspensions is multifaceted. First, polls found that many parents carry negative opinions as to how their child's school doles out discipline and that the school administrators were too hesitant to provide, for disobedient students, severe but deserved punishments (MacNeil & Prater, 2010). Further, parents often say that administrators attempting to avoid the use of suspension are actually creating a school

environment more conducive to bullying and other forms of harassment (MacNeil & Prater, 2010).

However, Hemphill and Hargreaves (2009) discussed that disciplinary practices not only negatively impacted a school's climate and its students' sense of safety, but they also had a detrimental impact on the parents of suspended students. They concluded that parents often felt anger and a sense of powerlessness in their child's educational experience because they were excluded from the decision-making process that resulted in their child's suspension (Hemphill & Hargreaves, 2009).

In-School Suspension and Student Achievement

Examining the impact of in-school suspension on 245 African American eighth grade students, Weathers (2010) noted that when compared to students that were not assigned to in-school suspension, students assigned to in-school suspension scored significantly lower in reading, English/language arts, and math. The conclusion was that absence from direct classroom instruction due to in-school suspension had a significant negative impact on students' academic achievement as measured on standardized tests (Weathers, 2010).

Arcia (2006) discovered that suspended students gain significantly less academically when compared to students of similar demographics who were not suspended, though these students did show significantly lower "presuspension" achievements than their unsuspended peers (Arcia, 2006). Anderson, Howard, and Graham (2007) found a significantly inverse relationship between reading achievement and suspensions for middle school students, noting that a significant number of students suspended also had documented reading disabilities. According to Anderson et al. (2007), suspensions are grossly unwarranted for students with

reading disabilities, and they posited the need for literacy-based alternatives to reduce classroom misbehavior.

Dickinson and Miller (2006) revealed that academic achievement is negatively impacted for special education students because, as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, schools do not have to provide educational services to in-school suspended students until the student has served 10 cumulative days.

Waters-Maze (2002) examined whether there was a statistical relationship between school suspension and students' scores on the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) and found statistically significant differences existed between students that served 1 to 10 days in suspension and those that served more than 10 days in suspension. Though the research effort was inconclusive in establishing the impact that duration has on recidivism, Jackson's (2006) dissertation found that shorter terms of in-school suspension were not effective in reducing classroom misbehavior. With that being said, more research specifically focusing on in-school suspension durations is needed, especially for school districts seeking to reduce the number of days students serve during an in-school suspension assignment (Jackson, 2006).

Vincent et al. (2012) indicated that African American and Hispanic students were not only disproportionally represented in exclusionary discipline cases, but they also tended to be suspended for relatively more days.

In addition to concerns regarding time served in suspension, researchers have also scrutinized the quality of instruction available to suspended students, especially students assigned to in-school suspension (Dickinson & Miller, 2006). While one school district was identified for providing its students assigned to in-school suspension up to 6 hours of instruction per day, most districts limited resources to academic self-paced "packets" that normally

contained missed assignments from class (Dickinson & Miller, 2006). Furthermore, when academic help was needed, research indicated that it was rare for the in-school suspension instructor/monitor to be a certified teacher (Dickinson & Miller, 2006).

Alternatives to in-school suspension. Trends in the research suggest that both researchers and school administrators are becoming increasingly skeptical that in-school suspension can serve as a viable alternative to out-of-school suspension (Smith, Bicard, Bicard, & Casey, 2012). Furthermore, it appears that any form of suspension is generally "unsuccessful in curbing maladaptive behaviors" (Smith et al., 2012, p. 174) and school administrators tend to rely on in-school suspension as a tool that only serves to remove the "problematic students" from the classroom (p. 174). These researchers suggested that positive reinforcers and preventive measures were more effective, especially with research showing that over half of the students in a given in-school suspension room were repeat offenders (Smith et al., 2012).

The increasing use of disciplinary alternative education programs, commonly called "alternative schools," is also prompting researchers and practitioners to rethink their position on the viability of in-school suspensions (Allman & Slate, 2011). On the surface, disciplinary alternative schools allow administrators to provide a consequence for severe offenses such as terroristic threats, drug-related infractions, and bringing weapons to school, but still allow the student to remain in an educational environment. Further, the student also receives counseling, social work intervention, and oftentimes a school schedule that is altered to fit specific individual/behavioral needs (Allman & Slate, 2011).

Though alternative schools can be costly, can have difficulty in hiring and retaining experienced teachers, and often consist of students with chronic behavior problems and violent tendencies, supporters point out that the success of these schools is tied to the fact that, unlike

in-school suspension, this is a disciplinary tool that does not remove the student from the educational setting (Allman & Slate, 2011).

Morrissey et al. (2010) concluded that in-school suspension and other forms of exclusionary disciplinary were ultimately reactionary to problems after they occur and did little to prevent future classroom misbehavior. These researchers posited the need for schools to be proactive in addressing student misbehavior through positive behavior supports (PBS) (Morrissey et al., 2010). Instead of an in-school suspension program that removes students from the classroom, these researchers suggested a structured PBS program that includes (a) representative teams composed of students, teachers, and administrators, (b) systematic direct teaching of specific behaviors, and (c) using data to monitor progress and adjust interventions (Morrissey et al., 2010).

In a similar effort, Browne-Dianis (2011) provided evidence that schools are beginning to retreat from zero-tolerance policies and revise their discipline codes to include various forms of positive support and interventions. Gonzalez (2012) held that exclusionary discipline practices do little to address classroom misbehavior and set in motion a "pipeline" from school to prison. This researcher suggested the use of school-based restorative justice programs that engages all parties (students, parents, teachers, and administrators) in conflict resolution, the addressing of any academic needs, and the evaluation of any impacts on school safety (Gonzalez, 2012). Drewery and Kecskemeti (2010) examined suspension reduction initiatives involving the use of restorative practices. Of key interest is the quality of the relationship the teacher has with the student, because when relationship building and conflict resolution approaches are utilized, friction between students and their teachers was greatly reduced (Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010).

Last, Iselin (2010) found that (a) teacher training in cultural responsiveness and ethnicity sensitivity reduces suspension rates by reducing teacher-student conflicts, (b) the use of profiling students is ineffective, (c) school-wide efforts to reinforce positive behaviors do reduce suspensions, and (d) suspension levels are reduced when teachers and administrators refrain from lecturing, verbal reprimanding, ridiculing, and shaming the students.

Student, school, and administrator characteristics and suspensions. Iselin (2010) discovered, in a nationwide review of disciplinary practices, that (a) schools with low suspension rates had high attendance, (b) schools with higher suspension rates, when compared to schools with lower suspension rates, did not differ in number of enrolled students, gender ratios, and teaching experience, (c) schools with low suspensions were rated higher in school appearance, (d) schools with high suspensions had more fights, and (e) schools with prior high rates of suspensions were likely to have high rates in future years.

In regard to student characteristics, research indicates that (a) males are more likely to be suspended, (b) suspended students are less likely to have adequate parental supervision at home, (c) students with emotional or learning disabilities, especially students diagnosed with ADHD, are more likely to be suspended than nondisabled students, and (d) higher suspension percentages exist among African Americans, students who have been retained, students whose parents carry low opinions of the school, and students who change school often (Iselin, 2010).

In researching the characteristics of administrators who prescribed suspensions, evidence in the research suggests that school administrators who suspended frequently tended to carry favorable views of suspension and were often seen "yelling at students" (Iselin, 2010). Conversely, administrators with relatively low suspension rates (a) expressed a desire to reduce the number of suspensions in their school, (b) were actively examining alternatives to

suspension, and (c) tended to hire teachers with a variety of instructional methods and who were able to build classrooms with high student engagement (Iselin, 2010).

Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT)

The Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) were designed to measure how well students master Georgia's performance/content standards in the subjects of reading, English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. As an assessment of academic achievement from the student level to the state level, CRCT results are used yearly to "diagnose individual student strengths and weaknesses as related to the instruction of the state standards, and to gauge the quality of education throughout Georgia" (Georgia Department of Education [GaDOE]).

Taken by all students in grades 1-8, the CRCT specifically targets Georgia students' acquisition of learning standards as defined in the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS), which is a formal set of learning standards adopted by Georgia and 43 other states (GaDOE). Upon completion of tests in April/May of each school-year, the testing contractor provides state-level, district-level, and school-level disaggregated reports of student performance information in each subject area for the following categories: all students, students in subcategories that include Section 504 and limited English proficient, special education students (subcategories include primary classification/disability--i.e., visual impairment, learning disabilities, etc.), gender, and race/ethnicity (GaDOE).

To ensure CRCT reliability and validity, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) yearly convenes a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of six nationally-recognized experts in the field of educational measurement. The TAC is tasked with providing the state with impartial, expert advice on test development, scoring, and the statistical reporting process. In building the

CRCT tests, test-makers employ statistical procedures similar to other large-scale assessment programs like the ACT and SAT to ensure that CRCT assessments are properly statistically equated, meaning that multiple forms of each test do not differ in content coverage and difficulty.

Upon completion of tests development, each CRCT test then undergoes a comprehensive review process conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (US ED) known as Peer Review. During the Peer Review, the CRCT is again evaluated in regard to standards alignment and measurement instruments (GaDOE).

In a response to the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* asking if the CRCT is a valid measurement of student achievement, the GaDOE responded that,

> Working within a common metric such as the theta scale and implementing statistical procedures such as equating allows us to attribute, with confidence, any changes in student performance to student achievement and not as a by-product of the test form that was administered. The passing score always has the same meaning from administration to administration. (Downey, 2012)

There is evidence in the research supporting the Georgia CRCT as a measure of student achievement. Williams (2009) used the Georgia CRCT in ascertaining the relationship between teacher perceptions of principal leadership and student achievement. Weathers (2010) employed the CRCT as a measure of student achievement of eighth grade African American students who had been suspended, while Benson (2010) used math CRCT scores in an investigation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) implementation and impacts on the achievement gap between African American and White students. Last, Randal and Engelhard

(2010) examined the reading CRCT in an effort to formulate a model to ascertain measurement invariance within assessments that utilize dichotomous data.

In regard to the CRCT results for middle grades math and reading, in 2012-2013, 96% of all sixth grade students, 94.7% of seventh grade students, and 96.8% of eighth grade students met or exceeded the standard on the reading CRCT (GaDOE). Conversely, 82.7% of sixth grade students, 89.9% of seventh grade students, and 83% of eighth grades students met or exceeded the standard on the math CRCT (GaDOE).

Disaggregated results provided by the 2013-2014 Report Card for Georgia K-12 schools reveal that for students in grades 6 to 8, (a) females continue, albeit slightly, to outperform males on the reading and math CRCT; (b) students without disabilities continue to significantly outperform students with disabilities, especially in mathematics (in eighth grade mathematics, 37% of students with disabilities failed to meet the standard compared to only 11% of students with no disabilities); and (c) White students continue to significantly outperform both Black and Hispanic students on both the reading and math CRCT, with the percentage of Black students not meeting the standard more than twice the percentage of White students (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2014).

Summary

Of key interest in this literature review was the degree in which the recent literature distinguishes the impacts of in-school suspension from other forms of exclusionary discipline, especially out-of-school suspension. Complicating this endeavor is a sheer lack of research investigating in-school suspension in isolation from the other types of exclusionary discipline (Evans, 2011). Furthermore, research efforts that did explore in-school suspension were limited to discussions on specific in-school suspension programs, types of infractions that warrant in-

school suspension, and the demographic profiles of suspended students (Morrison et al., 2001). Only two research efforts were discovered that investigated the potential impact that in-school suspension had on academic achievement. Evans (2011) noted that research on in-school suspension is simply "scant" and "the history of in-school suspension is being written in our current educational climate" (p. 39).

In addition to a lack of research on in-school suspension, the majority of the focus on exclusionary discipline is on out-of-school suspension, with in-school suspension given only ancillary attention (Evans, 2011). As a result, the research has yet to distinguish in-school suspension from the negative impacts associated with the other types of exclusionary discipline, including (a) the inability to correct classroom misbehavior (Allman & Slate, 2011; Blomberg, 2004); (b) the disproportionate and inconsistent application for males, minorities, and students with disabilities (Blomberg, 2004; Shah & Maxwell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011; Sullivan et al., 2013; Vincent et al., 2012); (c) the adverse impacts on school climate and students' and parents' attitudes towards school (MacNeil & Prater, 2010; Rubin, 2012); (e) the significant correlations with future dropouts, delinquency, and criminal activity (Allman & Slate, 2011; Lee et al., 2011); and (f) the negative impacts on academic achievement (Allman & Slate, 2011; Blomberg, 2004; Evans, 2011;Weathers, 2010).

With that being said, the research does hint at the potential for in-school suspension to be an effective discipline tool in the place of other types of exclusionary discipline (Brown, 2007; Evans, 2011; Theriot & Dupper, 2010). However, this potential may be conditional on whether the particular in-school suspension program provides services that utilize research-backed methodologies to address the root cause of the misbehavior, instead of serving only as a "holding tank" for deviant students (Evans, 2011, p. 38). Nevertheless, the "scant" research on in-school

suspension, especially concerning the degree and direction to which in-school suspension is separate from the deleterious effects associated with the other types of exclusionary discipline, highly suggests the need for further research efforts on the subject (Evans, 2011, p. 39; Weathers, 2010).

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Design

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to investigate the relationship between time assigned to in-school suspension and the math and reading scores on the 2013-2014 Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students. This quantitative correlational research design utilized one criterion variable at a time in the statistical analysis, the participants' 2013-2014 math and reading scores on the Georgia CRCT, while the predictor variable was the number of days that the student was assigned to in-school suspension. Correlational studies determine the direction of the relationship of the variables, whether positive, negative, or no relationship (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). This research design was selected because it attempted to evaluate the relationship between the predictor variable (time assigned to in-school suspension) and the criterion variable (CRCT score) in a situation in which the researcher had no influence on the above variables (Gall et al., 2007).

The primary objective of any quantitative research is to accurately, factually, and systematically describe the characteristics of a chosen population or area of interest (Creswell, 2005). It is hoped that through the collection of quantitative data in this study, the descriptions made through the quantitative analysis will help guide school stakeholders in developing discipline decisions in the future. The statistical procedure used to test these hypotheses was the Spearman's rho (ρ) correlation analysis (also referred to as Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient or Spearman r_s). Spearman's rho is well-suited to answer the research questions in this study due to (a) Spearman's rho's frequent application in non-experimental research to describe the strength of the linear relationship between two quantitative variables, (b)

Spearman's rho providing a standardized (or unit-free) index of the strength of the relationship between the variables of study, (c) Spearman's rho being an appropriate nonparametric measure of association for data that fails to meet the required assumptions associated with parametric measures such as the Pearson *r*, and (d) the discovery of a correlation using Spearman's rho, while not sufficient to declare a causal relationship between the two variables, allowing the researcher to report the possible existence of a causal connection (Warner, 2013).

Research Questions

The research questions and hypotheses addressed in this study are the following:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 Reading CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 Math CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students?

Null Hypotheses

$H_0$1: There is no statistically significant correlation between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 Reading CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students.

$H_0$2: There is no statistically significant correlation between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 Math CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students.

