

SCHOOL SUSPENSION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR TENTH AND
ELEVENTH GRADE MALE STUDENTS: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

by

Dante' L. Ferguson, Sr.

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this correlational study was to examine the relationship between absenteeism due to suspensions and math and reading scores from the 2016 – 2017 Georgia Milestones Test for tenth and eleventh grade regular education, male students. The focus of this study was on determining if math and reading scores on standardized tests could be predicted by the number of days missed from school due to suspensions using a bivariate regression. A total of 93 male high school students in grades ten and eleven who have received one or more out of school suspensions during the previous school term were randomly selected from 4 high schools in a suburban metro Atlanta school district. A bivariate regression analysis was used in this study. The results of the analysis showed a significant but weak negative correlation between days missed from school due to OSS and EOC analytic geometry and American Literature scores on the Georgia Milestones Assessment. This study may have implications for national school discipline policies in that the data may indicate a need for educational leaders to provide additional training for teachers and policy makers to take a closer look at the negative impact of zero tolerance policies in schools.

Keywords: zero tolerance, exclusionary discipline, African American males, school to jail pipeline, academic achievement

Copyright Page

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Gloria D. Williams. She always stressed the importance of having a personal relationship with God and the value of education in our household. Although she raised four children by herself, she persevered making sure that we always had what we needed. Her tireless efforts created a household atmosphere that was loving and supportive, making it possible for my siblings and me to succeed. I would also like to include my grandparents, Robert and Devonza Lesesne, who are with the Lord, for being the solid foundations for our family. Neither of them completed high school but was full of wisdom and provided guidance. It is because of the grace of God and the love and support from these three great people that I am where I am today.

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First, I would like to give praises to God Almighty because without Him, we are nothing. I thank Him for blessing me with the spirit of patience, perseverance, and scholarship, attributes that helped me see this process through. God has also blessed me by putting great people of intelligence in my path during this endeavor. The list of individuals who have supported me are too numerous to mention. I thank them for their support, prayers, and encouraging words.

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“AD ASTRA PER ASPERA”

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List of Abbreviations

College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI)

Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)

Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

End Of Course (EOC)

End-of-Course Test (EOCT)

End-of-Grade (EOG)

Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE)

Highest Obtainable Scale Score (HOSS)

Internal Review Board (IRB)

Lowest Obtainable Scale Score (LOSS)

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Out of School Suspension (OSS)

Research Question 1 (RQ1)

Research Question 2 (RQ2)

Secure Our Schools (SOS)

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to investigate the relationship between days missed from school due to exclusionary discipline practices and math and reading achievement scores on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Test for tenth and eleventh grade regular education male students. The goal was to continue the existing body of research on the issue of African American male students being given exclusionary discipline consequences at disproportionately higher rates than their peers and how it negatively affects their academic success. African American male students are suspended at rates that are at least two to three times higher than their Caucasian counterparts (Butler, Lewis, Moore, & Scott, 2012). This has devastating consequences on academic achievement which may explain, in part, the existence of the racial achievement gap. However, attention was also given to the effects of exclusionary discipline on the academic progress of other subgroups as well, namely Caucasian and Hispanic male students. The focal point of this study was on determining if there was a predictive relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspensions and scores on standardized tests of male high school students. This chapter will provide a background on exclusionary discipline, an introduction of the problem, and it will address the purpose and significance of the study.

Background

School administrators, as noted by McNeil, Friedman, and Chavez (2016), use exclusionary discipline, out of school suspensions in particular, to reduce undesired behaviors in the school setting, a practice that has been in place for decades. However, since the 1970s, the rates of out of school suspensions and expulsions rose for all racial groups. While Caucasian

students are 66% more likely to be suspended from school than they were 30 years ago, African American students are 150% more likely to be suspended and Hispanic students are 133% more likely to be suspended from school (McNeil, Friedman, & Chavez, 2016). As a result, students missed valuable classroom instruction which increased their likelihood of lowered academic achievement (Wilson, 2014). Skiba (2014) also noted that schools with higher rates of suspensions and expulsions have lower success on standardized tests, regardless of student racial backgrounds and socioeconomic status.

