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THE RACIAL DISCIPLINE GAP IN EDUCATION

A MASTER'S THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY

EMILY M. STRIPE

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THE RACIAL DISCIPLINE GAP IN EDUCATION: AN INVESTIGATION

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APPROVED

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Abstract

Racial inequities persist throughout the United States' educational system despite the increased attention on reducing exclusionary discipline. These inequities, conceptualized as educational and disciplinary gaps between Black and White students, produce negative outcomes for students of color including decreased graduation rates and an increased risk of entering the criminal justice system. In this review, I analyzed current literature in order to identify multiple factors that impact the racial discipline gap at the familial, organizational, and individual levels. Based on the literature reviewed and analyzed here, closing the racial discipline gap requires educational stakeholders to implement a framework of principles, policies, and practices that eliminate bias, strengthen student-staff relationships, and provide teachers with coaching and support.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In May 2020, Minnesota became the epicenter of a renewed movement for racial equality. While much of the focus remains on police reform, it would be a missed opportunity not to address the racial inequality manifested in our schools, especially given the relationship between school discipline and increased risk of entry into the criminal justice system for students of color. This transition from one system to another is caused by the disproportionate discipline for Black students, which causes a loss of instructional time and lower achievement (Dutil, 2020).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), Minnesota has the lowest graduation rate for Black students in the country. Though the gap between the graduation rates of White and Black students has narrowed since 2014, a difference of over 20% remains (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). Furthermore, Balfanz et al. (2015) found that each suspension increased a student's risk of not graduating by 20%.

As far as addressing racial education gaps is concerned, there is no shortage of possible solutions: School Wide Positive Behavior Systems, Culturally Responsive Practices, Trauma Informed Practices, literacy programs, and the list goes on. However, schools often address the racial gaps that exist in education as individual issues. For example, a school may look at achievement data such as test scores separately from discipline data (e.g., infractions, suspensions). This approach can lead to a patchwork of different initiatives to address seemingly different issues when, like other societal issues, they are related. If schools implement more initiatives than are effective or sustainable, a well-meaning school's staff is at risk of initiative fatigue (Reeves, 2006).

As a White educator in Minnesota for the past 12 years, I have both witnessed and, despite my best efforts, contributed to the racial discipline gap. For the first two years of my career, I taught in a diverse suburban middle school. This school struggled with racial discipline and achievement disparities and was a designated “turnaround school.” For the past ten years, I have worked at a diverse urban 6-12 charter school on the east side of St. Paul.

At my current school, racially disproportionate discipline has long been prevalent. According to data reports for the 2018-2019 school year, Black students accounted for 60% of Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) while comprising only 37% of the school population. Similarly, Hispanic students accounted for 25% of ODRs while representing only 16% of the school population. White and Asian students were largely underrepresented in discipline data. These students made up 10% and 5% of ODRs while making up 37% and 14% of the school population, respectively.

Over the years, my school has experimented with several school wide initiatives and training aimed at addressing discipline and racial disparities in our school: low tolerances/high expectations, training on white privilege, instructional discipline, equity training and courageous conversations, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, and AVID. Most recently, In 2021, we began implementing School Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) and developed a school wide commitment to systemic equity. Despite these efforts, my school continues to struggle to make any gains on closing the discipline gap.

In the pilot year of SWBIS implementation, SWIS data from January to June showed that Black students received 78% of the ODRs that resulted in exclusionary discipline (ISS and OSS), Hispanic students received 9%, White students received 12%, and Asian students received 12%. Again, Black students are overrepresented in this data as they comprised 28% of the school

population. Hispanic, White, and Asian students are all underrepresented as they made up 25%, 23%, and 16% of the student body, respectively.

My colleagues' reactions to the different initiatives differ greatly. While some of us approach each new initiative with an "all-in" mindset, others feel skeptical, overwhelmed, or indifferent. Because the possible avenues for addressing racial disproportionality in education are so vast, I often wonder how we can be more targeted and effective in our approach and how we can do so without fatiguing or losing the trust of teachers. For this reason, it is crucial to address the disproportionality in academics and discipline in our schools with teacher workload and capacity for change in mind. Adding to the urgency of the issue is the likelihood that, while we educators grapple with the complexities of addressing racial disparities in school, students of color continue to experience very different educational outcomes than their White and Asian counterparts. As such, the following questions guided my research: What strategies that have the most impact on closing the racial discipline gap? What are the potential roadblocks to implementing these strategies and how can schools mitigate them? What practices and policies have a negative effect on the racial discipline gap? Furthermore, even if a school appears to be successfully addressing racial disparities, Black students may not feel that shared success or even feel valued. How can racial disparities be addressed in a way that values Black and Brown students' shared culture and individual worth? This review aims to identify strategies that influence the discipline gap, and help to narrow a school's focus rather than scatter it.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms and definitions will be used in this review. They are included here for the purposes of clarification and consistency.

Achievement Gap

The term achievement gap refers to the achievement disparities between minoritized students and their peers (Pearman, 2019). While the achievement gap can refer to all minoritized students or specific races, it most often refers to Black and/or Hispanic students and their White and/or Asian counterparts. In this thesis, achievement is measured by performance on Math and ELA standardized tests.

Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness refers to the process through which people recognize, analyze, and take action against systems of inequality and oppression. Critical consciousness is dynamic, meaning that a person can occupy one stage of consciousness in one aspect of their life and a different stage in another aspect (Schauer, 2021).

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT is used as a framework for much of the research throughout this thesis. This framework refers to the structural components of our society such as laws, policies, and practices that normalize Whiteness and problematize those that don't fit these norms (Bornstein, 2018).

Discipline Gap

The discipline gap refers to the discipline-related disparities between students of color and their peers. In this study, discipline is frequently defined as in-school suspension (ISS) and out-of-school suspension (OSS), but can also include office referrals (Pearman, 2019).

Implicit Bias

According to Marcucci (2020), implicit bias is a mental process through which a person makes associations between race and a stereotype or judgment. In this thesis, implicit bias refers to the unconscious treatment of students of color by teachers and administrators.

Restorative Justice/Restorative Practices

Restorative justice (RJ) is a philosophy around addressing wrongdoing in the community. In the restorative justice process, the victim and the wrongdoer come together to problem-solve and repair the damage done to the relationship. Restorative practices (RP) are preventative and intervention strategies used within the RJ framework to promote community and responsibility (Gregory et al., 2016).

Systemic Racism/Structural Racism

Systemic and structural racism are the policies, practices, and attitudes that systematically favor White people while penalizing people of color. Structural racism is a component of Critical Race Theory (Bornstein, 2018). Within the context of education, structural racism includes aspects such as discipline policy, tracking, and curriculum.

Teacher Quality Gap

The teacher quality gap refers to the systematic pairing of disadvantaged students and lower quality teachers as measured by years of experience, teacher exam scores, or school designated measures. This pairing results in a disproportionate quality of education between disadvantaged students and their peers (Goldhaber, 2018).

Statement of Research Question

This thesis explores the following question: According to current research, what factors have the biggest impact on the discipline gap in K-12 schools?

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review explores factors that influence the racial discipline gap. This research was conducted using the ERIC educational database via Bethel University's library. Articles of interest that were unavailable through ERIC were requested from and provided by Bethel librarians. Additionally, this review includes articles referenced in related articles and located through the ERIC database.

To begin my research, I used the search terms "racial discipline gap," "restorative justice," "culturally responsive," "school-to-prison pipeline," and "culturally relevant." In order to address the broader context, I also used the keywords "achievement gap" and "teacher quality gap." I selected the studies on these related gaps based on their relevance to the racial discipline gap. In order to ensure I covered an adequate breadth of aspects in this review, I expanded my search to include "policy," "zero tolerance," "parental involvement," "teacher-student relationships," "teacher characteristics," "implicit bias," and "administrator characteristics." Finally, as a Critical Race Theory (CRT) theme began to emerge in the research, I expanded my search once more to include "white supremacy." To maintain focus on the current climate of education in the U.S., I selected no studies that were published prior to 2012. Moreover, I excluded studies that took place outside of the United States or focused on Pre-K or university-level students. In all, three articles focused on the elementary grades, four focused on middle school, two focused on high school, one focused on grades 3-8, nine focused on secondary, and 10 focused on K-12.

Because both quantitative and qualitative studies offer valuable insight into the racial discipline gap, an adequate number of both were included in this review. Furthermore, the studies encompass a wide variety of methodologies: longitudinal, case study, portraiture, and

narrative. The dates of publication range from 2014 to 2021, 20 of which were published in the past five years.

Themes

Throughout the research process, several conceptual themes emerged. Among them were Critical Race Theory (CRT), school-to-prison pipeline, implicit bias, restorative justice, and the achievement gap. Additionally, each article's particular focus fell into four categories that relate to the level of society to which their study relates: those with a broad societal focus, those with a community focus, those with a district or school-level focus, and those with an individual-level focus. Because the aim of this review is to provide educators with an analysis of current research that can be used to inform their decisions, the latter set of themes was deemed most practical for application and serve as the organizational framework for this review. As such, Chapter II is divided into four sections: 1) Broad-based Relationships to the Discipline Gap, 2) Familial Factors, 3) District-level and Schoolwide Factors, and 4) Teacher and Administrator Factors.

Broad-based Relationships to the Discipline Gap

This theme contains three article reviews that provide a big-picture context related to the racial discipline gap. The first two articles explored the relationship between the discipline gap and the achievement gap. The third article in this section investigated the Teacher Quality Gap (TQG).

Gopalan (2019) investigated the characteristics of the discipline gap and its relationship to the achievement gap. The purpose of this study was to better understand the structural factors that contribute to the discipline gap. Gopalan asserted the necessity to examine the data related to these factors on a large scale so that educators and other stakeholders can identify and use targeted interventions to close the discipline gap (p. 8). The following research questions guided

this study: 1) How do the Black-white and Hispanic-white discipline gaps vary across districts in the US? 2) What are the strongest correlates of Black-white and Hispanic-white discipline gaps? 3) How much of the geographic variation in discipline gaps is explained by the observed correlates? 4) How does the linkage between racial/ethnic achievement gaps and racial/ethnic discipline gaps vary across districts in the US?

Gopalan used discipline data from the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) national database in the form of reported suspensions, school-related arrests, law enforcement referrals, and expulsions. For achievement and district data (standardized test scores, socioeconomic composition, racial/ethnic composition, segregation, and school characteristics), the researcher used data from the Stanford Education Data Archive (SEDA). Overall, 3,707 districts made up the sample size for this study. Gopalan then analyzed the data to map the discipline gap across the United States, examined the correlation of the established structural factors and the discipline gap, and used a random-effects meta-analytical model to characterize the relationship between the racial discipline gap and the racial achievement gap.

Gopalan found a larger discipline gap in school districts where racial socio-economic disparity is higher. Additionally, there was a slight but statistically significant correlation between the racial discipline gap and a district's average income level and adult education level with correlation coefficients of .214 and .225, respectively. The average Black-White discipline gap was larger than the Hispanic-White discipline gap across all disciplinary measures (OSS, ISS, arrests, and expulsion).

Gopalan's analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between the discipline and achievement gaps; after controlling for district-level factors therein lies a possibility that the discipline gap contributes to the achievement gap. Overall, correlations between the discipline

gap and district factors were largely inconsistent, which suggested the need for investigating other school-related variables.

In a similar study, Pearman et al. (2019) also investigated the relationship between the racial achievement gap and the racial discipline gap. Addressing the lack of national data in previous research, the researchers sought to determine whether a relationship between the two racial gaps exist while controlling for factors across districts, and, if so, the nature and direction of the relationship.

The researchers focused on the school years 2011-2012 and 2013-2014 due to the availability of national data for both achievement and discipline. Pearman et al. used the Stanford Education Data Review (SEDA) to access district-level proficiency data of students in grades 3-8 in the areas of English/Language Arts (ELA) and Math. The researchers categorized the data by race and calculated the average scores for each group. Pearman et al. (2019) used these averages to estimate the gap between racial groups, combining the ELA and Math gaps to create one estimate per district.

For the same grades and school years, the researchers gathered data for out-of-school suspensions at the district level by race. Pearman et al. (2019) then calculated the suspension rate for a specific race as the number of students of that race that received out-of-school suspension one or more times divided by the total number of students in the same racial category. The researchers subtracted the suspension rate for white students from the suspension rate for each other racial category to determine each discipline gap.

While assessing the relationship between the two types of gaps, the researchers controlled for district-level variables that could impact the outcome. These variables included the proportion of students receiving free and reduced lunch, the proportion of minority students, the

proportion of English language learners, racial and income segregation, and racial differences in special education, gifted and talented education, and student-teacher ratios. Additionally, Pearman et al. (2019) controlled for a set of community characteristics for the district including median income, the proportion of adults with at least a bachelor's degree, the proportion of female-headed households, unemployment rates, and the proportion of the community living in poverty.

The research team used a fixed-effects model to determine the relationship between the achievement and discipline gaps. This model illustrated a positive correlation between the racial gaps for both Black (.25 correlation) and Hispanic (.29 correlation) students. When controlling for district-level characteristics, Pearson et al. (2019) found that “a 1 percentage point increase in the black-white discipline gap was associated with a 0.01 standard deviation increase in the black-white achievement gap” (p. 10). Under the same circumstances, the Hispanic-White discipline gap dropped to zero. In other words, the Hispanic-white discipline gap that exists was able to be explained by district-level factors.

When analyzing the relationship in the opposite direction, the investigators found that a one standard deviation increase in the achievement gap was associated with a 3.67 percentage point increase in the Black-White discipline gap and a 1.24 percentage point increase in the Hispanic-White discipline gap. After controlling for other variables, the increase dropped to 2.2 percentage points in the Black-White discipline gap and to zero in the Hispanic-White discipline gap.

The researchers concluded that the discipline gap was predictive of Black students' performance, but not the performance of White students and that large achievement gaps overall

are predictive of high suspension rates. Furthermore, districts with larger Black-White discipline gaps have larger achievement gaps for the same racial groups.