Participants

Archival data from school databases was used in this study. The participants of this study included 1546 African American male students in grades 6-8 from 30 schools in the state of Georgia. In building the sample for this study, the researcher communicated by letter (see Appendix A) to 180 Georgia county and city school district superintendents seeking permission to have access to in-school suspension data and 2013-2014 reading and math CRCT scale scores for all sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students who had been assigned to in-school suspension for a minimum of one complete school day. Four district superintendents replied directly to the letter, allowing the researcher permission to access the necessary data, and one school district required the researcher to complete an application procedure for a district-level IRB, whereby permission to access the required data was determined by that school district's research and development department. In total, among the 180 Georgia school districts in which permission to access the required data was sought, the researcher was granted access to a total of five school districts and 30 middle schools serving regular education, African American male students in grades 6 to 8.

In regard to sampling type, the goal prior to petitioning each of the 180 Georgia school districts for access to the required data was to utilize random sampling to build a desired sample size of 300 or more students. As discussed in Howell (2011), random sampling would have ensured that every African American male student in grades 6 to 8 within the population had an equal chance of being included in the research effort, that efforts were made to reduce the potential for research bias, and that the results of the study could be generalized. Furthermore, by separating participating schools using urban, suburban, and rural classifications, the researcher would have had greater confidence that the random sample would be representative of the entire

population (Warner, 2013). Unfortunately, the small number of school districts that approved the researcher's data request necessitated the need to utilize convenience sampling. Limitations of this study associated with convenience sampling will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

The power of this study, defined as the probability of this research effort not committing a Type II error (accepting a null hypothesis that is actually false), is increased when sample size (n), significance level (α), and effect size increase. As a general rule of thumb, the minimum power of a study necessary to reject a false null hypothesis would be equal to 80% (Power and Precision, 2010). The effect size is a measurement of the strength of the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables in the analysis (Cohen, 1988). According to Creswell (2005), effect size is applied to determine "the practical strength of the conclusions about the relationship among variables" (p. 186) for the results of the study to be generalizable to a larger population. In most instances, the effect size of the study can be divided into three different categories: small (.2), medium (.5), and large (.8) (Cohen, 1988). The level of significance for this research effort is set to an alpha equal to a 5% level of significance, which is standard for statistical significance (Warner, 2013). Therefore, with a power of .80 (80%), an effect size of .5 (medium), and a probability of .05, the sample size of 1546 African American males in grades 6 to 8 exceeded the required minimums for correlational research in educational contexts (Gall et al., 2007; Warner, 2013).

Setting

The setting of this study includes 30 Georgia middle schools serving sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students among five different school districts in the state of Georgia. In order for a given school to qualify for this study, it must (a) utilize in-school suspension, (b) serve students in grades 6 to 8, and (c) not be a Georgia state chartered school,

commission charter school, Department of Juvenile Justice school, or other alternative-type school.

Upon the identification of the schools that would be used in this study, the researcher contacted the principal of each selected middle school to discuss the gathering of the data. It was communicated to the principal that the results of pilot trials indicated that an expected time allotment of 1.5 hours was required to gather sufficient data and that the researcher was willing to (a) travel to the school to retrieve the necessary data directly from the school's database or (b) compensate the school for expenses incurred through a member of the school's faculty or staff retrieving the data. All participating school districts/schools opted to have a district or school administrator retrieve the necessary data and forward the data to the researcher via email. Furthermore, in an effort to ascertain the prevailing in-school suspension model used in the sample schools (e.g. punitive, academic, therapeutic, or hybrid), participating school principals were questioned as to the degree of interventions, inventories, or services provided by their in-school suspension program. Given the information provided by the principals, the "punitive" model of in-school suspension, as defined in Whisman and Hammer (2014), typifies best the in-school suspension model used in the participating schools.

Instrumentation

Archival data from school databases was the source of the data to be analyzed for this correlational study. Reading and math CRCT scores for 2013-2014 for all students were available to Georgia schools by June, 2014, and were stored at each school in cumulative folders kept on file for every student. Discipline data in regard to in-school suspension were also maintained at each school to include the assigned student's personal information, reason for suspension, duration of suspension, and history of previous disciplinary actions. For the purpose

of data collection, whether collected directly by the researcher or by a member of the participating school's faculty/staff, a data collection sheet (see Appendix C) was constructed to document the required data for each participant in the study. As discussed on the data collection instrument, to protect the student's identity, the instrument assigned each participant a nondescript numeric code; identifiable information such as student name, age, social-security number, or other school identification labels was not recorded.

In regard to the criterion variable, 2013-2014 math and reading scores on the Georgia CRCT, the purpose of the CRCT is to assess how well students achieved the learning objectives outlined in the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) curriculum. The test is required for all students in first through eighth grades in the subjects of reading, English/language arts, and math. In grades 3-8, students are additionally tested in the subjects of science and social studies. Each test features 50 to 70 GPS content-related questions in a multiple-choice format. Raw scores are converted to scale scores to indicate performance levels. Three areas of performance are used: Does Not Meet Expectations (below 800), Meets Expectations (800-849), and Exceeds Expectations (850 or above). In this study, the math and reading CRCT scores for each participant were not combined to form a composite score for purposes of the statistical analysis. For each African American male student in grades 6 to 8 that had been assigned one or more days to in-school suspension, a separate Spearman correlation analysis was conducted for each reading and math CRCT scale test score. The scale scores (values ranging from 650 to 920 for reading CRCT and 650 to 950 for math CRCT) were derived by converting the total number of questions correct (raw score) to a defined CRCT scale for that content area and grade. Since scale scores are equivalent across multiple test forms within the same grade and subject, it is

understood that students with the same scale score on a given CRCT test demonstrate similar understanding of that subject's learning objectives (GaDOE).

According to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), content validity of the CRCT is evidence in the process used in the development of the testing instrument. Specifically, the CRCT tests are a product of a "test development cycle" that includes committees composed entirely of educators who (a) review the GPS and determine the items to be on the tests, (b) determine how each item is to be scored and weighted, (c) determine the overall organization of the test and the distributions of each area, and (d) review the test documentation for error and bias following field tests. In addition, the GaDOE has conducted external and internal studies against the GPS and other "similar CRCT measures."

According to the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (APA, 1999), reliability measures provide evidence that a measuring instrument such as the CRCT would provide similar scores on repeated attempts of the tests. Considered the industry standard, reliability of the CRCT is provided by two measures: Cronbach's alpha and the standard error of measurement (SEM) (GaDOE). Cronbach's alpha is an index of internal consistency reliability that assesses the degree to which test responses remain consistent across multiple measures of the same concept (Warner, 2013). This means that as Cronbach's alpha values increase, the fraction of a test score that can be attributed to error decreases (Warner, 2013). Cronbach's alpha values for the reading and math CRCT are between .87 and .92 (small differences among grades and subjects), which indicates relatively high internal consistency (Warner, 2013).

To determine the effect of measurement error on a student's score, the standard error of measurement (SEM) must be calculated (GaDOE). While Cronbach's alpha is used to determine the internal consistency of the CRCT test questions, the SEM is a measure of how consistent the

CRCT remains if one student took the test multiple times. As SEM increases, the reliability of the test decreases (GaDOE). The SEM values for the CRCT fall between 6.69 and 11.64 (small differences among subjects and grade levels), well within acceptable confidence levels as defined by the National Council of Measurement in Education (NCME) (GaDOE).

Procedures

After successfully completing Liberty University's Internal Review Board (IRB) procedures (see Appendix C for Liberty IRB approval), the researcher communicated by letter (see Appendix A) to 180 Georgia county and city school district superintendents seeking permission to have access to in-school suspension data and 2013-2014 reading and math CRCT scores for all sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students who had been assigned to in-school suspension for a minimum of one complete school day. As noted in previous sections, archival data from school databases were used in this study.