Historical Overview

The current state of exclusionary discipline evolved from zero tolerance. Zero tolerance discipline policies were first instituted in elementary and secondary public schools during the 1980s by the federal government as an extension of War on Drugs policies and in response to a string of tragic school shootings of the early 1990s (Jones, 2013). Then, in 1994, President Bill Clinton instituted the Gun-Free Schools Act which mandated that all states expel students from school for one calendar year who had a firearm in their possession (Curran, 2016). Jones (2013) noted that this legislation also offered incentives, such as federal funding, for those states that increased school safety in their respective districts. Although the federal government only mandated zero tolerance policies towards firearms, many states used such policies to cover items other than guns such as water guns, toys, and nail clippers (Jones, 2013). Also, many schools since then have used zero tolerance policies to cover less serious infractions like profanity, disrespect, truancy, classroom disruptions, dress code violations, and insubordination (Losinski, Katsiyannis, Ryan, & Baughan, 2014). Zero tolerance policies were first instituted to produce a deterrent effect, forcing students to think about the real possibility of being suspended or expelled from school for committing serious offense. However, evidence has shown the

opposite to be true. Rather than decreasing instances of negative school behaviors, suspensions for African American students and recommendations for expulsion of all students increased under the new stricter policies (Hoffman, 2012).

Because of these policies, Skiba (2014) noted that African American students, males in particular, received discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline consequences for minor infractions at alarmingly high rates. Vicki Nishioka (2013) found that while African American, Hispanic, and Native American students were suspended from school more frequently and for longer periods of time than their Caucasian counterparts, the reasons for the disproportionate amounts of minority students being referred for disciplinary actions were not due to differences in behavior, but because of differences in how teachers and administrators reacted to those behaviors. Similarly, Steinberg and Laco (2017) stated that although there were no reports of differences in behaviors between African American and Caucasian male students, African American male students received disproportionately higher rates of suspensions from school than their Caucasian peers did. Moreover, African American male students were given out of school suspensions at rates two to three times higher than their Caucasian peers, which continues a trend that has increased over the past 30 years (Skiba, 2014). African American males were disproportionately overrepresented in office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions (Curtis, 2014). This showed that teachers as well as administrators played a key role in determining who would receive referrals because there were no racial differences in the types of offenses committed by students under their supervision (Curtis, 2014). Past and current studies continue to show that racial stereotypes and covert bias remain widespread in society in general and in schools in particular (Skiba, Choong-Geun, Trachok, Sheya, Hughes, & Baker, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

The critical race theory (CRT) and the deterrence theory were used as the theoretical framework during this research. CRT has a core premise that racism is institutional, systematic, and endemic (Sleeter, 2016). Racism, according to Sleeter (2016), is not an aberration but a fundamental way in which society is organized. What this reveals, with regard to education, is that teacher education programs continue to produce a large number of educators who are ill equipped to teach racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse student populations (Sleeter, 2016). Such occurrences are not by happenstance, but, as noted by Rogers-Ard, Knaus, Epstein, and Mayfield (2012), a direct product of racist systems designed to meet the needs of Caucasians.

The three tenets of CRT that can be useful in this study are interest convergence, challenges to claims of neutrality and color blindness, and experiential knowledge. Interest convergence is an argument stating that Caucasians advance interests of African Americans only when said interests converge with and advance Caucasian interests (Milner, Pearman, & McGee, 2013). This is due to the fact that Caucasians fear systematic changes will threaten them in ways such as loss of status and control and any gains of people of color will be a threat to their social standing (Sleeter, 2016). The dominant ideology forwards the notion that the varying degrees of people's success hinges solely on a system of competitive individualism and meritocracy. Yet, CRT challenges to claims of neutrality and color blindness hold that such neutrality and color blindness hide Caucasian privilege and power. Lastly, dominant ideologies and knowledge systems are based on Caucasian worldviews that deny or mask racism. CRT values experiential knowledge because people of color, who are routinely victimized by racism, are better equipped to understand its effects than those who perpetrate it (Sleeter, 2016).