While the previous two studies explored the relationship between the achievement and discipline gaps, Goldhaber et al. (2018) investigated the inequitable distribution of teacher quality as a means of adding to the body of literature on inequality in public education. Specifically, Goldhaber et al. conducted a quantitative study to examine Teacher Quality Gaps (TQGs). The longitudinal nature of this study addressed a gap in literature because existing research focuses on TQGs from a narrow time frame and fails to consider how gaps may differ depending on teacher quality measure and how they may change over time. Additionally, recent research suggests that the TQG is more narrow than previously thought. The researchers' purpose was to provide historical context to the TQG and a description of its evolution throughout the years, using different measures for both student disadvantage and teacher quality.

The study focused on North Carolina and Washington due to the availability of relevant data for the past few decades. Before obtaining data, the researchers first established measures for both "disadvantaged" and "teacher quality." Within this study, "disadvantaged" refers to either under-represented minorities (URM), which was comprised of Black, American Indian, and Hispanic students, and economically disadvantaged (ED), which was defined as students who qualified for free or reduced lunch. The researchers used three different factors to measure teacher quality: years of experience, licensure test scores, and value-added estimates.

Goldhaber et al. (2018) accessed data from the North Carolina Education Research Data Center (NCERDC) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the S-275 Database, Core Student Records System (CSRS), and the Comprehensive Education Data and Research Systems (CEDARS). The specific source of data varied slightly between states. For example,

licensure tests were different in each state and the starting year for data availability differed depending on the measure and state. The researcher focused on data for grades 3-5, however, given the exploratory nature of the study, other grades were investigated. The data from North Carolina included 213,907 teachers, 1,554,901 teacher-year observations, 170,950 Praxis scores, and 148,312 value-added estimates. The data from Washington included 100,875 teachers, 892,662 teacher-year observations, 52,087 WEST-B scores, and 40,009 value-added estimates.

Goldhaber et al. (2018) used the data to calculate the TQGs both within schools and districts in each state for every year of available data. The researchers paired each teacher quality measure with each student disadvantage measure separately in order to visualize the gap trend for each pair over time. This analysis revealed a gap in teacher quality between disadvantaged and advantaged students that persisted for each of the years analyzed and for each measure.

The amplitude of the data allowed the researchers to make several observations. First, TQGs have increased since the 1980s. In 1988, URM students were 10% more likely to be exposed to a novice teacher than their counterparts. In 2013, they were 34% more likely to be exposed to a novice teacher. TQGs are larger when URM students are used as the measure of disadvantage rather than ED. In other words, race is a bigger predictor of being exposed to a low quality teacher than economic status. While the TQG exists for every measure of teacher quality, each measure has a distinct gap trend. For example, when licensure test scores were used as the measure for teacher quality, the TQG remained consistent over time. However, when value-added measures were used, the TQG widened considerably in 2009-2010 and then narrowed between in 2012-2014. Furthermore, the trend for one type of TQG within a district did not have any bearing on a different type of TQG within that same district. Because of this,

Goldhaber et al. (2018) asserted that it is necessary for each district and school to understand their own TQGs in order to take steps to close them.

Familial Factors

This theme consists of article reviews that investigated the impact of family-level factors on the discipline gap. The first study explored multiple factors while the second and third studies focused specifically on parental involvement.

McElderry and Cheng (2014) addressed a gap in the literature related to the racial discipline gap. Rather than focus on school-related factors such as policy, the researchers examined the relationship between student and familial variables and exclusionary discipline. The working hypothesis was that the following student characteristics would be associated with experiencing higher rates of exclusionary discipline: belonging to a minority group, being male, having a disability, attending an urban school, being raised by a single parent with low Socioeconomic Status (SES), and having low parental involvement.

McElderry and Cheng (2014) used data from the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (PFIES). From this data set, the researchers used information from 4,837 seventh through 12th-grade students and did not include home-schooled students. The researchers studied the relationship between school exclusion and variables relating to the student, student's mother, parental involvement, school location, and service provision.

McElderry and Cheng (2014) defined school exclusion as having ever been suspended, expelled, or withdrawn from a school for disciplinary reasons. Student variables were age, gender, disability status, and ethnicity. Variables related to the student's mother were age, education level, employment status, marital status, whether or not she speaks English, and whether or not she receives public assistance. Parental involvement variables included the

number of school activities a parent attended in the given school year, whether or not they met with a guidance counselor, whether or not they were involved in their student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), if applicable, how often work or lack of childcare interfered with their involvement in school activities, and satisfaction with school. School location variables indicated whether a school was located in an urban, suburban, or rural setting. Lastly, service provision variables included the number of times teachers made contact with a parent about negative behavior and the type of services, if any, the student received in or out of school.

The researchers conducted a multivariate analysis and found that, of the student-centered variables, being African American (odds ratio 2.99), Hispanic (odds ratio 1.91), being disabled (odds ratio 1.91), and age (odds ratio 1.09) were risk factors for experiencing exclusionary discipline. For mother-centered variables, receiving public assistance (odds ratio 1.99) and full-time employment (odds ratio 1.22) increased the odds of exclusionary discipline for their child. Conversely, higher education level, being married, and being non-English speaking served as protective factors. McElderry and Cheng (2014) did not find any significant relationship between school location and exclusionary discipline. For parental involvement-centered variables, both meeting with a guidance counselor (odds ratio 1.54) and having no involvement with their child's IEP (odds ratio 2.9) increased the likelihood of exclusionary discipline. For service provision variables, receiving teacher contacts regarding behavior (odds ratio 1.43) and the student receiving services outside of school (odds ratio 1.61) were associated with receiving exclusionary discipline. Furthermore, while, overall, parental participation in school activities was a protective factor (odds ratio 0.87), this was not the case for African American students. For this particular demographic, parental involvement was not as protective (odds ratio 1.16).

In a related study, Marcucci (2020) further investigated the role of parental involvement as a protective factor for different races as it relates to discipline. The researcher explained that although the existence of a racial discipline gap has been supported through research, there remains a lack of understanding around the variables that play a role in widening or closing the gap. Marcucci examined the effect of parental involvement in education, one of the variables, on the discipline gap. The author hypothesized that race would be a predictor of In-School Suspension (ISS) and that parental educational involvement would result in a decrease in out-of-class discipline time (ISS) for their respective student.

Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS) of 2002 served as the data source. The ELS study employed random sampling to select 752 secondary schools. From that set of schools, the study randomly selected sophomore students which resulted in 15,362 participants total. Marcucci used the extensive data gathered as part of the ELS in order to answer the research question. After coding students by race, Marcucci used both student and parent answers to survey questions in order to examine the relationship between a parent's educational involvement and whether their student received the consequence of ISS. The coding of these responses enabled Marcucci to quantitatively analyze three types of parental involvement: values (the level of education the parents expected their child to ultimately achieve), home involvement (how often parents said they check their student's homework), and school involvement (whether or not parents said they volunteer at school).

This study supported the assumption that race is a significant predictor of a student receiving ISS. However, the author found that parental involvement did not have the same effect on disciplinary outcomes for all of the race groups. For Black students in the study, home-based parental involvement (parent usually checks homework) and school-based involvement (parent

volunteers at school) resulted in them being at least twice as likely to be disciplined with ISS as their peers with odds ratios of 3.41 and 2.1, respectively. Marcucci stressed that the findings were correlational, not causal, and offered that implicit bias among educators and lack of social capital of underserved parents in the schools could be one explanation for the results.

The experiences of underserved parents is further explored by Wilson et al. (2020). The researchers investigated the racial discipline gap in Rivertown, New York where the research team had a history of research-fueled activism in the community. Over the past several decades, the demographics in Rivertown had shifted dramatically. The proportion of Black residents increased from 0.5% in 1950 to 15.8% in 2016. This increase in racial diversity was met with hostility by long-time white residents. The dynamic extended to the schools where parents of black students felt their children were being treated differently than white students. The researchers began working with the disenfranchised parents and community members and eventually collaborated with them to establish a non-profit organization called Community Advocates Restoring Educational Standards (CARES). CARES has a mission of advocating for equitable aspects to education for children who have been historically excluded. It is within this context that the study took place.

The authors' purpose was to understand the attitudes around the disproportionate disciplining of black students and to use data to determine whether the racial disproportion existed after accounting for economic disadvantage. By examining the way that school administrators view these patterns, the researchers sought to fill a gap in the literature. This ethnographic study relied on both qualitative and quantitative data and an interest convergence/divergence framework to make sense of the situation.

The researchers used data from 2013 to 2018, which included over 100 weekly focus group interviews with parents, conversations with teachers, and field notes from the CARES meetings. Additionally, it included observations of classrooms, disciplinary hearings, and school board meetings. Observations in the school setting were completed by parent volunteers, as the research team was not permitted to observe. Quantitative data included disciplinary referrals, suspension, attendance, and graduation rates from the district.

After sharing qualitative data with the district administrators, the researchers sought to validate those findings with quantitative data. Wilson et al. (2020) gathered OSS data broken down by race from the Basic Education Data System (BEDS) from 2011-2016. The data included information for students who were suspended for at least one day, but each student was only counted once regardless of how many times they were suspended. The researchers analyzed data from the secondary schools (two middle schools and one high school) and calculated both the proportion of the year's total suspensions for each racial group and the proportion of each racial group who were suspended each year. This analysis established the existence of racially disproportionate suspensions at the Rivertown secondary schools with Black students consistently being suspended at a higher rate according to both types of calculation.

When the researchers presented their quantitative findings to the administrators, they did not accept the link between discipline and race. Instead, they offered an alternative rationale-economic disadvantage. The administrators argued that the stress on families caused by poverty could explain behavioral differences, and in turn, disciplinary differences. After this meeting, a group of school staff came to a CARES meeting and argued that the disproportion in the data was due to home environment, which further highlighted the fundamental difference in beliefs between the two groups.

In response, the researchers tested the administrators' hypothesis to see if the apparent racial discipline gap could be explained with economic factors. Using the same data from BEDS, Wilson et al. (2020) performed an analysis after controlling for rates of economic disadvantage. This analysis revealed persistent differences between outcomes for races, with Black students still being suspended at higher rates. The researchers brought these findings to the superintendent of the district who acknowledged that racial disproportionality and implicit bias in discipline may be a problem, but ultimately settled on other factors such as absenteeism, mobility, and behavior differences as the root cause.

The researchers interpreted the response from administrators as interest divergence coupled with White fragility. In other words, school teachers and administrators view the agenda of Black families as directly at odds with their interests: maintaining status quo teaching strategies without disruption from race-conscious reform. The authors noted that teachers widely evaluated according to white middle-class parents' expectations and that keeping their jobs depended on appearing to meet those expectations (154). Furthermore, Wilson et al. (2020) argued that, in order for schools' interests to converge with Black families', there must be a cost to maintaining the status quo and an incentive to change.

District-level and School-wide factors

This theme consists of research related to school and district-level policies and factors that impact the racial discipline gap. This section is divided into three subsections: factors that have the potential for positive and negative impact, factors that exacerbate the discipline gap, and factors that can potentially narrow the gap.

Positive and Negative Aspects that Contribute to the Discipline Gap

Included here are two articles that explored the unintended negative effects of adopting practices and policies meant to narrow the achievement and discipline gaps.

Marsh (2021) investigated the mindset around “success” at a “no-excuses” charter school and how this mindset manifests itself in teacher and school practices. Marsh framed his research with the description of “no-excuses” schools put forth by Dobbie and Fryer (2013): schools with increased instructional time, selective teacher hiring, extensive teacher feedback, high expectations, and a goal of 100% college acceptance. While these characteristics may seem desirable and have even shown to raise English Language Arts (ELA) outcomes for Black students, Marsh asserted that this ideology is rooted in middle-class White culture and a two-class society allowing schools to rationalize their responses to students of color who do not meet the norms with color-neutral racism.

Marsh used a pseudonym to identify one such school, Metropolitan City Charter Academy (MCCA). MCCA is a public urban charter school whose assessment scores indicated high achievement. The student body was nearly 100% Black or Latino; 90% of the student population qualified for free-and-reduced lunch. Nineteen percent of the students received Special Education services, and 4% were identified as English Language Learners. The researcher focused the study on grades 7 and 8. In those grades, there were 22 teachers, 80% of whom were White and 60% of whom were female. The teachers averaged four years of experience.

To select participants, Marsh (2021) first asked 7th and 8th grade teachers (on a volunteer basis) to generate a list of students they would identify as “ideal” or “at-risk” along with a rationale. Of those teachers, 15 agreed to be interviewed for the study. Marsh then collected quantitative data in the form of observations of various school settings and interviews with the

participants. The researcher kept field notes of the observations which totalled 900 hours. Each teacher participant was interviewed formally at least once. These interviews were semi-structured and designed to explore perceptions of student success. Marsh also conducted informal interviews with participants throughout the course of the study. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Marsh (2021) analyzed the data, identifying codes as they emerged. The researcher then reviewed the data multiple times to group the codes together and ultimately identified three themes that represented the teachers' views on student success: individual responsibility, character development, and compliance.

According to these teachers, individual responsibility referred to a student's work ethic and intrinsic motivation. Teachers at MCCA expected students to work with a sense of urgency, maximizing efforts while effectively managing resources and time. Because individual responsibility was viewed as a choice, teachers characterized procrastination as lazy.

Marsh (2021) identified several traits from the analysis that, together, made up the ideal student's character: emotional restraint, maturity, listening, initiative, and self-advocacy. Possessing these traits were strongly associated with how the teachers viewed student success. Marsh noted that, according to the teachers, self-advocacy meant that students asked for academic support when or opportunities when needed. On the other hand, behavioral advocacy was not viewed as a desirable trait. Students who did not understand behavior expectations and asked for clarification were viewed as defiant and in need of correction. This particular nuance served to sustain the power differential between students and teachers.