Upon the identification of the participating districts, individual school principals were contacted via letter (see Appendix B) to discuss the gathering of the data. It was communicated to the principal that an expected time allotment of 1.5 hours was required to gather the sufficient data and that the researcher was willing to (a) travel to the school to retrieve the necessary data directly from the school's database using the data collection instrument in Appendix C or (b) provide the school the data collection instrument along with a self-addressed return envelope for a school administrator to complete and return. Once received, data for each participant were saved in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and then analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 22.0 (SPSS) for Windows. All electronic data collected were stored on the researcher's home computer under password protection, and physical copies were stored in a file cabinet under lock and key to ensure confidentiality of the data gathered.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to investigate the relationship between time assigned to in-school suspension and the math and reading scores on the 2013-2014 Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) for sixth to eighth grade African American male students. This quantitative correlational research design utilized one criterion variable, the participant's 2013-2014 math and reading scores on the Georgia CRCT while the predictor variable was the number of days that the student was assigned to in-school suspension.

The statistical procedure used to test the hypotheses was the Spearman's rho correlation analysis (also referred to as Spearman r_s). Used to describe the strength of a relationship between two variables, Spearman r_s has values between -1.00 and +1.00 (Warner, 2013). Positive r_s values indicate a positive correlation, in this case as time assigned to in-school suspension increases, so do scores on the math and reading CRCT tests. Conversely, negative r_s values indicate a negative correlation whereby the increase of one variable brings about the decrease of the other. Spearman r_s values approaching 0 indicate that no linear relationship exists between the two variables (Warner, 2013). The strength of the relationship between the two variables of study is determined by how close the r_s values approach -1.00 or +1.00 (Warner, 2013). Only when the relationship between two variables is perfectly linear (r_s = -1.00 or +1.00) can exact statements be made regarding how the value of one variable is affected by the change in the other (Warner, 2013). However, because "perfect linear relationships are rarely seen in real data," the researcher can make approximate statements regarding the strength of the relationship (Warner, 2013, p. 264). According to Warner (2013), r_s values approaching -.75 or +.75 indicate a strong negative or positive correlation while values approaching -.25 or +.25 indicate a weak negative or positive correlation.

With the data not meeting the assumptions of normality, bivariate normality, and, homoscedasticity, the researcher had four options for the bivariate linear correlation analysis: (1) proceed with the commonly utilized Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson *r*) and rely on its "robustness" with non-normal data, (2) attempt nonlinear transformations to bring about greater degrees of normality, (3) attempt resampling approaches, or (4) utilize the nonparametric Spearman r_s (Bishara & Hittner, 2012). While substantial differences exist among researchers regarding the "robustness" of Pearson *r*, Bishara and Hittner (2012) indicated that there is a clear consensus in the literature that the nonparametric Spearman r_s is "valid" when parametric assumptions such as normality are violated. A meta-analysis found multiple studies with Spearman r_s exceeding Pearson's *r* in power across a range of mixed-normal and non-normal distributions (Bishara & Hittner, 2012). Thus, according to the available literature, the Spearman r_s presents the researcher a viable option for bivariate correlational analysis due to its ability to (a) describe the strength of the linear relationship between two quantitative variables, (b) provide a standardized (or unit-free) index of the strength of the relationship between the variables of study, and (c) analyze data that fail to meet the required assumptions associated with parametric measures, and while not sufficient to declare a causal relationship between the two variables, it does allow the researcher to report the possible existence of a causal connection (Bishara & Hittner, 2012; Warner, 2013).

Prior to beginning the Spearman r_s correlation analysis, the data required screening for violations of assumptions. The first assumptions regarded whether the data included two variables that can be measured on a continuous and/or ordinal scale and whether the data reflected paired observations.

Last, in order for a Spearman r_s to provide an accurate determination of the strength between two quantitative variables, there must be a monotonic relationship between the two variables being analyzed. A monotonic relationship is one that reflects one of the following: (a) as one variable increases, the other variable also increases, or (b) as one variable increases, the value of the other variable decreases (Howell, 2011). To determine evidence of a monotonic relationship, bivariate scatterplots of the two variables were visually inspected.

Following assumptions testing and descriptive analysis, the Spearman r_s test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between time assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 reading CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students. Using this test, the researcher was provided with a correlation coefficient, which allowed the researcher to determine the strength of the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables. The Spearman r_s correlation analysis was then repeated separately for time assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 math CRCT so as to examine each CRCT test individually. All statistical tests were conducted at the .05 level of significance.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to investigate the relationship between time assigned to in-school suspension and the math and reading scores on the 2013-2014 Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students. This chapter details the descriptive statistics for each variable and the statistical findings for the Spearman rho analysis conducted for each research question.

Research Questions

The research questions and hypotheses addressed in this study are the following:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 Reading CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 Math CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students?

Null Hypotheses

$H_0$1: There is no statistically significant correlation between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 Reading CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students.

$H_0$2: There is no statistically significant correlation between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 Math CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students.

Descriptive Statistics

With the sample consisting of regular education, sixth to eighth grade, African American males (N = 1546), the average time served in in-school suspension (ISS) was 3.61 days (SD = 3.317). The mean scale score for the 2013-2014 reading CRCT was 822.04 (SD = 30.71) and 807.03 (SD = 26.156) for the 2013-2014 math CRCT. More detailed descriptive statistics are discussed in Tables 1-3 below.

Table 1

SPSS v.22 Descriptive Statistics of ISS Variable

			Statistic	Std. Error
ISS_Days	Mean		3.61	.084
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.45	
		Upper Bound	3.78	
	5% Trimmed Mean		3.19	
	Median		2.00	
	Variance		11.003	
	Std. Deviation		3.317	
	Minimum		1	
	Maximum		28	
	Range		27	
	Interquartile Range		4	
	Skewness		2.227	.062
	Kurtosis		6.624	.124

Table 2

SPSS v.22 Descriptive Statistics of Reading CRCT Variable

			Statistic	Std. Error
Reading_CRCT	Mean		822.04	.781
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	820.51	
		Upper Bound	823.57	
	5% Trimmed Mean		822.30	
	Median		822.00	
	Variance		943.122	
	Std. Deviation		30.710	
	Minimum		298	
	Maximum		920	
	Range		622	
	Interquartile Range		31	
	Skewness		-6.010	.062
	Kurtosis		102.445	.124

Table 3

SPSS v.22 Descriptive Statistics of Math CRCT Variable

			Statistic	Std. Error
Math_CRCT	Mean		807.03	.665
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	805.72	
		Upper Bound	808.33	
	5% Trimmed Mean		805.97	
	Median		805.00	
	Variance		684.121	
	Std. Deviation		26.156	
	Minimum		716	
	Maximum		950	
	Range		234	
	Interquartile Range		33	
	Skewness		.719	.062
	Kurtosis		1.300	.124

Results

Research Question 1

Before conducting the Spearman r_s test, the data had to be analyzed to determine that a monotonic relationship existed between the variables of in-school suspension (ISS) and reading CRCT scale scores. Based on the visual inspection of a scatterplot between the above variables (Figure 1), a monotonic relationship can be assumed.