The deterrence theory provides the theoretical foundation of zero tolerance policies. This theory relies on three basic components: certainty, severity, and celerity. The more certain, severe, and swift the punishment attached to an infraction is, the less likely an individual will be to commit the action (Beccaria, 1983; Nagin, 2013; Paternoster, 2010). Therefore, to help reduce crime, law enforcement officials must place more emphasis on the penalties of crime to discourage citizens from breaking the law. In short, the deterrence theory suggests that the presence of punishments will serve to deter individuals from committing infractions (Nagin, 2013).

The deterrence theory, when applied to the educational setting, implies that the presence of zero tolerance policies would discourage students from breaking school rules. Also, this theory assumes that students who have reached adolescence have the ability to reason at the level of adults. Therefore, students are rational beings and are capable of measuring the cost-benefits of their actions and will be deterred from violating school rules if the costs outweigh the benefits (Curran, 2016). Lastly, the general student population will be deterred from misbehaving in school when they see other students who have broken school rules being referred for disciplinary consequences and subsequently punished (Tomlinson, 2016).

As noted earlier, teachers, as well as school administrators, play a vital role in who receives discipline referrals and subsequent exclusionary consequences. And accompanying this knowledge is evidence that African American male students receive disproportionate amounts of harsher exclusionary discipline consequences than their Caucasian peers. As a result, African American male students miss inordinate amounts of classroom contact hours which, in turn, places them at higher risk of academic failure (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). Though the use of exclusionary discipline has been praised by some, opponents of the overuse of exclusionary

discipline consequence have long stated that these harsh penalties are ineffective in changing undesired behaviors, but in fact push students toward academic failure and eventual school dropout, regardless of racial background (Curtis, 2014).

Problem Statement

Recent studies show that male students, particularly African American males, disproportionately receive harsher exclusionary school disciplinary consequences than their peer groups who commit the same or similar offenses (Butler, Lewis, Moore, & Scott, 2012). Boneshefski and Runge (2014) noted that African American students are four times more likely than their Caucasian peers to be suspended from school and two and half times more likely to be expelled from school. Exclusionary discipline practices in schools have had negative impacts on student achievement and social outcomes, particularly with African American males. Curran (2016) noted that these students disproportionately receive harsher penalties than their counterparts leading to higher rates of academic failure and school dropout. Several previous studies looked mainly at the negative social consequences for African American male students regarding exclusionary discipline, particularly the school to jail phenomenon (Curtis, 2014). However, there has been a gap in examining other racial categories with regard to exclusionary discipline and academic achievement (Wright, Morgan, Coyne, Beaver, & Barnes, 2014). McNeil, Friedman, and Chavez (2016) concluded that students who are suspended from school early in their academic journey began to lose interest in their academics which increased their likelihood of receiving multiple suspensions. Thus, the problem is that suspensions negatively affect academic outcomes of male students, especially African Americans.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this correlational study was to examine the relationship between absenteeism due to suspensions and math and reading scores from the 2016 – 2017 Georgia Milestones Test for tenth and eleventh grade regular education, male students. This study will fill the gap in past research by not only focusing on negative academic consequences for African American male students stemming from days missed from school due to suspensions, but also on its impact on Caucasian and Hispanic male students. Participants in this study included all male students from various racial backgrounds in grades ten through eleven who have received one or more suspensions during the previous school term. Days missed from school due to suspension served as the predictor variable. This study focused on determining if there is a predictive relationship between days missed from school due to suspension and analytic geometry for grade 10 and end of course (EOC) test scores for grade 11 in American Literature from the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones. Scores on the Georgia Milestones Test, a collection of standardized tests used to assess grade level mastery in reading and math, served as the criterion variable (Georgia Department of Education, 2015).

Significance of the Study

The findings from this study will add to the body of research showing how the overuse of exclusionary discipline has not only negatively impacted African American male students disproportionately, but how it has affected Caucasian and Hispanic male students' academic achievement as well (Wright et al., 2014). This study challenges the effectiveness of zero tolerance policies which undergird tougher exclusionary disciplinary consequences in schools. Zero tolerance policies, which were created initially to battle drugs and violence in schools, have now been applied to less serious, and more subjective, infractions and African American male