The final theme that Marsh identified was compliance, which some teachers referred to as "playing the game" of school. Successful students were students who did not cross lines and did

not disrespect authority. Marsh observed that students who were not compliant, but demonstrated high achievement were characterized as “at-risk” while, conversely, students who were compliant but struggled academically were characterized as “ideal.”

Overall, the narrow view of student success at MCCA hinged on the students’ adherence to dominant White middle class norms. Marsh (2021) asserted that this narrow view dismisses systemic racism and therefore student voices and experiences. As such, “no-excuses” schools should take steps to reimagine student success in an inclusive way that humanizes students. Furthermore, teachers should re-evaluate the power dynamics they seek to maintain and work to create a community-based environment at school.

In a broader study, Steinberg and Lacoë (2015) addressed the relatively recent trend of replacing exclusionary discipline practices with supportive strategies. These alternatives to traditional discipline practices are often viewed as a necessary step in closing the racial discipline gap (p. 9). Steinberg and Lacoë’s study confronted a gap in current literature by examining the effects of these policy changes on not only the students they aim to benefit, but also their peers with no recent out-of-school suspensions (OSS). Additionally, they investigated whether policy reform actually reduced the use of OSS and whether it impacted the racial disproportionality of school discipline.

The researchers focused their study on the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) before, during, and after their discipline policy changes in 2012. This policy change aimed to improve school safety and climate by prohibiting the use of OSS for minor offenses and reducing the length of OSS for major offenses. Steinberg and Lacoë (2015) used ten years of district-level data from Common Core of Data and the Pennsylvania Department of Education spanning the seven years prior to the policy change and the three years thereafter. The researchers also

analyzed three years of student-level data from the SDP spanning the before and after phases of policy implementation.

Steinberg and Lacoë (2015) used this data to measure the variability of OSS from year to year and found that the instances of OSS in SDP declined in the years prior to policy implementation from 38 to 26 suspensions per 100 students. There was a slight decline in OSS in the two years following implementation and an increase of 7 suspensions per 100 students in the third year. Additionally, both the rate of serious incidents and truancy increased in the post-policy years.

When focusing on subsets of students, the data showed that students who were suspended prior to the new policy experienced 2.5 fewer suspension days per year overall under the new policy. Furthermore, their average absences decreased by 1.45 days. There was no change in achievement. Peers of students with prior suspensions had varying outcomes depending on the degree to which their school complied with the policy change. Peers at schools that were able to fully comply with the new policy did not experience changes in achievement or attendance. At schools that partially complied with the policy change by reducing but not eliminating conduct referrals, peers experienced a decline in math achievement (0.06 standard deviations) and a 3% increase in absences. Peers at schools who did not (or could not) comply with the policy change experienced the same decline in math and an additional decline in English Language Arts achievement (0.03 standard deviations). However, the researchers did not find any change in attendance at the non-compliant schools.

Steinberg and Lacoë (2015) also examined the impact of the policy change on the racial disproportionality of discipline. The Black-White discipline gap did in fact decline by 0.03 days

per student in relation to conduct suspensions. However, there was an increase of 0.11 days per student in relation to the corresponding gap for serious incident suspensions.

Negative Impact on the Discipline Gap

Included in this heading are three articles that investigated factors that have the potential to sustain or widen the racial discipline gap. All of the articles explored distinct school/district-level factors: teacher quality, police presence, and zero tolerance policies.

Benson et al. (2020) built on previous research regarding factors impacting the racial achievement gap and the relationship between the achievement and discipline gaps. The researchers identified a lack of quantitative studies that analyze the effects of structural racism over time. Structural racism consists of the accepted systems in place that benefit white people, while creating negative effects for Black people both immediately and over time.

The authors focused their research efforts on one such system - the pairing of students and teachers. This pairing works in two ways: 1) more experienced teachers are often assigned to higher-level courses, 2) students of color experience barriers to these courses through tracking and bias. This results in a disproportionate teacher-student assignment by race, which the researchers refer to as a “teacher quality gap (TQG), which takes on a form of “second-generation segregation” (p. 3). The purpose of this study was to quantitatively investigate this disproportionality over time. More specifically, the researchers investigated the extent to which White, Black, and Latino students have teachers with similar years of experience in the core subjects of math, science, English, and social studies.

Benson et al. (2020) situated their study in one racially-integrated school within an urban school district in the southeast United States. The authors defined “racially integrated” as a school where no one race accounts for the majority of the student population. The sample

included 280 5th-grade students whose racial composition was 26.5% Black, 36% Latino, and 37.5% White. The researchers drew data from the National Center for Educational Statistics from 2013 to 2017 in order to track the trends of teacher-student pairings over time. The teachers assigned to the students ranged in experience from less than one year to over 25 years.

The researchers employed a Doubly Multivariate Analysis of Variance using student race and grade level as independent variables and teacher experience as the dependent variable. This allowed the authors to track the relationship between each of the racial categories and teacher experience level over four years for each of the core subjects.

Benson et al. (2020) found that the only subject for which a statistically significant difference in student-teacher pairings existed was math. This gap persisted across grades for both Black and Latino students in comparison with their White peers. The authors posited that these results support the hypothesis that inequitable student-teacher pairings contribute to the educational disparities among races. As such, they recommended action be taken at the school, district, and state level to address teacher assignments and student tracking, especially in math.

In addition to inequitable teacher-student pairings, police presence in schools has contributed to disproportionate discipline for students of color. In response to the increase in active shooter events in schools, police presence has become more prevalent in U.S. schools. While the intention of incorporating policing programs into schools is to increase safety, other consequences remain a possibility. Weisburst (2018) addressed the expansion of police presence in U.S. schools, the impact of which has not been widely investigated. The purpose of this study was to quantify the effect of funding for school police programs on student outcomes.

Weisburst obtained data from the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) DOJ Office regarding federal COPS grants used for funding for police in Texas public schools from

1999-2008. The researcher also obtained student-level data from the Texas Education Research Center (ERC) including demographics, enrollment, disciplinary actions, graduation rates, and college enrollment.

Weisburst (2018) used a model that analyzed the variation across years within a school district in order to compare student outcomes with exposure to COPS grants, keeping data for high schools separate from middle schools and using grant application timing as a direct control.

In terms of discipline, the analysis showed an impact on middle schools, but not high schools. Overall, the disciplinary rates for middle schools increased by 6%, which was due to disciplinary action for low-level behaviors. Exposure to a three-year federal COPS' grant was associated with a 2.5% reduction in graduation rates and a 4% reduction in college enrollment rates.

Weisburst (2018) also disaggregated the data by race and SES and found that vulnerable groups carried the majority of the negative effect of the COPS' grants. For middle school discipline, there was a 7% increase in incidences for black students while there was a 5% increase for Hispanic students, and a 4% increase for white students. Similarly, the largest decrease in college enrollment was among low-income students.

Another strategy schools have used to address safety in schools is zero tolerance policies. Curran (2016) explored the effect that zero tolerance policies have on discipline outcomes for students of different races. Because zero tolerance policies mandate specific consequences for particular behaviors, it is logical to think that they would reduce racial bias in student discipline. However, Curran asserted that further research was needed to determine whether this was true or whether zero tolerance policies, in fact, exacerbate the racial disproportionality in exclusionary discipline. Additionally, the researcher examined the effect that zero tolerance policies had on

school leaders' perception of the presence of certain negative behaviors in their respective schools.

In order to fill a gap in previous research, which often focused on a single school district, Curran used national data from both the Office of Civil Rights (discipline data) and the Schools and Staffing Survey (perception data). These two data sources included 36,650 and 42,470 school years worth of data which occurred between 1989 and 2007. Curran then analyzed the data from the Office of Civil Rights for patterns of suspensions overall and by race. The researcher used the Schools and Staffing Survey data to determine principals' perception of problem behaviors at their schools and did so according to their ratings.

Curran used a fixed-effects model to determine the connection between zero tolerance laws and various outcomes while controlling for state characteristics and yearly trends. The researcher found that an increase of 0.5% of the proportion of students suspended could be predicted by the presence of a state-mandated zero tolerance law. Furthermore, this increase in suspensions became disproportionate when Curran examined the data by race. The magnitude of the coefficient from Black students suspended was three times larger than the coefficient for White students. Curran also found that in a school with a state-mandated zero tolerance policy, higher proportions of Black students lead to an increase of the proportion of Black student suspensions. The opposite was true for White and Hispanic students.

For the second portion of the study, Curran examined principals' perception of physical conflict, robbery, vandalism, alcohol, drugs, weapons, and disrespect in schools where mandatory expulsion laws exist. Curran found a statistically significant and positive relationship between those laws and vandalism, robbery, and weapons offenses. There was a statistically significant and negative relationship between mandatory expulsion laws and assault. All other

categories of this analysis were statistically insignificant. In other words, though “perception” is an imperfect measure, the findings from this study do not show that zero tolerance laws contribute to a more positive school environment.

Positive Impact on the Discipline Gap

Included here are reviewed articles related to district and schoolwide policies and programs that have a positive effect on the racial discipline gap. These policies and programs include Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS), teacher coaching programs, Restorative Practices (RP), and parental involvement.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a popular approach to decreasing the use of exclusionary discipline and closing the racial discipline gap. Research regarding the effectiveness of PBIS has produced mixed results. McIntosh et al. (2018) addressed this inconsistency by investigating the impact of PBIS on out of school suspensions (OSS) as a whole and on distinct racial groups using a much larger sample than previous studies.

McIntosh et al. (2018) used data from the Civil Rights Data collection database for the 2013-14 school year, which was the most recent set of data available. The researchers cross-referenced this data with the PBIS Assessment database, resulting in a sample of all schools in the U.S. using PBIS for the year of the study, the year prior, and the year following. Schools that had less than 10 students from each racial category were not included in the study. Fidelity implementation measures determined which schools met criteria for implementing Tier 1 PBIS. The data analysis included 95,507 schools that served as the control group and 2,357 schools that served as the PBIS comparison. McIntosh et al. (2018) calculated the rate of OSS for both groups as the percent of students who received at least one OSS during the year of the study. The researchers analyzed the data as whole sets and by racial group.

Overall, a total of 5% of students nationwide received OSS during the school year. Comparatively, this same figure was 4% for the PBIS schools. Black, multiracial, and Pacific Islander groups of students were impacted the most by PBIS implementation with a decline in OSS received of two percentage points for each group. Furthermore, the calculated white/black OSS risk ratio was 4.33 for the control group and 3.67 for PBIS schools, indicating an impact on the discipline gap while highlighting the need for additional strategies.

Building on this research, James et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and student achievement and discipline outcomes. In particular, the researchers sought to verify inconsistent findings from previous studies and address the lack of research into the relationship between PBIS and achievement data while taking into account fidelity when investigating these relationships. Specifically, James et al. (2019) investigated whether changes in the implementation fidelity of PBIS impacted behavior and achievement data from one year to the next in a sample of Ohio schools.

The researchers measured achievement data with performance index scores (school performance on state tests) and behavior with the number of out-of-school suspensions per 100 students. The implementation of PBIS was measured with the Tiered Fidelity Indicator (TFI). The study's sample included 85 schools from 31 different districts in Ohio. Of those schools, 41 were elementary schools, 21 were preK-8, 14 were middle schools, and nine were high schools. Additionally, the sample represented different school settings which included 19 rural, 22 suburban and 44 urban.

Before determining a relationship between fidelity of implementation and achievement and behavior, the research first determined other variables that had a correlation to either of these variables. The researchers found that the student mobility rate, the proportion of the school

population identified as a racial or ethnic minority, and the percent of high-performing or “accomplished” teachers all correlated to the number of out-of-school suspensions per 100 students. The covariates that correlated to the performance index scores were the same with the addition of chronic absenteeism and the percent of economically disadvantaged students.

Next, James et al. (2019) conducted linear regressions to determine the impact that TFI scores had on academic performance and discipline data. The author found that TFI scores predicted 13.4% of the variability in OSS data and 2.1% of the variability for the academic performance.

While this study suggested a weak link between SWPBIS and improved academic outcomes, it confirmed results of previous studies that established a relationship between PBIS and decreased out-of-school suspensions. Furthermore, the researchers established a relationship between the fidelity with which PBIS was implemented and improved discipline data for schools.

Teacher training and coaching are sometimes paired with schoolwide programs such as PBIS as a means of increasing success of implementation. Nese et al. (2020) investigated the impact of one such pairing, the Inclusive Skill-Building Learning Approach (ISLA) program, on behavior and discipline outcomes. In particular, the researchers focused on whether the implementation of ISLA could prevent and reduce the use of exclusionary discipline, potentially lessening the negative effects on the individual, community, and society.

The ISLA model complements the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program and contains specific components related to staff training, analysis of student behavior, development of behavior skills, and re-entry to the classroom after removal. More specifically, ISLA requires that all staff be re-trained on effective behavior management strategies, students

receive immediate coaching and support once removed from the classroom, and the students' re-entry to the classroom is positively facilitated.

Nese et al. (2020) conducted a case study with two public middle schools. Both schools had used PBIS for at least two years prior to the study and were aiming to reduce exclusionary discipline by implementing ISLA for the first time. School 1 was located in a suburban environment where 85% of the students qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch, and 43% identified as students of color. School 2 was located in the same region of the United States, but in a rural setting. At School 2, 68% of the students qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch and 15% identified as students of color.

The researchers measured four different outcomes to determine the impact of ISLA: number of major Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) resulting in exclusion from class, instances of exclusionary consequences, instructional time lost, and staff perception. For the quantitative measures, the researchers had data for both the year that ISLA was piloted and the previous year, which served as the pre-ISLA measure. Nese et al. (2020) collected ODR and discipline data from each school's School Wide Information System (SWIS). The researchers included in-school suspensions (ISS), out of school suspensions (OSS), and expulsions in their data. For instruction time lost, staff members used a Google Document to enter the time a student was removed from class for an ODR and the time the student returned to class. The total number of instructional minutes lost each week was then calculated on a weekly basis. The researchers determined staff perception using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Any staff member who utilized the ISLA room throughout the year was asked to complete the survey which included 17 questions and a Likert scale for the responses. Finally, the lead author conducted a focus group of seven staff members to gather qualitative data. As a validity measure, graduate students conducted

30-minute observation sessions to quantify the consistency in which each component of ISLA was carried out.