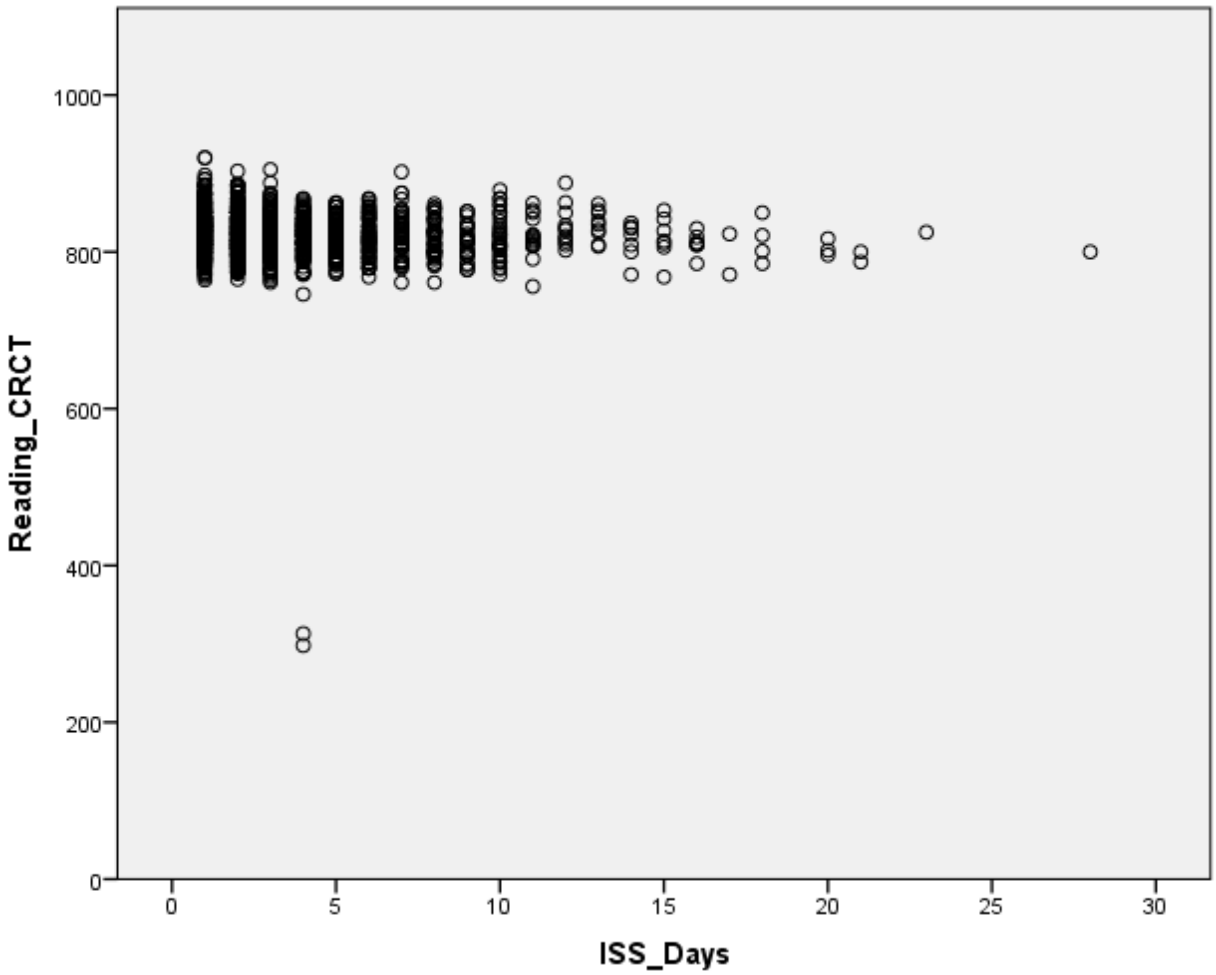

Figure 1. Scatterplot of ISS and Reading CRCT to determine presence of monotonic relationship.

With visual inspection of the scatterplot indicating a monotonic relationship between the variables of in-school suspension (ISS) and reading CRCT, a Spearman r_s correlation analysis

was run to assess the relationship between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension during the 2013-2014 school year and scale scores on the 2014 reading CRCT for regular education, sixth to eighth grade African American males. The results of the Spearman r_s indicate a significant but weak negative correlation between days assigned to in-school suspension and scale scores on the reading CRCT, $r_s(1544) = -.123$, $p < .0005$, thus allowing the researcher to reject the null hypothesis. The correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

Research Question 2

As conducted for Research Question 1, before conducting a Spearman r_s test on Research Question 2, the data had to be analyzed to determine that a monotonic relationship existed between the variables of in-school suspension (ISS) and math CRCT scale scores. Based on the visual inspection of a scatterplot between the above variables (Figure 2), a monotonic relationship can be assumed.

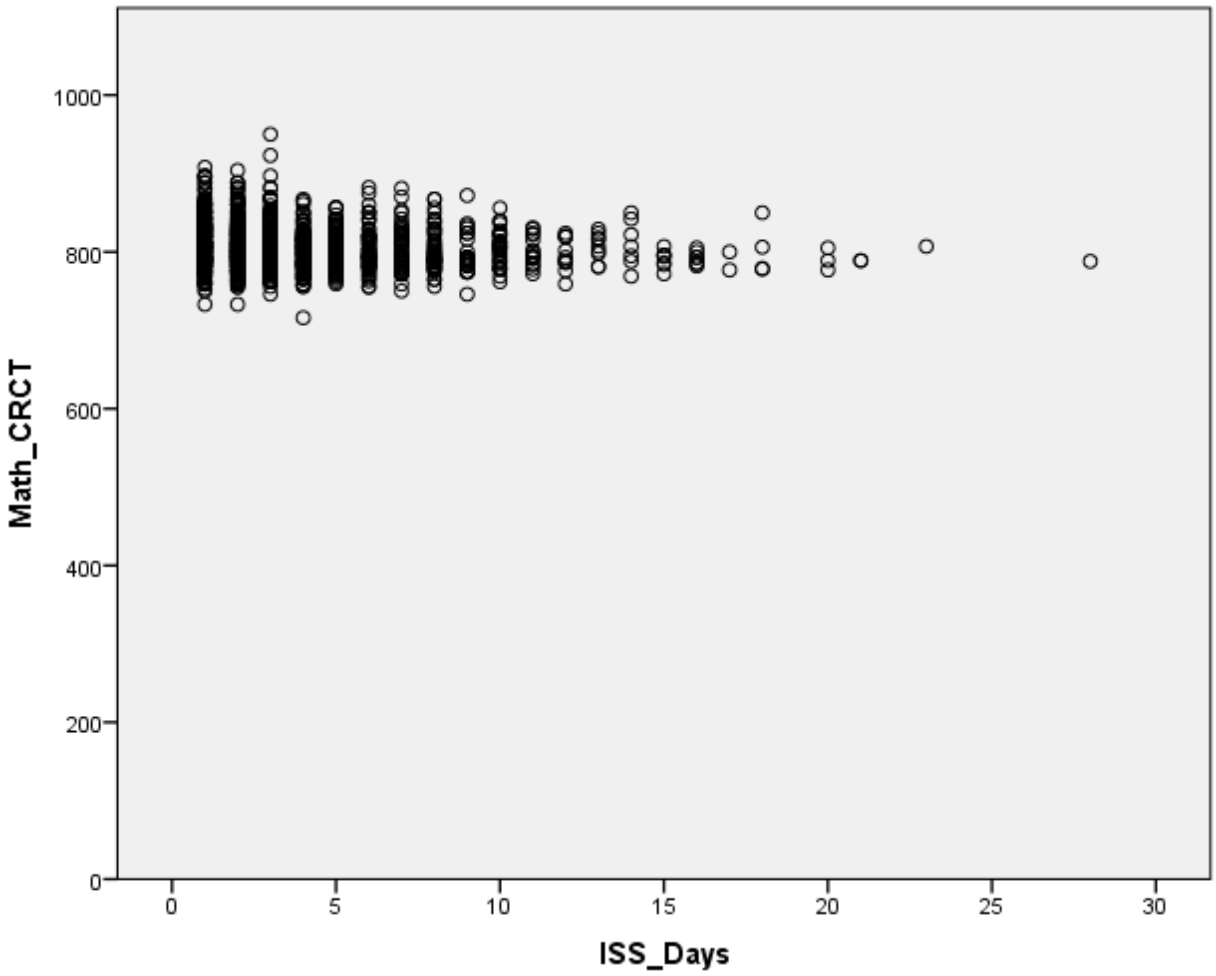

Figure 2. Scatterplot of ISS and Math CRCT to determine presence of monotonic relationship.