School 1 experienced a 25% decrease in major ODRs during the ISLA pilot year with 616 major ODRs in the 2014-15 school year and 462 in the 2015-16 school year. Additionally, prior to ISLA, 34% of students received at least one ODR and 25% received at least one ODR the following year. Results at School 2 were similar; major ODRs decreased by 22% and the number of students receiving at least one ODR dropped from 27% to 20%.

School 1 also experienced a decline in exclusionary consequences. In the pilot year of ISLA, the proportion of students receiving OSS decreased from 18.5% to 13.2%; the proportion of students receiving ISS decreased from 16% to 11%, and the percentage of students receiving an expulsion decreased from 1.1% to 0.01%. At School 2, the proportion of students receiving OSS decreased from 9.6% to 8%; the proportion of students receiving ISS decreased from 6.9% to 4%, and the number of students expelled decreased from one student to no students.

Instructional time lost showed the most dramatic decrease of all of the outcomes measured. At School 1, the total number of minutes of instructional time lost decreased from 1125 to 75, and at School 2 from 563 to 45, a 93% and 92% reduction, respectively.

The staff survey included results from 10 staff members across both schools. The 17 survey questions addressed staff perceptions of ISLA's effectiveness, appropriateness, and sustainability. The average Likert scores for each question ranged from 4.89 to 5.7. On average, the response to each question was slightly agree, agree, or strongly agree which indicated a positive perception within the staff who took the survey. Results from the staff focus group were not quantified, but rather shared as anecdotal quotes from staff members. The anecdotes from staff members also indicated a positive perception of ISLA.

In a related study, Gregory et al. (2016) focused their research on the impact of teacher practices on the discipline gap. Their work was a follow-up study to a previous study on a program called My Teacher Partner- Secondary (MTP-S). MTP-S is a coaching program where coaches work with teachers within the CLASS-S framework to improve disciplinary outcomes for students of color. CLASS-S includes desirable classroom characteristics such as a positive climate, teacher sensitivity, and regard for adolescent perspectives.

The original study showed that MTP-S effectively closed the gap in disciplinary referrals between black students and students of other racial categories (Gregory et al., 2015). The follow-up study aimed to support those findings by examining whether that trend held for another year of MTP-S coaching with the same teachers but different students. Furthermore, Gregory et al. (2016) acknowledged the temporary nature of the coaching program and chose to extend their focus to the third year where teachers who had been coached for two years no longer had a coach actively working with them. The researchers wanted to know what effect a second year of MTP-S coaching would have on discipline referrals for Black students, and whether any positive effect would remain after coaching had finished. Mindful of the application limitations it might present if their study concluded with a specific recommendation of the MTP-S program only, they also investigated the parts of the MTP-S coaching program for those that had the most impact on the discipline gap, so teachers and administrators could focus on those characteristics. The authors predicted that the trend of closing the discipline gap would hold and that this success would be linked to teachers that offer robust emotional and instructional support.

The study included 86 secondary teachers who participated in two years of coaching and one year of post-coaching follow-up. To qualify for the study, teachers had to agree to being randomly assigned to a group (the control group or the group who received the MTP-S coaching)

and teach a course that culminated in a standardized exam. Of the 86 teachers chosen to participate in the study, half of them served as the control group. Gregory et al. (2016) chose teachers across five different secondary schools in one district, which were selected due to low academic performance and high diversity. In addition, the five schools did not have any school-wide discipline initiatives at the time of the study, so there were no obvious competing variables.

Teachers who received the MTP-S coaching, or intervention teachers, were videotaped while teaching throughout the year. These videos were coded by CLASS-S categories observed and then each teacher was assigned a score of 1-7 for each of the five categories. In doing so, the researchers were able to analyze the data to determine whether or not there was a link between higher scores in any of the categories and lower discipline rates for black students in those teachers' classrooms. Additionally, they compared the number of office referrals for the control group's classes to the teachers who had received the coaching and determined the existence of a discipline gap for each.

Similar to the original study, the authors found that in year two, the racial discipline gap did not exist in the MTP-S teachers' classes. In these classes, the probability of a Black student receiving a discipline referral was virtually the same as all other students (0.1) while Black students in the control group's classrooms were two times more likely to receive a discipline referral than other students (0.3 and 0.1, respectively). The other aspect involved exploring a connection between the CLASS-S framework and the closing of the discipline gap. Ultimately, the teacher's use of analysis and inquiry in the classroom had a statistically significant effect on lowering the number of referrals for Black students. They also found that teacher sensitivity, while not statistically significant, warrants further study.

In a related case study, Bornstein (2018) used his own experience as the principal of a turnaround school to conduct an autoethnographic study of leadership practices that challenge school disciplinary practices rooted in white supremacy. Specifically, Bornstein investigated how whiteness shaped the existing discipline structures and the reform process. Furthermore, the researcher explored how a white man's use of transformative leadership principles impacted this process.

In 2013, the author accepted a position as principal of an elementary school in a small city in the Northeast United States. The school's racial makeup included 51% of students identifying as Black, 14% Hispanic/Latino, 5% multiracial. 86% of students were economically disadvantaged, and 13% had at least one disability. Due to the school's poor performance on standardized tests and failed efforts at reform, it was identified as a "turnaround school." As such, it received a grant to invest in enrichment programs, external consultants, and staff development. Additionally, there was an open investigation into the district's excessive and disproportionate discipline of students with disabilities, black students, and Latino students. Bornstein's study took place over the 2013-14 school year where he had one year to develop a turnaround plan.

The author used personal journals, memos, emails, professional development materials, and other documents as qualitative data. Bornstein also used his own memories of the school year; he wrote down these memories, coded them, and analyzed them for themes. Quantitative data included demographic information as well as suspension data for the year of the study and the year directly preceding it.

Bornstein's (2018) findings can be categorized as obstacles and solutions. Solutions were practices that the author implemented or proposed to implement with the goal of dismantling

racism institutionalized in the school, in turn reducing the discipline and achievement gaps. Obstacles were practices, policies, and attitudes that the author identified as conflicting with this goal either directly or indirectly. Many of the solutions are the author's responses to the obstacles.

"Deficit" language was pervasive. In "leadership academies", where building principals met once a month, school principals and other administrators often shifted blame for the excessive suspensions and low test scores to the students and their families. The author observed that school staff members spoke about student diversity in a deficit-oriented way and were nostalgic for the days when their schools were less diverse and earned higher scores on standardized tests. The author also noted that staff spoke of their new facilities with pride, but feared minoritized students would destroy them. In other words, some staff viewed material things as an asset while viewing the students as not only a deficit, but a threat to the assets.

Fear was another theme Bornstein (2018) observed in his year at the turnaround school. Few teachers implemented the morning meeting, which aimed to center students' social and emotional needs. According to his journal at the time, Bornstein perceived that the accountability teachers felt for producing tangible results (i.e., test score increases) left them unable to buy into these changes. Overall, Bornstein asserted that the fear and anxiety related to staff maintaining their jobs and their own safe space in the school ultimately prohibited them from making the necessary changes to discipline and instruction in order to begin to dismantle white supremacy in the school.

School policy reflected a narrow view of compliance and order. For example, their slogan that outlines the school's behavioral expectations- Respect Optimism Always Responsible and Safe- was problematic. It used racially neutral yet subjective language and could easily be used

to center white norms and police anything outside of those norms. Additionally, these expectations did not extend to the staff. In fact, Bornstein's notes reflected that staff regularly escalated student behavior which resulted in their exclusion from class. Rather than establishing classrooms to support students who have suffered from trauma, the school engaged in practices that further traumatized students and sometimes resulted in the medicalization of behavior differences.

Over the course of the year, Bornstein (2018) implemented and proposed actions aimed at addressing some of these obstacles with varying degrees of success. First, the school leadership team created a "twin vision statement" that elicited ownership of school values from staff as well as students. The author also began shifting the school's discipline practices toward restorative. This included transforming the in-school suspension room into a reflection room where students exhibiting challenging behaviors were met with support, introducing morning meetings, and introducing trauma-informed practices.

Ultimately, under Bornstein's leadership, the number of out-of-school suspensions dropped by 45% and in-school suspensions dropped by 80% in comparison with the previous year. Despite the promising reduction in suspensions, the district rejected Bornstein's proposal to focus on trauma-informed and restorative practices and instead opted to use strategies that target content standards.

Prior to Bornstein's study which identified restorative practices as a method of decreasing exclusionary discipline, Gregory et al. (2016) conducted a study focused on restorative practices (RP) as a means of improving student-teacher relationships and narrowing the racial discipline gap. While several studies have investigated the relationship between restorative practices and discipline outcomes, no studies have specifically examined interaction between restorative

practices and students' relationships with teachers, leaving a gap in the literature. The purpose of this study was to determine whether higher teacher RP implementation was associated with better relationships with their students and whether differences existed across racial groups. Additionally, the authors investigated the impact of RP implementation on the issuance of discipline referrals for individual teachers. The researchers hypothesized that teachers with higher RP implementation would have more positive relationships with their students of all races and that they would issue fewer exclusionary discipline referrals across racial groups.

This study was situated within two large and diverse high schools in a small city in the United States during their first year of implementing restorative practices as an initiative. To give context to the study, Gregory et al. (2016) reported disciplinary data for the year directly prior to implementation. During the 2010-2011 school year, misconduct/defiance referrals accounted for almost a third of all referrals. Thirty-four percent of Latino students and 38% of Black students received a misconduct/defiance referral, while only 11% of White and 5% of Asian students received the same type of referral, indicating a racial discipline gap.

The following year, RP trainers led two full-day workshops with school staff as well as two days of consultation in each school. Consultation consisted of observation and feedback, modeling, and planning. At the initial training, the research team introduced the study. Between the two schools, 29 teachers agreed to participate in the study and completed the required survey. For each teacher, one of their classes was chosen at random to become the focus of the study. The teacher participants ranged in experience from 3 to 32 years, with an average of 13 years. Approximately 75% were women, and all but one were White.

An average of 60% of each focus class consented to the study, which resulted in 412 student participants. Fifty-three percent of the student participants were male, 44% were White,

21% were Latino, 3% were American Indian, 2% were Asian, 5% were Black, and 25% identified as Mixed Race.

The researchers used the teacher and student surveys developed by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) to measure the implementation of RP. The IIRP identifies 11 elements of RP as essential, for example “management of shame” and “fair process.” The survey was designed to assess implementation of each of these elements on a five-point scale. Because teachers were rated similarly across racial groups, the researchers compiled the student survey results into a single rating for each teacher. The teachers completed the teacher version of the same survey, assessing their own implementation of RP.

To assess teacher-student relationships, students completed an additional survey using the Teacher Respect scale. This survey asked students to what degree they felt their teacher liked them, enjoyed having them in class, and listened to their side. Discipline referral data accounted for the second measure of teacher-student relationships. To determine the connection between referrals and relationships with the teacher, the researchers first obtained discipline data from a schoolwide database and identified the types of referrals that would likely stem from a breakdown in the teacher-student relationship (e.g., defiance, disorderly conduct, insubordination). For this particular measure, Gregory et al. (2016) opted to include data for all students of the teacher participants, rather than only using discipline data from the student participants. In this way, the researchers could obtain a more comprehensive rating of their use of exclusionary discipline to manage student behavior.

The researchers analyzed the data using multilevel analyses to determine the impact of RP implementation on relationships as determined by student perception. This analysis showed that higher student-reported RP was associated with a more positive relationship according to

student survey results. In other words, student perception of RP implementation was a predictor of a positive student-teacher relationship while a teacher's self-assessment of RP implementation was not. This outcome held true across racial groups.

To determine the relationship between RP implementation and exclusionary discipline, the researchers used a multiple linear regression. Similar to the first research question, student-reported RP was a predictor of misconduct/defiance referrals while teacher-reported RP was not. However, the results were not the same across racial groups. The predictability for RP and referrals for Black and Latino students was significant, while the authors characterized the predictability for RP and referrals for White and Asian students as "approaching significance." Furthermore, teachers who had a higher-than-average RP implementation rating averaged .77 referrals issued for Asian and White students and 2.92 referrals for Latino and Black students. Teachers who had a lower-than-average RP implementation rating averaged 1.69 referrals for Asian and White students and 9.13 referrals for Latino and Black students. This suggests that while high implementation of restorative practices has the potential to narrow the racial discipline gap, it will not eliminate it.

A connected study examines the relationships between schools and parents as a potential tool for narrowing the racial discipline gap. Yull et al. (2018) studied the development and effects of a parent engagement program implemented in Rivertown, New York, especially as they pertain to the relationships between stakeholders. A relatively recent increase in racial diversity and poverty within the district coincided with racially disproportionate discipline and lower graduation rates. In 2016, 52% of students in the district were students of color, and 76% were economically disadvantaged. In 2015, the graduation rate was 54%.

The development of the Parent Mentor Program (PMP) was a direct response to these new challenges. While most parent programs are race-neutral, the purpose of the PMP was to provide a way for parents of color to advocate for equitable education and treatment of their children in the school by increasing engagement between parents of color and school staff and facilitating the collaboration on district initiatives. The PMP challenged deficit-based assumptions that are often applied to parents of color and, instead, focused on strengths. The goal of the PMP was to increase the cultural responsiveness of the schools, increase the parents of color's social and cultural capital within the school system, and ultimately, decrease racially disproportionate discipline. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that the PMP in Rivertown had on the relationships between parents and school staff and on the cultural capital of the parents. Furthermore, the researchers identified the following research questions: What concerns do parents of color have with regard to engaging with the school system? What barriers do they face? In what ways does the PMP raise critical consciousness among the Parent Mentors?

In order to recruit parents who would be a good fit for the PMP, the researchers worked with school administration to identify families within the district whose children struggled with attendance and school performance. Accompanied by social workers, the researchers conducted home interviews with these families to recruit them to "Community Cafes." Community Cafes were gatherings with the purpose of building community and understanding needs and concerns of those attending (similar to a focus group). Yull et al. prepared four guiding questions for the cafes: 1) What is it like to be raising a child in this community? 2) Can you give an example of a positive experience with the school? 3) Can you describe a difficult experience with the school? 4) If you could talk to the superintendent or principal without judgment, what would you say?

Following the community cafes, the researchers recruited Parent Mentors who, at the time, had at least one student in the district, were enthusiastic about the prospect of working with teachers and students, were available to spend at least 6 hours in the school each week, and able to attend a week-long training program. In total, four Parent Mentors were recruited, all of whom were African American women and single heads of household. These Parent Mentors became the subjects of the study, providing data by means of interviews. The researchers audio recorded the interviews, analyzed them, and assigned codes, which resulted in thematic categories.

The teachers who partnered with the Parent Mentors were chosen on a volunteer basis. All were ninth-grade teachers of core subject areas. One parent was partnered with the school social worker who ran an after school study hall program.

Yull et al. (2018) found that, prior to the PMP, participants' experiences within the school system fell into two themes: 1) feeling unwelcome and perceived as uncaring and 2) experiencing racial injustice and exclusionary discipline. Prior to the study, participants felt that they were met with suspicion and hostility when they entered the school. They did not feel welcome to be involved in school events and, furthermore, that school events were not accommodating to their schedules. As a result, school personnel dismissed them as uncaring because of their lack of "participation." However, participants recognized that certain exceptional adults in the building did make an effort to form relationships with their families, which helped to mitigate some of these negative experiences. Participants noted that their children did not seem to enjoy school as much as they had when they were younger, which they credited to increased surveillance measures in modern schools. Participants also expressed that teachers didn't seem to have as much authority as they did in the past and that they do not effectively demand or earn respect. Teachers are more likely to pass discipline off to other staff,

thereby undermining their own authority and over-relying on punitive discipline. Parents also perceived discipline to be unfair because they are not included in conversations until the consequences are major. They also felt that their students were provoked and/or other students involved received lesser consequences. Parents felt that it was not within their power to change these perceived injustices.

Qualitative data showed that the PMP had several benefits. First, because the participants attended the trainings and Community Cafes together, they formed a strong connection with each other. Connection among parents is important because it helps to combat feelings of isolation and also makes it easier to approach administration and demand change. Additionally, participants felt respected and proud when they were in the school building, rather than unwelcome and dismissed.

The PMP was mutually beneficial for the parent and staff participants. Because Parent Mentors were forming positive relationships with the students in their classes and intervening on their behalf, they were able to minimize class disruptions, redirect students to keep them on task, and prevent minor situations from escalating to a point where exclusionary discipline might take place. As a result, parents of color were able to disrupt the deficit labeling that they so often disproportionately carry, increasing their cultural capital within the school. They were able to leverage the connections they made to gain respect and partnership with school staff members.

Teacher and Administrator Factors

This final theme of this literature review highlights research related to individual teachers and administrators. As with the previous theme, this one is divided into three subsections: factors that have the potential for positive and negative impact, factors that exacerbate the discipline gap, and factors that can potentially narrow the gap.

Positive and Negative Aspects that Contribute to the Discipline Gap

This subsection contains one case study that explores both positive and negative aspects of teacher practices on students of color.

Kennedy-Lewis and Murphy (2016) investigated the perceptions of students who are frequently disciplined. The researchers asserted that Black students are more likely than their white counterparts to be repeatedly disciplined using exclusionary practices. This aspect of the discipline gap contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline by excluding the most vulnerable students from classroom instruction more often and by shaping students' perception of themselves and how others see them. Acknowledging a gap in the literature, the researchers focused on the latter. Specifically, the following questions served as a guide for the research: do students who are repeatedly disciplined, or "frequent flyers," adopt educators' labels of them as "bad?" If so, in what ways? How does this label shape their experiences as a student?

Kennedy-Lewis and Murphy (2016) used labeling theory and symbolic interactionist framework as a lens for the study. The study was qualitative and focused on the experiences and perspectives of 11 students at an urban middle school in the southeastern part of the United States. In sum, 60% of students at the school were African American and 55% received free or reduced lunch. The African American population at the school represented 91% of the out of school suspensions given.

To select the 11 participants, school administrators identified students who had been suspended at least twice during the school year and with whom they had frequent interactions, thus making them "frequent flyers." The 11 participants included four African American boys, five African American girls, and two girls of mixed race. On average, each participant had received 28 referrals, confirming their frequent flier status.

Over the course of one month, the researchers conducted four 45-60 minute interviews with each of the students separately. The interviews were structured with predetermined questions, but allowed for some flexibility in order to facilitate the development of the students' narratives (i.e., asking questions out of order or asking follow up questions). The questions centered on student-teacher relationships and interactions, academic learning, behavior, and other people's perceptions of them. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded to uncover common themes. Additionally, Kennedy-Lewis and Murphy (2016) analyzed the cumulative records for each of the students, which allowed them to compare the paper trail of their behavioral infractions to the students' own perceptions of their behavior.

The researchers found a significant shift in students' perception of how staff members see them beginning in middle school. This shift coincided with an increase in office referrals and, consequently, exclusionary discipline. According to the students, behavior was dealt with mostly inside the classroom in elementary school. This assertion was validated by the students' cumulative records. Though some students did have negative interactions with teachers in elementary school, they did not associate those interactions with being labeled as "bad."

The interviews showed that students resented the change in teacher behavioral management where the students were often simply written up. The students viewed the referral as a missed opportunity to support them and, as such, it damaged their relationship with their teacher. The participants recognized themselves as being labeled as "bad" and perceived many of their referrals and discipline as a subjective consequence of that label.

Additionally, the researchers noted that "bad behavior" could be organized into three categories: response, reaction, and resistance. The latter category consists of actions that a student takes in response to a perceived injustice. While resistance to injustice is a valuable skill,

the participants often found themselves in trouble for this type of behavior and misunderstood by their teachers.

Kennedy-Lewis and Murphy (2016) found that, though the participants were aware of their negative label, they did not see themselves as inherently “bad.” The students recognized that their behavior could be “bad” sometimes, but that it was circumstantial and not a characteristic of their personality. Furthermore, the students were optimistic that they could be “good” in the future, but worried that their school record reflected a “badness” that could limit their opportunities.

Negative Impact on the Discipline Gap

This subsection contains seven articles that explored the negative impact of individual educators on the racial discipline gap. The first three articles provide research regarding implicit bias. The middle two articles focused on Black girls as a subset of the racial discipline gap. The last two articles investigated the aspect of decision-making on the racial discipline gap.

Marcucci (2020) investigated the role of implicit bias in teachers’ decisions regarding student discipline and, more specifically, whether implicit racial bias has the same effect on punitive and restorative discipline practices. The researcher developed a vignette and an accompanying survey in which a hypothetical student enters the classroom and exhibits a series of both subjective and objective misbehaviors. Marcucci administered the survey to 287 teachers, 144 of whom read a version of the vignette in which the student was characterized as white and the other 143 teachers read a version in which the student was Black. Using a seven-point Likert scale, the survey asked the study participants to rate their likelihood of isolating the student in the classroom, sending the student to the hall, sending the student to a buddy room, writing a discipline referral, referring the student to a school counselor or psychologist, saying that the

student deserves one day of in school suspension, or saying that the student deserves one day of out of school suspension. Marcucci hypothesized that not only would there be a significant difference in the likelihood of overall discipline depending on the hypothetical student's race but also a difference in the use of exclusionary or restorative discipline practices.

Using the full sample of surveys, scores were higher (meaning stronger agreement for using that particular discipline practice) for the white student in every category except isolation within the classroom. When Marcucci isolated the survey results from White teachers only, this trend became more pronounced. For example, White teachers rated writing an office referral a 5.47 for the white student and 4.27 for the Black student.

Because the results of this study did not align with real data on the racial discipline gap, Marcucci provided two possible explanations for the tendency of white teachers to discipline the white student more harshly: shifting standards theory and social desirability hypothesis (p. 66). Shifting standards theory says that teachers subjectively apply discipline based on their expectations for a particular group. In other words, if white teachers have lower standards for black student behavior, they will not view misbehavior as out-of-the-norm and may not apply discipline as severely as they would for a white student for whom they have higher expectations. However, applying this theory as a rationale for the results of this study does not explain how the racial discipline gap persists in the real world. Instead, Marcucci suggested that the social desirability hypothesis explains why white teachers in a survey setting would opt to discipline a white student more harshly. That is, teachers overcompensate for their implicit racial bias if they are in a setting where 1) they know explicit racism is not socially acceptable and 2) they have time to reflect enough to override their implicit bias.

Additional evidence for the implicit racial bias of educators can be found in Starck et al. (2020). The researchers suggested that, while schools are tasked with mitigating the effects of the racial inequities in the United States, teachers themselves are racially biased. Furthermore, racial bias is a contributing factor for discipline disparities and teachers are not equipped to regulate their own implicit biases (p. 273). However, because of the nature of their job, it is plausible to assume that teachers are less racially biased than other categories of people. Starck et al, investigated the validity of this assumption.

For this study, the researchers used Implicit Association Test (IAT) data from the Project Implicit website. Project Implicit is a website that allows users to self-administer the IAT while collecting demographic information from the participants. The IAT measures implicit bias by calculating reaction times in pairing black and white faces to positive words. Because the IAT also asks participants to rate their “warmth” towards different races, the researchers were able to quantify explicit bias by subtracting warmth towards African Americans from warmth toward white people. Starck et al. sorted the data, and used only data from participants who resided in the United States, were 18 years of age or older, and reported their occupation. Because the purpose of this study was to compare the racial bias of teachers to other Americans, the researchers sorted the data into two separate groups. This resulted in a sample size of 68,930 Pre K-12 teachers and 1,531,070 others.

Starck et al. analyzed the data using linear regressions and found that teachers had a small but statistically significantly lower implicit bias than non-teachers ($M=0.37$ and $M=0.38$, respectively). Similarly, explicit bias for teachers was also lower than non-teachers ($M=0.61$ and $M=0.65$).

The researchers also included covariates in their analysis, including race and political identification. This portion of the analysis revealed that these two covariates were much more accurate predictors of implicit bias. The difference in implicit bias was 74 times larger between Black and White respondents than between teachers and non-teachers. Additionally, the difference between politically liberal and conservative respondents was 46 times larger than teachers and non-teachers.

In another study related to implicit bias, Gullo and Beachum (2020) investigated the impact of implicit bias on the severity of consequences given for behavioral infractions. Instead of focusing on teachers, who are the target audience of most anti-bias professional development, this study addressed a gap in literature by focusing on administrators' implicit bias.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the implicit bias of principals and assistant/vice principals influenced objective and subjective disciplinary decisions. The researchers considered the following four research questions: 1) Are there differences in discipline severity among administrators? 2) Are there differences in discipline severity by student race due to administrator bias? 3) Does implicit bias account for these differences taking other student factors into account? 4) Are the findings the same for subjective and objective decisions?

Gullo and Beachum (2020) chose the Pennsylvania school districts from which to pull participants as its demographics are similar to national demographics, making findings more likely to be broadly applicable. The researchers invited all districts meeting their criteria to participate in the study. Of those districts, seven chose to participate which lent 43 administrators from 22 different schools to the study. There were fewer elementary schools and a lower

representation of black students from schools participating in the study than in the overall sample of districts invited to participate.

Participating schools provided discipline data for the first 100 days of the 2016-17 school year for analysis. This data included student demographic information, type of infraction, and consequence given. The researchers categorized the infraction as subjective or objective and rated it on a severity scale (1 = least; 7 = most) using the PA Safe Schools coding system. The researchers then coded the consequence given on a scale of 1 to 6 (1 = warning; 6 = expulsion). Administrators provided their own data via survey, which included their race and years of experience in their position. Each participating administrator completed the Implicit Association Test for Race (IAT) and the result was used as a measure of their implicit bias. Overall, results of the IAT showed a slight pro-white preference.

The researchers then analyzed the data using hierarchical linear modeling which included 401 objective incidents and 3,498 subjective incidents. Analysis revealed a 22% variance in objective discipline and a 33% variance in subjective discipline between administrators. Race was a significant predictor of subjective and objective discipline severity. Administrator IAT score was a significant predictor of subjective discipline severity, but not a significant predictor of objective discipline severity. Student grade, administrator race, and administrator experience were insignificant predictors of both objective and subjective discipline severity. Infraction level was a significant predictor of both types of discipline while Free and Reduced Lunch eligibility was a predictor of subjective discipline severity.

Overall, the study revealed that administrator implicit bias accounts for approximately one-fifth of the racially disproportionate discipline by way of subjective discipline decisions. The

authors recommended the expansion of objective discipline systems, incorporation of anti-bias strategies for staff, and examination of existing discipline policies for embedded bias.

Narrowing focus on the intersection of race and gender, Annamma et al. (2019) established a link between Black girls and the school-to-prison pipeline. While other studies have examined the disproportional discipline of Black students, they often ignored the unique challenges that Black girls face by grouping them together with Black boys. The purpose of Annamma et al.'s (2019) study was to determine whether Black girls were disproportionately disciplined in schools and, if so, whether the justification for the use of excessive discipline aligned with societal narratives about Black girls and women.

First, to investigate the overrepresentation of Black girls in school discipline, Annamma et al.(2019) collected data from Denver Public Schools. Specifically, the researchers analyzed data for all K-12 disciplined female students for the 2011-2012 school year and found when separated by race, Black girls were the only racial group disproportionately represented. In fact, Black girls represented 29% of the discipline data but only 15% of the population of female students in the district. Then, Annamma et al. used a logistic regression model to identify the justification (i.e., destruction of school property, disobedience or defiance, bullying, detrimental behavior, other violations of the school's code of conduct, third-degree assault, first-degree assault, drug possession or distribution, and possession of a dangerous weapon) significantly connected with the discipline of Black girls versus White girls.