With visual inspection of the scatterplot indicating a monotonic relationship between the variables of in-school suspension (ISS) and math CRCT, a Spearman r_s correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension during the 2013-2014 school year and scale scores on the 2014 math CRCT for regular education, sixth to eighth grade African American males. The results of the Spearman r_s indicate a significant but weak negative correlation between days assigned to in-school suspension and scale scores on the math CRCT, $r_s(1544) = -.142$, $p < .0005$, thus allowing the researcher to reject the null hypothesis. The correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the results of the Spearman rho data analysis for both research questions. The data analyses found a significant weak negative correlation between days assigned to in-school suspension and scale scores for both reading CRCT, $r_s(1544) = -.123$, $p < .0005$ and math CRCT, $r_s(1544) = -.142$, $p < .0005$, prompting the researcher to reject both null hypotheses. Further, both sets of correlation findings were significant at the .01 level (two-tailed). The results showed that increasing the number of days assigned to in-school suspension for regular education, sixth to eighth grade African American males is associated with lower scale scores on the reading and math CRCT. The statistical and practical significance of these results will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to investigate the relationship between time assigned to in-school suspension and the math and reading scores on the 2013-2014 Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students. In-school suspension and reading and math CRCT score data were collected for 1546 sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students who had been assigned for one or more days to in-school suspension, sampled from 30 middle schools throughout the state of Georgia. The number of days assigned to in-school suspension, where students guilty of rules violations were temporarily partitioned from their classmates, served as the predictor variable in this research effort. Scale scores on the 2013-2014 reading and math CRCT, a collection of standardized tests used to assess grade-level mastery of reading and mathematics learning objectives, served as the criterion variable. Statistical analysis used separate Spearman's rho correlation (ρ) analysis (also referred to as Spearman rank correlation coefficient or Spearman r_s) to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the time assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the reading and math CRCT.

Research Question 1. The first research question in this study focused on the relationship between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 reading CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students. The results of the Spearman rho analysis, conducted using SPSS v.22, revealed a significant weak negative correlation between days assigned to in-school suspension and scale scores on the reading CRCT, $r_s(1544) = -.123$, $p < .0005$. The results showed that increasing the

number of days assigned to in-school suspension for regular education, sixth to eighth grade African American males is associated with lower scale scores on the reading CRCT.

In attempting to explain the negative correlation between days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the reading CRCT, a strict, straightforward rationale for the findings regarding RQ1 is that while assigned to in-school suspension, study participants were unable to fully participate in and benefit from lessons targeting reading-based learning objectives, which in turn negatively impacted their overall reading level and subsequent scores on the reading CRCT. In this context, the findings support Ford's (2013) conclusions that reducing district-wide suspension rates by 5 percentage points would deliver a nearly 5% gain in math achievement scores and over a 3 percentage-point increase in reading achievement scores on end-of-year standardized tests.

While Ford (2013) contended that "substantial" reading achievement gains would be made when suspensions are reduced, there is research suggesting that the negative association between in-school suspension and the reading CRCT (r_s = -.123) found in this research effort should not be construed as a causal connection between these two variables, especially given the race and gender of this study's participants. Instead, the statistical findings of this study support research indicating that suspended African American male students often have lower *pre-suspension* reading levels and are assigned to in-school suspension *more frequently* because of increases in classroom misbehavior associated with their inabilities to successfully engage classroom reading assignments (Anderson, Howard, & Graham, 2007). Therefore, the findings of this study should be evaluated through the contextual understanding that (a) a reciprocal causal relationship exists between behavior and reading achievement levels for all students, (b) reading levels and suspension rates in the middle school years for African American males are strongly

influenced by reading difficulties and problematic behavior in their pre-school and early elementary years, and (c) pre-suspension lower reading achievement levels accompany cultural differences, teacher inexperience, ineffective/differential discipline practices, and zero-tolerance policies as major factors linked to the disproportionate numbers of African American males receiving suspensions (Anderson et al., 2007; Gellert & Elbro, 1999).

Research Question 2. The second research question in this study focused on the relationship between the number of days assigned to in-school suspension and scores on the 2013-2014 math CRCT for sixth to eighth grade regular education, African American male students. The results of the Spearman rho analysis, conducting using SPSS v.22, revealed a significant weak, negative correlation between days assigned to in-school suspension and scale scores on the math CRCT, $r_s(1544) = -.142$, $p < .0005$. The results showed that increasing the number of days assigned to in-school suspension for regular education, sixth to eighth grade African American males is associated with lower scale scores on the math CRCT.

With findings indicating that increasing the number of days assigned to in-school suspension is associated with lower scores on the math CRCT ($r_s = -.142$), the results of this study augment research showing that time away from class does significantly impact math achievement and subsequent scores on math standardized tests. The results of this study support McCrary's (2010) findings that increased class absenteeism accounts for significant differences in seventh grade scale scores on the math CRCT, especially in the domains of numbers and operations. Research by Jacobson (2008) further implied that missing class time due to suspension may have had a more profound impact on math achievement for this study's participants, citing research indicating that minorities and students in low socioeconomic households show decreased abilities to "make up" missed assignments. And while it may be

tempting to refute assignment to in-school suspension as being analogous to school absenteeism, it must be noted that the literature well documents the direct relationship between instructional time and school achievement (Whisman & Hammer, 2014). Further, schools tend to adopt "punitive" in-school suspension models that do not provide (a) inventories to identify potential learning difficulties, (b) academic support resources and individual instruction, and (c) in-school suspension "teachers" available to model the same quality of instruction present in the classroom (Morris & Howard, 2003; Short, 1988). Given research regarding the importance of instructional time and the negative impacts of absenteeism, and how in-school suspension rooms tend to be modeled, it would seem wholly specious to predict that removing the study participants from the learning environment via suspension would not have impacts on their math achievement similar to missing school entirely (Whisman & Hammer, 2014) .

As discussed in regard to reading achievement levels, inabilities to successfully engage mathematics learning objectives in the classroom is a strong predictor for classroom misbehavior, especially for African American males and students in low-socioeconomic households (Whisman & Hammer, 2014). Whisman and Hammer (2014) found that students below proficiency in math were 2.4 times more likely to receive a discipline referral and that students with five or more discipline referrals had a 60 percentage-point proficiency gap.

Furthermore, the frustration, disaffection, and damage to self-esteem that accompany low math achievement not only increases African American males' propensity to engage in problematic classroom behavior, but also perpetuates lower expectations for math achievement from their teachers and administrators (Boaler, Wiliam, & Brown, 2000). African American males such as the ones in the sample are routinely placed in low-level/remedial math classes and denied lessons that significantly improve the cognitive skills needed for higher-level math

achievement (Boaler et al., 2000). As a result, their math achievement levels continue to decline relative to other student subgroups, which in turn perpetuates greater levels of frustration and misbehavior in the classroom. Simply, the results regarding RQ2 suggest that a "perfect storm" of pre-suspension low math self-efficacy, reduced instruction time due to suspension, and lowered math-related expectations from school practitioners may be in effect for the study participants (Boaler et al., 2000; McCrary, 2010; Whisman & Hammer, 2014).

Conclusions

Among the main factors guiding this study is the "scant" amount of research specifically attempting to ascertain the impact of in-school suspension on academic achievement (Evans, 2011; Weathers, 2010). In a review of the literature, only two studies, Weathers (2010) and Kralevich, Slate, Tejeda-Delgado, and Kelsey (2010) were discovered that explored the relationship between in-school suspension and student achievement, as measured using standardized tests. Therefore, there was a need to add to the available literature the impact that in-school suspension may have on student achievement, especially in light of prior research indicating exclusionary discipline: (a) failure to correct classroom misbehavior (Allman & Slate, 2011; Blomberg, 2004); (b) disproportionate and inconsistent use for males, minorities, and students with disabilities (Blomberg, 2004; Shah & Maxwell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011; Sullivan, Klingbeil, & Van Norman, 2013; Vincent, Sprague, & Tobin, 2012); (c) adverse impact on school climate and students' and parents' attitudes toward school (MacNeil & Prater, 2010; Rubin, 2012); (d) significant correlation with future dropouts, delinquency, and criminal activity (Allman & Slate, 2011; Lee et al. 2011); and (e) negative impact on academic achievement (Allman & Slate, 2011; Blomberg, 2004; Evans, 2011; Kralevich et al., 2010; Weathers, 2010).

With findings that increasing the days assigned to in-school suspension is associated with lower scores on the reading and math CRCT, the results of this study are commensurate with both Weathers (2010) and Kralevich et al. (2010). For a sample size of 245 African American eighth graders in an urban school district, Weathers (2010) found, using t-test analysis, a significant difference between students receiving in-school suspension and their non-suspended peers for the reading CRCT ($p = .004$), the English language arts CRCT ($p = .004$), and the math CRCT ($p = .030$). Kralevich et al. (2010) conducted ANOVA by grade level and found significant differences between suspended and non-suspended peers in seventh and eighth grade reading and math achievement scores on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), but none for sixth grade students. Thus, the findings of this study support conclusions provided by multiple researchers that student achievement is negatively impacted by in-school suspension (Kralevich et al., 2010; Noguera, 2003; Shah & Maxwell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2006; Weathers, 2010).

Ultimately, at the heart of this study is not whether middle school, African American male students should receive disciplinary consequences for classroom misbehavior, but instead whether the findings of this study support the use of in-school suspension as a discipline tool for a student subgroup struggling with well-documented academic, familial, and societal issues (Skiba et al., 2002). Thus, in addition to building on the current educational literature focusing on impact on student achievement and effective school discipline techniques, the results of the study support research that student achievement can be and often is negatively impacted by exclusionary discipline, with in-school suspension included (Anderson et al., 2007; Arcia, 2006; Evans, 2010; Kralevich et al., 2010; Noguera, 2003; Shah & Maxwell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2006; Waters-Maze, 2002; Weathers, 2010).

Given the results of this study, especially in light of (a) the documented increasing achievement gap between African American students and students of other subgroups (Shah & Maxwell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011), (b) the inability of in-school suspension to curb classroom misbehavior (Smith et al., 2012), and (c) the punitive nature of current in-school suspension programs with scarce attempts to address pre-suspension academic difficulties (Morris & Howard, 2003), this researcher contends that school practitioners at all levels should be alerted to the potentially injurious nature of in-school suspension. Ideally, it is hoped that the findings of this study will prompt practitioners to re-examine their discipline models regarding the removal of students from the learning environment, and when students must be partitioned away from their peers, that removal is accompanied with research-backed academic supports and behavioral interventions.

Implications

In providing evidence that in-school suspension is associated with lower scores on reading and math standardized tests, the implications of this study are broad and serious. Research thoroughly documents the achievement gap between African American students and their peers in other subgroups, and the idea that this achievement gap is being exacerbated by a disproportionate percentage of African American males assigned to in-school suspension (Shah & Maxwell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011). Furthermore, beside the moral ramifications and damage to students, families, and communities that occur from school-based differential discipline practices and achievement gaps, is the fact that teachers, administrators, and schools in the state of Georgia are evaluated on *student achievement*, as measured using end-of-year standardized tests. Therefore, teacher/administrator evaluations, school reputations, and the percentage of

students successfully meeting standards for "high stakes" testing are all impacted by school-based discipline practices.

However, a key concern of this study is not just the statistical significance of the findings, but also the practical significance of the findings given that the negative r_s values for both research questions in this study are considered to be statistically "weak." Thus, determining the practical significance of low/small/weak correlation magnitudes became especially important given the researcher's conclusions to potentially impact (or not impact) decision paradigms regarding school discipline for a student subgroup that is at present suffering with achievement gaps and discipline disproportionalities. Intended for the behavioral sciences, Cohen's (1988) guide for labeling correlation magnitudes considered correlation values within the .10 - .29 range as small or "weak" effects. Understandably, the correlations found in this research effort of a -.123 (RQ1) and -.142 (RQ2) may prompt some school practitioners to dismiss the findings as practically insignificant, regardless of the fact that they are statistically significant. However, Rutledge and Loh (2004) argued that "investigators have reified these values into rigid decision criteria" that often result in negative consequences (p. 138). Furthermore, while values as low as .10 (or -.10) may appear to be practically inconsequential, in the context of improving or worsening a condition or state, these "weak" values have appreciable value (Rutledge & Loh, 2004).

In an attempt to encourage educators to refine their presentations of effect sizes in educational research so that practitioners can make more informed decisions, Lipsey et al. (2012) found that highly successful interventions that impact academic achievement "are rarely as large as .30" (p. 4), and a correlational value of .12, in educational contexts, should be deemed as a strong effect. All this is being said to caution the reader/practitioner when making subjective

decisions on effect magnitudes labeled as "low" or "weak." Given the findings of Lipsey et al. (2012) and the importance of documenting *any* impact a discipline tool has on student achievement, the position that the findings of this study have both statistical and practical significance is strongly merited.

Limitations

As with any research effort, limitations associated with threats to internal and external validity can be identified. As provided by Warner (2013), threats to internal validity impact a study's ability to make causal references. The main threat to the internal validity of this study relates to the study's design and the limitations that accompany correlational research. As discussed in prior chapters, while not sufficient to declare a causal relationship between the two variables, correlational research does allow the researcher to report the possible existence of a causal connection, if certain conditions are met (Warner, 203).

For this study, the condition most at risk is the presence of confounding variables that may be influencing the association between days assigned to in-school suspension and results on the reading and math CRCT. For example, research was cited showing a reciprocal, causal connection between reading and math achievement level and classroom misbehavior (Anderson et al., 2007). Well-documented in educational literature is that students unable to successfully engage classroom learning targets often experience frustration, lower self-efficacy, and the need to shift attention away from their academic difficulties (Anderson et al., 2007). Thus, a rival explanation for the findings is that lower reading and math CRCT scores may be an association of lower pre-suspension achievement levels among the study participants which increased their propensity to engage in classroom maladaptive behavior.

Other confounding variables that may have contributed to the results of this study include (1) teacher attributes such as attitudes toward suspensions, years of experience, and willingness to provide suspended students access to missed material upon return from suspension, (2) school-level variances in the in-school suspension model used (e.g., punitive or academic) and whether administrators provided suspended students behavioral and academic supports, and (3) socioeconomic/parental factors that impacted the student's ability to make up missed assignments at home. Unfortunately, the research design selected for this study was chosen for pragmatic reasons given the difficulty gaining access to the required data. The bivariate correlational design that was utilized limits this study because it does not take into consideration several potentially confounding variables that often accompany such complex, multifaceted issues as student behavior and achievement.