Annamma et al. (2019) found a statistically significantly higher occurrence of discipline of Black girls for defiance/disobedience (49%), detrimental behavior (53%), and third-degree assault (5%). Conversely, Black girls were less likely to be disciplined for drug or alcohol

possession. After accounting for other demographic covariates, the researcher found that the disproportionality of referring Black girls for defiance and disobedience was significant.

In addition to a higher rate of subjective rationale for use of discipline, Black girls also had a higher rate of exclusionary discipline applied to them. Fifty-two percent of Black girls referred to the office received out-of-school suspension as their consequence while only 20% of Asian girls, 31% of White girls, and 41% of Latina girls received the same consequence.

After identifying the categories of discipline in which Black girls were either over or underrepresented, Annamma et al. (2019) used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to determine whether these categories were subjective or objective. All three categories where Black girls were disproportionately disciplined (i.e., defiance, detrimental behavior, third degree assault), were defined in the district's Safety and Discipline Indicator (SDI) with subjective language that forces judgment (i.e., "knowingly," "openly," "recklessly," "willfully") and requires reporting staff to make an assumption about intent.

Furthermore, Annamma et al. (2019) asserted that these subjective categories serve as a catchall for stereotypes and controlling images about Black girls and women to play out in schools. For example, if a Black girl is "too loud" or "talks back," she can be categorized as defiant and disciplined as such. Because Black girls are measured against the standards of ideal White femininity (e.g., or i.e., quiet, passive, helpless, and innocent), behavior outside of these norms results in their implicit or explicit mischaracterization as loud, demanding, and aggressive.

In a related study, Morris and Perry (2017) asserted that research isolated to either race or gender as it pertains to discipline can have unintended negative effects. In this study, the researchers analyzed discipline data through an intersectional lens, specifically, the ways in which gender and race interact in relation to student discipline. Morris and Perry examined the

effect that race had on different genders receiving office referrals at various levels of severity. Furthermore, the researchers investigated the specific types of violations disproportionately attributed to Black girls.

Morris and Perry used discipline data from the Kentucky School Discipline Study; the sample included 30,202 students in grades six through 12 who were enrolled over a four-year period from August 2007 to June 2011. The students represented in the study were 49% female, 64% White, 24% African American, 8% Latino, and 4% Asian. The researchers coded discipline data and organized it by both type and level of severity (Class I, II, III, and IV). Morris and Perry then used multilevel mixed logistic regression models to analyze the relationship between gender and race and office referrals, including type and class. The researchers used the first set of models to determine the effect of gender and race on the odds of any office referral while they used the second and third set of models to uncover any disproportionality in either the class or type of rule violations.

The researchers found that, in general, rule violations were more likely to be attributed to Black students than White students, with an odds ratio of 2.29; as well, Black boys were twice as likely to be referred as white boys. In comparison, Black girls were 2.80 times as likely to be referred as White girls. In fact, they had the same predicted probability of receiving any office referral as White boys did (.07).

In regard to the severity of the violation, Morris and Perry (2017) found that Black students of all genders were more likely to receive a Class I, II or III referral with odds ratios of 2.54, 1.59, and 2.23, respectively. However, Black students were no more likely than White students to receive a Class IV referral, the most severe category of violation. When data was separated by gender, the researchers found that Black girls were substantially more likely to be

disciplined for a Class I offense than Black boys (3.26 and 2.13 odds ratios, respectively). This trend held for Class III offenses, with an odds ratio of 3.09 for black girls and an odds ratio of 1.83 for Black boys.

Additionally, Morris and Perry (2017) examined the effect that being Black had on the type of offense for which they received a violation. Black girls had an odds ratio of 3.29 for receiving a violation for disruptive behavior while Black boys had an odds ratio of 1.81. This pattern held true for other low-level violations such as dress code and cell phone use and extended to subjective Class II and III categories such as disobedience, aggressive behavior, and dishonesty. On the other hand, more objective violations such as truancy, vandalism and tobacco use were not nearly as disproportionate.

By examining the data by both race and gender, the researchers found that the impact that being Black had on a student was significantly higher for girls than it was for boys. Furthermore, Morris and Perry (2017) offered a possible explanation for this disproportionality that occurs at the cross-section of race and gender; that is, schools more frequently discipline Black girls for behaviors that are inconsistent with traditional norms of White femininity.

Providing further evidence for racial bias in discipline, Blake et al. (2020) studied the number of accumulated discipline infractions and how it relates to the discipline gap for students of color and students with disabilities. The purpose of the study was to add to the growing body of literature confirming the existence of a discipline gap and to determine whether racial and disability disparities in discipline could be attributed to the number of infractions for individual students. The researchers hypothesized that disparities between groups exist from the first disciplinary consequence rather than increasing over time as disciplinary instances also increase.

The study aimed to answer the following three questions: 1) Do African American students with and without disabilities receive more severe disciplinary sanctions than their White and Hispanic counterparts? 2) Are these patterns the same for Hispanic students? 3) Do the outcomes still hold true when controlling for the number of infractions a student receives in a year?

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission (TJPC) served as the sources of data for the study. The researchers analyzed data for all students enrolled in 7th grade in the 2000-2001, 2001-02, and 2002-03 school years. For each year's cohort, the researchers used data going forward (through the next six years) which constituted the rest of their secondary schooling unless the students had dropped out or transferred. Data from their sixth-grade year served as a control. Of the 928,940 students in the sample, 43% were White, 39% were Hispanic, and 14% were African American, making the sample both robust and representative of the state's population. Because of the purpose of the study, the researchers excluded students that did not fit the three racial categories from the analysis, which accounted for 3% of the total sample.

Blake et al. (2020) organized the data by infraction type, student racial category, and student disability category. Infraction type included mandatory and discretionary consequences. Because of the objective nature of the discretionary discipline, the researchers omitted any students who received a discretionary sanction from that year's data. The student was added back into the analysis for subsequent years, with their previous discretionary sanction serving as a predictor. The researchers also coded the data by disability category, if any. However, the analysis only included students with Intellectual (ID), Emotional (ED), and Learning Disabilities (LD) because of the relatively low presence of other disability types in the sample.

The researchers then ranked discipline outcomes based on severity. The analysis included in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), disciplinary alternative educational placement (DAEP), juvenile justice alternative educational placement (JJAEP), and expulsion. Controls were set for grade level, free/reduced lunch status, academic achievement, behavioral history from previous years, and school-level characteristics in the analysis.

Blake et al. (2020) first examined the overall probability of receiving discipline. Based on the analysis, 25% of students received at least one discipline sanction in a single year. African American students received the most discipline sanctions - twice as many as White students. Furthermore, African American students experienced the most severe discipline, followed by Hispanic students, then White students. Students with an intellectual disability had a reduced probability of receiving a disciplinary sanction while students with a learning or emotional disability had an increased probability of receiving a disciplinary sanction over their non-disabled counterparts.

Second, the authors examined the patterns in severity of discipline. African American students were the most likely of any racial group to receive more severe consequences with a lower number of infractions. However, each discipline event increased the likelihood of a more severe consequence for White students. In other words, racial disparities exist in discipline severity until White students “catch up” in number of infractions. At this point, 13 infractions, the disciplinary outcomes reached a balance among White and African American students. The trend was similar for Hispanic students, with the equilibrium with White students occurring at the sixth infraction.

Similarly, students with intellectual and emotional disabilities experienced more severe discipline earlier while students without disabilities received less severe discipline, but with a

higher marginal effect for each added infraction. The equilibrium between disabled and non-disabled groups occurred at 10 infractions. The researchers offered bias as an explanation for their findings. Given the data, it appears that white and non-disabled students were given the benefit of the doubt for behaviors for which African American, Hispanic, emotionally disabled, and intellectually disabled students were more severely held accountable. Because white and non-disabled students did not experience bias in this personal and systemic way, the severity of their consequences increased as administrators learned more about them as individuals.

In a connected study, Smolkowski et al. (2016) expanded on previous research that asserted implicit bias is not necessarily constant; rather, it may fluctuate depending on the external or temporary factors of the moment. The researchers referred to these situations as vulnerable decision points (VDPs) and, in the context of education, consist of situations in which teachers or administrators are less likely to be able to override their implicit biases. The authors posited that it is at these VDPs that racially disproportionate discipline is likely to occur. As such, it is essential to identify common VDPs in order to develop interventions that would reduce the racial discipline gap.

The purpose of the study was to identify common VDPs that could be supported with school discipline data. The researchers hypothesized that African American students would receive more Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) than White students for subjectively defined behaviors. Additionally, Smolkowski et al. (2016) proposed four VDPs for school staff that they hypothesized would be associated with a greater odds of a subjective ODR for Black students than White students: the end of the day, in the classroom as opposed to other school settings, when classifying an ODR as severe instead of minor, and when disciplining female students. The researchers also offered a rationale for selecting these four VDPs: the end of the day because

staff are more fatigued which may affect their ability to override implicit bias, the classroom setting because of its potential to intermingle with the established achievement gap, the issuance of severe ODRs because of the subjective nature of classifying borderline student behavior, and gender because of the potential for interaction of multiple biases.

Smolkowski et al. (2016) sourced data from 1,666 elementary schools across the U.S. using the School-Wide Information System (SWIS) during the 2011-12 academic year. The researchers excluded schools with less than 10 students in the White and African American racial categories. ODRs that could not be classified as either subjective or objective were also excluded from the analysis, resulting in a sample of 424,840 subjective ODRs and 58,845 objective ODRs.

After finalizing the sample, the researchers coded each ODR with pertinent variables, including student race, gender, and hypothesized VDP. A logistic regression model was used to analyze the data with the five ODR predictors: African American, female, end of day, classroom setting, and severe. The researchers found that African American students were 1.2 times more likely to receive a subjective ODR from the same teacher in the same school than their White classmates. Overall, the odds of receiving a subjective ODR was actually lower at the end of the day (odds 1.02) than other times of the day (odds 1.25) for African American students, disproving the end of day as a VDP. Further analysis revealed that African American students were 1.26 times more likely than White students to receive subjective ODRs in the classroom and 1.34 times as likely to receive a severe ODR.

Upon examining the role of gender in the issuance of subjective ODRs, the researchers disaggregated the data by gender and found that when comparing males only, African American students were 1.15 more likely to receive a subjective ODR than White students. However, when comparing only females, African American students were 1.4 times more likely to receive a

subjective ODR than white students. The researchers then analyzed the effect of being a Black female on each of the other VDPs and determined that African American females were 1.49 times more likely than White females to receive a subjective ODR at the end of the day, 1.54 times more likely in the classroom setting, and 1.73 times more likely to receive a severe subjective ODR.

Because the analysis did not support the end of the day as a VDP, the researchers tested an alternative hypothesis - the first 90 minutes of the day. The competing idea was that the beginning of the day is stressful for teachers and students as they transition from home and particularly for teachers as they get organized and attempt to set the tone for the day. During the beginning of the day, African American students were 1.4 times more likely to receive a subjective ODR than White students. When disaggregated by gender, African American males' odds were 1.32 while females were 1.72 in comparison to their same-gender peers.

Positive Impact on the Discipline Gap

The final subsection of this theme contains four article reviews related to individual educator aspects that have a positive impact on the racial discipline gap. The first focused on administrator characteristics. The other three highlighted teacher characteristics and practices.

In a recent case study, Bruhn (2020) explored the most important leadership qualities for administrators to possess when moving a school from a traditional discipline model to a restorative culture as a means of reducing disproportionality in racial discipline data. Bruhn employed the portraiture method of a case study with two school leaders, the principal and the restorative justice coordinator, at a charter school that decreased their suspensions of black students from 7.5% to 3.7% over the course of four years.

Employing portraiture methodology, Bruhn conducted three in-depth interviews with the administrators and shadowed them weekly over the course of a semester. Bruhn conducted formal interviews with three other school staff members and four students and completed observations in various school settings including classrooms, hallways, and the cafeteria. Bruhn took notes of the observations and transcribed the interviews for analysis.

After coding the notes and transcriptions for themes, Bruhn (2020) identified three key traits the administrators possessed: restraint, persistence, and respect. “Restraint” referred to an administrator's (or teacher’s) ability to lead by example and allow autonomy. Bruhn found that rather than strictly enforcing the expectations about restorative practices, the administrators gave teachers space to balance the multiple demands they face. That is to say, the administrators extended the same scaffolding, understanding, and flexibility they expected their teachers to give their students.

Respect referred to sensitivity to teachers’ needs. Bruhn observed that both administrators expressed a caring attitude toward teachers. Administrator 1 explained, “Everyone is human here, and everyone deserves to be honored. I speak to teachers about their emotional states as much as I do to students” (Bruhn, 2020, p. 20).

Bruhn used the term persistence to describe an administrator’s patience. Both administrators in the study were able to facilitate shifts in teachers’ mindsets by remaining supportive and continuously coaching them rather than mandating they make changes to their practices. Administrator 1 denoted, “The problem is that it’s not a quick fix. Like any investment, you invest energy” (Bruhn, 2020, p. 16).

By consistently demonstrating these three characteristics, the administrators modeled relationship-building for teachers and gave them the time, space, and support to develop skills in

restorative justice. As a result, they created an environment where restorative justice could be implemented and sustained.

In another case study, Nasir et al. (2015) asserted that, because society is racialized, schools are also racialized. Furthermore, schools are organizations that uphold the imbalance of racial power dynamics. This imbalance results in tangible consequences for Black male students in the form of inequities in school discipline, achievement, and involvement in the criminal justice system. The researchers focused their study on practices that have the power to actively work against those dynamics. Specifically, Nasir et al. (2015) identified specific teacher practices that Black males view as positive and supportive and therefore shift the balance of power toward equilibrium.