As noted by Warner (2013), threats to external validity limit a research effort's ability to generalize its results beyond the study participants. A significant limitation and threat to the external validity of this study is the absence of random sampling. As discussed in the literature review, the impact of exclusionary discipline varies by such school factors as student demographic/socioeconomic status, average teacher/administrator experience, and the in-school suspension model utilized. Therefore, an initial goal when building this study was to obtain data access from up to 12 school districts that would have a provided a cross-section of schools of varying types (e.g., urban, suburban, and rural), per-pupil spending, and student/teacher demographics. Once the 12 school districts were identified, random sampling techniques would have been used to identify three schools from each of the 12 districts to build the study population. Unfortunately, the generalization of this study is limited because over 95% of the school districts in Georgia declined the researcher's data request, with stated reasons ranging

from strict FERPA interpretations regard the release of student-level data to the amount of time the data collection would have involved, given that many school districts record suspension data and achievement test scores on different databases and software applications.

While random sampling would have increased the generalization of this study's results, the researcher's sole option in building a sufficiently sized sample population was to incorporate the entire data set provided by the five school districts that chose to participate in the research effort. A noticeable impact of using convenience sampling was the underrepresentation of African American middle school males from urban schools such as in the Atlanta area. The results of this study may have been different, and would be more generalizable, if it included participants from urban schools that tend to employ teachers with fewer years of experience, have students from lower socioeconomic levels, and assign a higher percentage of their students to in-school suspension (Arcia, 2007). In the next section, these limitations will be discussed when making recommendations for future research efforts.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings, the discussed limitations, and the lack of available research quantifying the relationship between in-school suspension and academic achievement, additional research is warranted. First, this study should be replicated with the goal to secure a sufficient number and variance of school types so that random sampling techniques can be employed to reduce the potential for research bias and best ensure that the results of the study could be generalized (Warner, 2013).

Second, as provided in Morris and Howard (2003), while schools tend to opt for the "punitive" model of in-school suspension, other in-school suspension options are available. Research focusing on whether statistically significant differences exist between different models

of in-school suspension would be beneficial to school practitioners. Third, this study did not delve into the association between in-school suspension and academic achievement by *grade level*. Future research efforts in this area may shed more light on why Kralevich et al. (2010) did not find significant differences between students assigned to in-school suspension and their unsuspended peers in the sixth grade.

Fourth, future research efforts should include multiple regression-type designs that allow a statistical analysis of confounding variables (e.g., age, race, teacher experience, gender, prior year scores, and special education status) that may moderate the relationship between days assigned to in-school suspension and student achievement.

Fifth, this study used archival data that was a *summation* of the total number of days the study participant was assigned to in-school suspension during the 2013-2014 school year. This study did not take into consideration any significant differences between the *durations* of each suspension assignment. A statistical analysis in this respect may find the existence of an optimum in-school suspension assignment length that provides a severe enough consequence for the classroom misbehavior, but is not injurious to the student's academic standing.

Last, a qualitative or mixed-methods study is encouraged to ascertain the role teacher actions and attitudes, before and after the suspension, impact student achievement. As discussed in the limitations, a confounding variable that contributes to the impact in-school suspension has on student achievement is teacher actions, such as providing the suspended student pre-recorded or web-cast video lessons, guided-notes, supplemental resources, and access to adult or peer tutors upon return from suspension.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Michael E. Seckinger, Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University
Lynchburg, VA 24502
XXXX XX, 2014

Dear Superintendent:

I am writing to kindly request your permission to collect research data from your school district, specifically pertaining to your middle school in-school suspension program. As a doctoral candidate at Liberty University, I am completing this research study to fulfill the dissertation requirement. I am also a math and science teacher in Muscogee County and understand completely the role school discipline plays in creating a school environment conducive to student achievement.

The purpose of the study is to determine if a relationship exists between time assigned to in-school suspension and reading and math scores on the 2013-2014 CRCT for middle school African American males. The specific information requested is the total time assigned to in-school suspension during the 2013-2014 school year and the 2013-2014 reading and math CRCT scores for regular education, African American males in grades 6 to 8 who have been assigned to ISS. To protect school and student confidentiality, student information such as name, address, or social security number is not needed and will not be collected. Further, pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the school districts and schools in the study.

If approval is granted, I will provide a school administrator the data collection instrument and compensate them for their time and any expenses accrued. All data obtained will remain under lock and key and you will be provided a copy of the final dissertation.

Your approval to conduct this study is greatly appreciated. Please contact me at seckinger.michael.e@muscogee.k12.ga.us if you have any questions or concerns.

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Sincerely,
Michael Seckinger
Liberty University
Approved by:

_____ _____ _____

Name and Title Signature Date

Appendix B

Michael E. Seckinger, Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University
Lynchburg, VA 24502
XXXX XX, 2014

Dear Principal:

I am writing to kindly request permission to collect research data from your school, specifically pertaining to your middle school in-school suspension program. As a doctoral candidate at Liberty University, I am completing this research study to fulfill the dissertation requirement. I am also a math and science teacher in Muscogee County and understand completely the role school discipline plays in creating a school environment conducive to student achievement.

The purpose of the study is to determine if a relationship exists between time assigned to in-school suspension and reading and math scores on the 2013-2014 CRCT for middle school African American males. The specific information requested is the total time assigned to in-school suspension during the 2013-2014 school year and the 2013-2014 reading and math CRCT scores for regular education, African American males in grades 6 to 8 who have been assigned to ISS. To protect school and student confidentiality, student information such as name, address, or social security number is not needed and will not be collected. Further, pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the school districts and schools in the study.

If approval is granted, I will provide a school administrator the data collection instrument and compensate them for their time and any expenses accrued. All data obtained will remain under lock and key and you will be provided a copy of the final dissertation.

Your approval to conduct this study is greatly appreciated. Please contact me at seckinger.michael.e@muscogee.k12.ga.us if you have any questions or concerns.

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Sincerely,
Michael Seckinger
Liberty University

Approved by:

_____ _____ _____

Name and Title Signature Date

Researcher: Michael Seckinger
Research Institution: Liberty University

Please return documentation sheet via email to mseckinger@liberty.edu or through U.S. mail using the provided self-addressed envelope.

Appendix C

Dissertation Data Collection Instrument

School/School District: _____ School Administrator: _____

Instructions: Based on your official school records, please fill in the table below for each **regular education, sixth to eighth grade African American male** student that was assigned to **in-school suspension for one or more days during the 2013-2014 school year**. Please provide information for as many students as possible on this data collection sheet.

Alphanumeric codes are used to protect student confidentiality; please do not include identifiable information such as student name, age, social-security, or other school identification labels.

Student Code	Number of Days Assigned to ISS	2014 CRCT – Reading Score	2014 CRCT – Math Score
A1			
A2			
A3			
A4			
A5			
A6			
A7			
A8			
A9			
A10			
A11			
A12			
A13			
A14			
A15			
A16			
A17			
A18			
A19			
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A21			
A22			
A23			
A24			
A25			
A26			
A26			
A28			
A29			

Appendix D

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 9, 2014

Michael E. Seckinger, Jr.
IRB **Conditional Approval** 1964.090914: The Relationship between In-School Suspension and the Academic Achievement of Middle School African American Males

Dear Michael,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been **conditionally** approved by the Liberty IRB. Conditional approval means that your full approval is pending on our receipt of certain items, which are listed below:

-Documented approval on letterhead from each research site you are enrolling in your study

Please keep in mind that you are not permitted to begin data collection until you have submitted the above item(s) and have been granted full approval by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board. Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well as you continue working toward full approval.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054

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