The researchers conducted a qualitative case study of a program called Manhood Development Program (MDP). The Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) in California developed MDP in response to high rates of chronic absenteeism and suspension and low rates of English and math proficiency among their Black male students. The purpose of MDP was to address the aforementioned challenges as well as to “help cultivate healthy identities among Black male students” (Nasir et al., 2015, p. 495). The MDP offered a class by the same name to Black male students at three high schools within OUSD who school administrators identified as having low academic performance, but not chronic absenteeism. The MDP class was optional and operated in cohorts of 20 students who received elective credit for the course. Though the structure and content of MDP classes had some variation across the different sites, they shared the traits of being taught by a Black male, addressing a variety of student needs, centering content on racial and cultural identity, and having the goal of changing the students’ mindset about their education.

After identifying the sites for data collection, Nasir et al. (2015) conducted visits at each of the three schools and invited all MDP students to participate in an interview during the last two weeks of the semester. The researchers then designated Valley High School as their focus school because support from administration and effective communication with the MDP teacher made observations easy to conduct. At Valley High School, Black students make up 40% of the student population and more than half of the overall student body qualified for free and reduced lunch.

At Valley High School, the researchers conducted observations weekly, took notes, and recorded the class. The research team analyzed the videos of class to identify disciplinary moments, instances when the MDP teacher intervened upon student behavior, and discipline-worthy moments, instances that would typically elicit a disciplinary intervention from the teacher but did not in this case. As a team, the researchers decided which of these moments were salient and transcribed them for further analysis.

Furthermore, at the end of the year, the researchers interviewed 14 students from the Valley High MDP class and nine from the two other schools combined. The researchers focused their interview questions on discipline practices, relationships, racialized experiences and how the MDP class compared to other experiences at school. The researchers then recorded and transcribed these interviews, coding and analyzing them using Hyper-RESEARCH software.

Nasir et al. (2015) identified three themes that emerged from the data analysis: reframing what was considered discipline-worthy (allowing free movement in the classroom, assuming best intentions, incorporating the students' communication styles), community-based discipline (encouraging public apology, creating a class constitution, sharing consequences as a class), and re-shaping students' identities as learners rather than subjects (using positive affirmations,

addressing students as “brother”). The researchers concluded that the strong teacher practices within each theme benefitted the Black male students in the MDP classes by allowing them to re-identify themselves as students worthy of care and, in turn, served to protect them from the disproportionate outcomes of the racialized school disciplinary system.

Further highlighting “at-risk” students’ perspectives, Phaup (2017) investigated student perspectives on exclusionary discipline and teacher behaviors. The purpose of this study was to address the discipline gap by documenting an in-depth account of frequently-disciplined students’ perception of exclusionary discipline. Additionally, Phaup sought to use these accounts in order to identify which teacher behaviors these students perceived to be “caring” and how teacher behaviors influence student behaviors.. By gaining a better understanding from students who are most affected by disproportionate discipline practices, teachers can reflect on how their attitudes and practices contribute to or protect students from these outcomes.

Phaup (2017) employed the practitioner research method, which centers the study within the researcher’s own professional practice. As such, Phaup’s study took place at the Arkansas middle school where she is employed as a teacher and where racially disproportionate discipline was evident. For example, in the month of October 2016, discipline reports showed that black students made up over 90% of out-of-school suspension (OSS) and in-school suspension (ISS) incidents while only representing 60% of the overall student population.

The researcher first defined “frequently disciplined” as students who had received three or more suspensions since the start of the school year. Because the potential subjects of the study were her own students, Phaup (2017) appointed a designee to recruit participants. Of the 24 students in the researcher’s resource classes, 11 returned the consent form and met the exclusionary discipline criteria for the year. Of those 11, Phaup chose six as the study

participants based on who she had the best rapport with. The researcher perceived that these six students would be most likely to be candid about their thoughts and experiences.

Phaup (2017) collected data over the last nine weeks of the 2016-17 school year. These data included six student discipline reflection forms completed by participants after receiving a disciplinary referral, individual student interviews, and the researcher's personal journal. Each student was interviewed once, with the exception of one student who was interviewed a second time after she returned from a suspension. The researcher recorded and transcribed the interviews, reading through them several times and, finally, coding them by common theme.

After completing the data analysis, Phaup identified six common themes. The first three themes pertained to exclusionary discipline: exclusionary discipline was ineffective in changing student behavior, it was harmful to students' educations and futures, however, students supported the school's use of exclusionary discipline. All six participants indicated that they felt suspensions were ineffective in changing student behavior. Furthermore, they believed it made student behavior worse by aggravating students or causing them to develop an apathetic attitude towards school. On every discipline reflection form, students chose "I don't care" when asked how they felt about being sent to the assistant principal. Four of the six respondents also marked "angry." Participants also perceived that exclusionary discipline had a negative impact on the future. For example, one participant expressed that their discipline record would affect their chance of being accepted into college.

Despite recognizing exclusion as both ineffective and detrimental, all six participants viewed exclusionary discipline as a necessity. Student responses pertaining to this theme included "they don't got time to put up with this stuff," "they're tired of it," and "[educators] don't know what else to do."

The final three themes that emerged from the data related to teacher behavior: certain teacher behavior escalated student behavior, calm discussions were the preferred method of managing student behavior, and the perception of respect and disrespect were integral in disciplinary incidents. Participants perceived that teachers cared about them when they viewed them as capable learners and provided them with the support they needed to be successful. Participants identified adjusting pace, trying new methods, and being willing to work with them, as supportive strategies. In other words, frequently-disciplined students perceived teachers who accommodated and differentiated for their academic needs as caring. The participants also appreciated when their teachers were nonjudgmental and protected them from embarrassment due to their academic deficiencies and gaps. In addition to being in tune with their academic needs, the participants also perceived teachers who helped with their personal and emotional needs as caring. These behaviors included being aware of students' personal challenges and striving to meet those needs (e.g., buying basic clothing and supplies for a student in need) as well as providing calm emotional support (i.e., de-escalation/calming strategies) during a discipline interaction rather than writing them up.

In contrast, participants described uncaring teacher behavior as being indifferent towards their academic achievement, being unwilling to help, and kicking them out of the classroom. Participants perceived these behaviors as teachers giving up on them and therefore felt they were uncaring. All participants expressed a strong dislike for teachers yelling at them. Other teacher behaviors they identified as escalating student behavior were engaging in power struggles, invasion of personal space, and an unwillingness to allow space for emotions to calm down or seek a trusted adult before continuing to address the issue.

The final theme of respect highlighted the subjective nature of the word “respect” and, in turn, the potential for misperceptions between students and teachers. The participants had different definitions of respect, both for students and teachers. Ideas about respectful student behavior included not talking back, compliance, not having an attitude, raising their hand, and staying in their seat. Respectful teacher behavior included speaking calmly, treating students equally, helping students, and not falsely accusing students.

In contrast to Nasir et al. (2015) and Phaup (2017), Schauer (2021) focused on teachers’ perspectives. The researcher investigated the childhood experiences of White female teachers who form positive relationships with their students of color. Because teachers are overwhelmingly White women, it is crucial to understand the development of their racial identity, so anti-racist practices can be effectively incorporated into schools. In other words, if a teacher is to challenge systemic racism, they first need to understand their own racial identity, especially in the context of education. Schauer sought to understand how a critical consciousness around race was developed in this demographic of teachers, addressing a gap in literature by focusing on childhood experiences rather than professional development.

Schauer (2021) employed an Anti-Racist Pedagogy lens throughout this study, which calls for the promotion of social justice through teaching and defines teaching as a political act. Through this lens, challenges that befall Black students are viewed as rooted in White supremacy rather than individual or cultural deficits. The purpose of this study was not only to identify common childhood experiences that could explain how White female teachers are able to build strong relationships with students of color, but also to investigate whether these teachers also used Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT).

This study took place within a large, urban school district with over 40,000 students. Of those students 70% were Black, 15% were Latino, and 15% were White. All students qualified for Free and Reduced lunch, indicating a high level of poverty within the district. The method for identifying participants consisted of first asking the superintendent of the district to recommend principals who “had an understanding of the importance of strong teacher–student relationships and culturally responsive pedagogies and practices” (p. 17). Those principals then nominated teachers who they believed form strong relationships with students of color and incorporate CRT into their classrooms. The final group of participants included five White female teachers ranging in age from 41 to 51. Four of the teachers taught at the secondary level, and one taught at the elementary level.

Schauer used a narrative approach to this study. The researcher conducted at least two interviews of each participant and an observation of their class. These interviews, which were audio-recorded and transcribed, included both structured demographic questions and open-ended questions, allowing participants to share their experiences. The researcher used open-coding techniques to classify data and identify recurring themes as well as key differences among the participants.

Schauer found that, while they came from different experiences and socio-economic backgrounds, the participants had all had experiences with race that led to critical consciousness in childhood or early in their teaching career. Critical consciousness refers to a person’s ability to recognize systems of inequality and challenge them through direct action (13). All of the participants described their parents as practicing a racially-neutral parenting style where race was not explicitly discussed and having friendships with people of other races was not discouraged. While this neutral style provided a foundation where critical consciousness could be developed,

it stopped short of providing a framework for understanding their own racial identity and how it fits into society.

Each of the participants expressed a colorblind worldview, emphasizing the importance of looking beyond race and labels to truly get to know a person. Additionally, all of the participants consistently used asset language when speaking about their students of color and class observation data showed that teacher practices prioritized social-emotional wellbeing. Schauer (2021) concluded that while these common characteristics allowed the teachers to build strong relationships with students of color, they did not bring them to the level of consciousness necessary to challenge the systems that perpetuate racial inequity.

CHAPTER III: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This thesis reviewed a total of 30 studies that examined the racial discipline gap in order to identify the factors of greatest impact at the K-12 level. Unsurprisingly, considering the complex nature of racial issues in the US, the analysis revealed outcomes related to various aspects of the issue. After analysis, I conceptualized the discussion of these findings into three broad categories: characteristics of the current landscape, school bias, and corrective strategies.

Characteristics of the Current Landscape

In order to understand the racial discipline gap, it is important to put it in context. Five of the studies reviewed pertained to the racial discipline gap as it relates to other racialized educational gaps as well as external factors.

Gopalan (2019) and Pearman et al. (2019) both investigated the relationship between the achievement gap and the discipline gap and found a statistically significant relationship between the two. Pearman et al. (2019) evaluated the direction of this relationship and found a stronger correlation for the achievement gap influencing the discipline gap than the other way around. Gopalan (2019) found that the Black-White discipline gap was larger than the Hispanic-White discipline gap and Pearman et al. (2019), by controlling for district and community characteristics, found that the Hispanic-White gap could be explained by those factors. Furthermore, the inconsistencies in the relationship that Gopalan found between the racial discipline gap and district factors suggests the need for investigating factors at the local level and that multiple factors are likely at play.

The teacher quality gap (TQG) also has implications for the achievement and discipline gaps. It is reasonable to assume that a difference in teacher quality applied systematically to different races would result in unfavorable academic and disciplinary outcomes for the students

paired with less-experienced, less-effective, or less-effective teachers. Goldhaber et al. (2018) found that racial TQGs exist for each measure of teacher quality (e.g., test scores, experience), but the size of the gap varies by quality factor and region. Like the aforementioned studies, this emphasizes the importance of tailoring corrective measures to the specific needs of the school or district. It is also crucial to examine the types of racialized educational gaps that exist locally and the ways in which they interact with one another.

Critical Consciousness: A Racialized Lens

10 studies approached the topic of racial discipline disparities through a lens of critical race theory (CRT) and critical consciousness, the former of which provides the framework for the latter to be achieved. Through the lens of this framework, in order to address the discipline gap, it was necessary to avoid racially-neutral strategies in favor of racialized ones.

This lens acknowledges the reluctance that can occur when taking a racialized approach and suggests that it can be appealing to teachers and administrators to inaccurately explain away the discipline gap with external factors, allowing them to resist change and, in doing so, retain the school as a relatively “safe space” for themselves. Additionally, teachers are under pressure to meet the expectations of White middle class parents. As long as schools center these norms of Whiteness, teachers will be uncomfortable or fearful of committing to change (Bornstein, 2018; Wilson et al., 2020).

As Marsh (2021) pointed out, some schools that follow a racially-neutral “no-excuses” model have had success in closing the racial discipline gap, but their method of doing so is rooted in gaining compliance to norms of Whiteness and maintaining the status quo rather than disrupting the system that keeps Black students at a disadvantage.

In order to close the racial discipline gap in a way that values Black students' identity, schools must actively work to shift the racial power dynamics to a place of equilibrium (Nasir et al., 2015).

Bias in Schools

Fifteen studies addressed implicit bias as a factor that impacts the racial discipline gap. Subjective language was a salient aspect of bias throughout this review due to its prevalence in both individual teacher expectations and discipline policy. Starck et al.'s (2020) study used the Implicit Association Test (IAT) and indicated that teachers have biases that mirror the general US population. The IAT assesses bias through a series of exercises where subjects pair Black and White faces or names with words that have either positive or negative connotations. This results in a score ranging from -2.0 to 2.0, with a score of 0 indicating no bias. Teachers' scores on the IAT were .32 for implicit bias and .30 for explicit bias. Furthermore, 55% of teachers and 59.7% of non-teachers indicated some level of pro-White/anti-Black implicit bias. Although teachers were slightly less biased than non-teachers, race and political affiliation were much better predictors of a person's bias. Based on these findings, it is likely that Black students experience some degree of racial bias toward them in schools.

These personal biases have real consequences for students of color. Black students experience a higher frequency of discipline and harsher consequences (Blake et al. 2020). Some of this can be attributed to teachers' decisions within the classroom; however, according to Gullo and Beachum (2020), one-fifth of racially disproportionate discipline can be attributed to an administrator's implicit bias. Both teachers and administrators experience vulnerable decision points during the school day (VDPs). VDPs are situations where implicit bias is particularly likely to overcome any override capabilities due to stress, subjective language, or other factors

(Smolkowski et al., 2016). In the same study, Smolkowski et al. found that disproportionate discipline was most likely to occur with Black students in general and, in particular, Black female students. within the classroom and at the beginning of the day. Overall, teachers are able to override implicit bias when a) it is socially desirable to do so (Marcucci, 2020), and/or b) they have the time and mental capacity to do so. It is consequently up to the schools to develop strategies to identify and understand these VDPs, so staff can take measures to eliminate them.

Four studies investigated subsets of bias: bias against Black families and bias against Black girls. Marcucci (2020) and McElderry and Cheng (2014) found that while parental involvement was a protective factor for other races in terms of experiencing school discipline, it was a risk factor for Black students. While neither study investigated the reason for these results, Marcucci (2020) suggested school bias and lack of social capital among Black families were possible explanations for the discrepancy between races. Wilson et al. (2020) and Yull et al. (2018) examined the bias from the marginalized parents' perspective and found that they recognized their children were being treated differently and that they did not feel welcome in their child's respective school. In the study by Yull et al. (2018) the implementation of the Parent Mentor Program (PMP), which placed Black parents in a support role in the classroom and provided them with training and support, had a favorable impact on the parent-school relationship.. This led to the parents' increased social capital and feelings of being respected by school staff.

Studies by Morris & Perry (2017) and Annamma et al. (2019) offered important findings regarding the intersectionality of race and gender. Black girls, though not they do not account for the highest percentage of disciplinary referrals, are more disproportionately disciplined within their gender (Annamma et al, 2019). As such, Black girls experience a unique kind of bias. A

possible explanation for this is that they are held to standards of White femininity, which is based on traits like passiveness and innocence. In fact, Black girls are frequently disciplined for subjective behaviors such as “defiance” or “detrimental behavior” (Annamma et al, 2019). This unique manifestation of bias has created a larger gap between Black and White female students than between Black and White male students (Annamma et al., 2019).

Corrective Strategies

12 studies focused on strategies that could potentially narrow the racial discipline gap. Two of these studies relate to policies with the potential to harm students of color. The other studies center around programs, practices, and traits identified as having a positive effect on closing the racial discipline gap and/or affirming and valuing Black students and their identity.

Problematic Policies

Police presence in schools and zero tolerance policies have both been implemented in response to safety concerns and both have been found to have a disproportionate negative impact on Black students. Weisburst (2018) found that among schools that received COPS grants, discipline was negatively impacted at the middle school level with Black students accounting for most of the increase. Similarly, Curran (2016) found that schools that implemented a state-mandated zero tolerance policy experienced a 0.5% increase in suspensions and an increase in racially disproportionate discipline. These studies highlight the importance of analyzing current policies at the school, district, and state level for negative effects on students of color.

Programs, Practices, and Qualities

The schoolwide programs PBIS, MTP-S, and ISLA were all found to have a positive effect on disciplinary outcomes. In a nationwide study, McIntosh et al. (2018) found that PBIS programs decreased OSS across racial categories by one percentage point and by two percentage

points for students of color, effectively narrowing the gap, but not closing it. Furthermore, James et al. (2019) examined the relationship between fidelity of PBIS implementation and OSS data and found that high fidelity scores had a desirable outcome on OSS data, increasing the effectiveness of the PBIS program. Nese et al. (2020) found that pairing PBIS with the ISLA program substantially reduced ODRs and exclusionary consequences. The ISLA program provides staff with training on effective behavior strategies and students with coaching and support upon their removal from the learning environment. The schools that served as the subjects of their study experienced a 23.5% average decrease in overall major ODRs and the average minutes of lost instructional time dropped by 92.5% during implementation of the ISLA program.

While PBIS and ISLA had favorable outcomes, the MTP-S program was the only program in this review to actually close the racial discipline gap. In the MTP-S program, teachers are individually paired with coaches who work with them one-on-one to improve disciplinary outcomes. In a case study, Gregory et al. (2016) found that the racial discipline gap was eliminated within the classrooms where MTP-S coaching was used in comparison with classrooms where it was not implemented.

In addition to schoolwide programs, restorative practices have emerged as an alternative to exclusionary discipline and, therefore, a way of closing the racial discipline gap. However, policy changes meant to reduce exclusionary discipline can have unintended effects. Steinberg and Lacoé (2015) found that prohibiting the use of OSS as a consequence for minor behaviors actually caused a shift of minor ODRs to major behaviors. Additionally, schools that struggled to implement the policy changes with fidelity experienced academic declines. This indicates a need

for support and monitoring coupled with policy changes and program implementation in order to set a school up for success.

Rather than simply addressing the disciplinary consequences as a means of reducing the racial discipline gap, the cause of the disciplinary incident must be addressed. Gregory et al.'s (2016) study on restorative practices (RP) offered several key outcomes on this topic. One, disciplinary referrals often stem from a breakdown in relationship between staff and student, which makes relationships a crucial area of focus. Students who rated teachers highly with RP implementation also rated them highly in terms of respect, which indicates a strong teacher-student relationship from the perspective of the student. Two, student ratings of RP implementations were more accurate than teacher self-ratings. Three, restorative practices, when implemented with fidelity, lead to stronger relationships and helped to minimize the discipline gap (a 2.15 ODR racial differential for high RP implementation teachers vs. a 7.44 ODR differential for low RP implementation teachers), although they did not eliminate it.

Bornstein's (2018) case study echoed these findings. Bornstein's implementation of restorative practices in the form of asset language, morning meetings, trauma-informed practices, and support for students exhibiting challenging behaviors resulted in a dramatic drop in OSS (45%) and ISS (80%).

While policies, programming, and practices are necessary components of closing the racial discipline gap, personal traits and mindset are additional key aspects of confronting racial disparities in education. Five studies focused on teacher or administrator traits, two of which specifically explored the perspectives of at-risk students. In examining traits of administrators who were successfully reducing racially disproportionate discipline in their schools, Bruhn (2020) identified restraint, persistence, and respect as qualities that defined their success. These

qualities were evident in both their interactions with students and staff. Bruhn's study brought attention to the humanness of the issue. Just as students benefit from relationship-building practices from their teachers, staff benefit from similar treatment, especially when adapting to new programs and practices.

Beginning in middle school, the use of ODRs increases and at-risk students begin to form a perception that school staff see them with a deficit mindset (Kennedy-Lewis & Murphy, 2016). To disrupt that mindset, Nasir et al. (2015) identified an asset-based mindset and a motivation to protect Black students from negative outcomes as important qualities for teachers implementing restorative practices. Similarly, Phaup (2017) found that at-risk students identified caring teachers as those who practiced de-escalation strategies and kept them in the classroom rather than kicking them out. Additionally, a willingness to patiently reteach content and differentiate lessons was viewed as caring.

Professional Application

A common thread throughout this research was the dynamic, multi-faceted nature of the racial discipline gap. For that reason, none of these strategies would likely work when implemented on their own. A successful program aimed at closing the racial discipline gap would consist of a collection of strategies at the policy, practical, and personal level.

Principles

Based on this body of research, it is evident that mindset and intention act as a foundation upon which successful policies and practices can be built. Accordingly, educational institutions should embed certain principles into their organizations in order to increase the likelihood of success in closing the racial discipline gap. Educational institutions should take a racialized approach rather than a race-neutral one, explicitly setting the reduction of racial

disproportionality as their intention. This means that an emphasis must be placed on attaining growth and racially equitable outcomes rather than overall academic achievement.

In order to implement a racialized approach, staff and other stakeholders should be educated on the CRT framework and how critical consciousness can create change within schools. Educational institutions must take responsibility for and prioritize undoing damage to the Black community caused by harmful practices and redefine the school as a safe space for Black students. This education, which could take the form of professional development or be embedded into teacher licensure programs, should include strategies designed to recognize and override implicit bias.

Finally, schools should embed and promote asset language and mindset towards all students, especially toward students of color and their families who have historically been subjected to a deficit mindset on behalf of schools.

Policies

Schools and their districts should eradicate subjectivity in language used in all policies, especially discipline policies. Terms such as “disruptive,” “disrespectful,” “detrimental,” and “defiant” should be eliminated in favor of objective terms. Subjective language breeds bias because it forces judgment. Consequently, bias breeds disproportionality.

Discipline policies should be examined in order to reconsider and reframe what is discipline-worthy. At the classroom level, discipline policies should allow for variation in student communication styles and need for movement. In other words, teachers should refrain from applying subjective discipline categories such as “defiance” and “disruption” to non-traditional classroom behaviors such as talking and standing without permission (Nasir et al., 2015).

Educational institutions should re-evaluate the use of police presence and zero tolerance in schools, and determine, based on data, whether either one or both result in disproportionate outcomes for students of color. In the case of disproportionality, these programs should be adjusted or eliminated in order to protect those students from negative effects.

Schools should cement restorative practices such as Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Trauma Informed Practices (TIPs) as schoolwide policy with training and support provided to teachers. Progress toward racially equitable outcomes should be incentivized at the local and national level in order to motivate teachers, administrators, schools, and districts to prioritize these changes.

Practices

Individual schools should collect and analyze data in order to identify vulnerable decision points and teacher quality gaps and take measures to eliminate them. Eliminating VDPs may consist of removing subjective language and restructuring the school day and/or classes. Eliminating TQGs would likely consist of reorganizing teacher-class assignments and pairing more experienced teachers with vulnerable populations as well as reducing tracking, especially in math classes.

Schools should adopt a research-based program aimed at reducing exclusionary discipline and disproportionality as well as increasing restorative practices. Four such programs were presented in this study: PBIS, ISLA, MDP, and MTP-S. While PBIS is widely accessible to interested schools and districts, the other three programs are exclusive. Both ISLA and MTP-S are projects born out of research and are only available to schools participating in a study. MDP is a program specifically designed by Oakland Unified School District in response to poor

outcomes for its Black male students. Schools should pair programming with fidelity monitoring and a support system such as continuous training and coaching.

Additionally, schools should implement a parent engagement program designed to value the cultural capital of parents of color, similar to the Parent Mentor Program. This will have two positive outcomes: extra support for teachers and strengthened relationships between the school and families of at-risk students. This relationship would redefine family involvement as a protective factor for Black students.

In the classroom, teachers should implement strategies that at-risk students perceive as caring: de-escalation and calming strategies, differentiation, and reteaching. Teachers should also develop a classroom management style that allows them to work through conflict within the classroom.

Personal Traits

Teachers should cultivate the qualities within themselves that benefit Black learners. Teachers should adhere to an asset-based mindset and hold themselves accountable for the same behavior they expect of their students. For example, at the school where I work, our four values are respect, optimism, achievement, and responsibility. As a staff member, I should model these qualities for my students.

Teachers should focus on building relationships with students and apply Bruhn's qualities of respect, restraint, and perseverance in order to maintain and strengthen them. They should show their care for students by expressing support for their personal and academic needs.

Finally, teachers should cultivate a critical consciousness within themselves in order to recognize and disrupt patterns of racial inequities wherever they arise.

Limitations

One limitation of this review was the narrow criteria for parental involvement that two of the studies used. For example, in Marcucci (2020), home involvement was defined as how often parents said they checked their children's homework. Checking homework is a specific definition of parental involvement and does not account for things like checking in on classes or grades, or helping their child organize their work and materials.

While it was important to me to include students' perspective in this study, I found that these studies had small sample sizes. This means that the perspectives expressed in these studies may have been influenced by the relationship between student and researcher and that they are not necessarily representative of the perspectives of students of color as a whole.

Another limitation of this review was the fact that most of the studies measured disciplinary outcomes (ISS, OSS, ODRs) or student perspective, but not both. For this reason, it is possible that a school with disproportionate disciplinary outcomes may actually be making progress in terms of teacher-student relationships or relationships with families. If this nuance exists, the studies examined here were not able to capture it.

Finally, the articles in this review heavily relied on the use of secondary schools as the subject of study. Consequently, it lacks context from elementary school and possible outcomes or persistent bias in the post-secondary educational setting.

Implications for Future Research

Throughout the process of this literature review, I found a lack of information linking curriculum and teaching strategies such as Culturally Relevant Teaching to discipline outcomes. Because of the relationship between the achievement and discipline gaps and the higher likelihood of the achievement gap influencing the discipline gap than the other way around, it

would seem worthwhile to have a better understanding of academic-based strategies or content that impact the discipline gap.

Other aspects of education that did not emerge in this study were high-stakes testing and funding. In my experience, schools often prioritize achieving proficiency in reading and math. Investigating how the emphasis on math and reading scores influence budget allocation, initiatives, programming, professional development, and expectations could give key information regarding what is and what is not being prioritized in schools. This could have implications for efforts to close the racial discipline gap.

A challenge involved in this review was that it is composed of various individual studies that investigated different approaches to closing the racial discipline gap using different measures. Based on the totality of this review, I assembled a toolbox of strategies that are likely to have a positive impact on the discipline gap. However, it is still unclear which strategies might be the most impactful. A single study that evaluates various corrective strategies for impact on the discipline gap would help to more definitively answer my research question.

Conclusion

This literature review sought to bring understanding to the racial discipline by exploring its relationships to other educational gaps and investigating factors that impact it, both positively and negatively. Additionally, the purpose of this review was to present these factors in such a way that would allow educators to narrow their focus on closing the discipline gap.

The racial discipline gap presents real consequences for students of color and it falls on educators, administrators, and stakeholders to utilize every available strategy in order to minimize it. To achieve this, policymakers and administrators must prioritize Black students and their needs by analyzing their community's characteristics, current policies and programs, and

educational gaps in order to create a multifaceted and racialized plan at the state, district, or school level. Teachers must center Black students' needs through relationship-building, restorative practices, and supportive teaching strategies. They must be ready to change and adjust as our population and their needs change and, perhaps most importantly of all, as we discover more sources of inequity.

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