students have overwhelmingly been affected by such (Triplett, Allen, & Lewis, 2014). Most scholars of the past have focused mainly on the negative social outcomes of the overuse of exclusionary discipline on African American males, such as the school to jail pipeline phenomenon (Wilson, 2014). This is worthy of continued focus. However, there is a need to broaden this research to include other subgroups, particularly Caucasian and Hispanic male students, and the impacts on the academic outcomes of these groups (Wright, et al., 2014). Results from this study may assist policy makers and education leaders in becoming more aware of how the overuse of exclusionary discipline negatively affects certain populations and lead them in finding alternative means to get the desired behaviors they want to see in the school setting. It is hoped that such findings will prompt policy makers and school leaders to find remedies to reverse the troubling and ongoing trend of the negative impact of exclusionary discipline on academic achievement. This type of research will also play a vital role in keeping policy makers and education leaders abreast of any new data that may arise which will assist them in making well informed decisions that will positively impact all students.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a predictive relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and analytic geometry scores for tenth grade male students on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments?

RQ2: Is there a predictive relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and end of course (EOC) test scores in American Literature for eleventh grade male students on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments?

Definitions

1. *Zero Tolerance* – policies that were instituted as a weapon to combat drug trafficking in the 1980s and gun violence in schools in the 1990s by the federal government, mandating a one year expulsion for students who bring firearms to schools (Losinski, Katsiyannis, Ryan, & Baughan, 2014). Such policies have now been extended to schools to cover less serious offenses (Skiba, 2014).
2. *Exclusionary discipline* – suspension and expulsion from school to reduce unwanted behaviors (McNeil, Friedman, & Chavez, 2016).
3. *Critical Race Theory (CRT)* – the notion that racism is systematic, institutional, and endemic in society and is used as a fundamental way to organize said society (Sleeter, 2016).
4. *Deterrence Theory* – the notion that the presence of punishments will serve to deter individuals from committing crimes (Curran, 2016).

Summary

Chapter One gave the background, historical, and theoretical foundations for this study. In addition, the problem, purpose, and the significance of this study were discussed. Research questions and definitions of key terms were also included. In the next chapter, the theoretical frameworks and related literature will be discussed.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The focus of this study determined whether there was a predictive relationship between days missed from school due to suspension and math and reading scores on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Test for tenth and eleventh grade, regular education male students. Chapter 1 summarized the rationale for this study by focusing on (a) the increased use of out of school suspensions as one of the tools used by school administrators in deterring negative school behaviors in the absence of substantial research justifying its continued use (Shabazain, 2015; Hoffman, 2012); and (b) research showing that suspensions and expulsions are used disproportionately by gender and race which adversely affects the academic achievement gap between male and female students as well as between racial groups (Wilson, 2014; Skiba, 2014; Hoffman, 2012; Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017).

To determine what this study provides regarding exclusionary discipline, the targeted research in this chapter was divided into four main categories: (1) the history of zero tolerance policies, (2) zero tolerance policies in schools leading to the increased use of out of school suspensions, (3) how gender and race play a role in the relationship between exclusionary discipline and academic achievement, and (4) the reliability and validity of the Georgia Milestones Test as a measuring instrument for academic achievement.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, exclusionary discipline is used to deter negative school behaviors by removing offending students from the classroom setting. Exclusionary discipline comes in the form of in-school suspensions, out of school suspensions, expulsions, or alternative schools (Perry & Morris, 2014). For the purposes of this literature review, out of school suspensions will be the focus. The assumption that the impacts of all forms of exclusionary

discipline on academic achievement are identical across the board cannot be made at this point. However, there are existing data that suggests that out of school suspensions and expulsions have the most far reaching negative effects on student achievement (Curran, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

The literature that is reviewed in this chapter underscored the use of out of school suspensions and can be viewed through the lens of the Deterrence Theory and the Critical Race Theory (CRT). The Deterrence Theory has its early roots in the works of classical philosophers Thomas Hobbes, Cesare Beccaria, and Jeremy Bentham (Nagin, 2013; Curran, 2016). Hobbes believed that individuals are determined to fulfill their self-interests and at times these interests may often conflict with the interests of others. Hobbes also noted that humans are rational beings and understand that their selfish natures would lead to crime and conflict and to avoid such, they would relinquish their egos as long as everyone did approximately the same things (May, 2013). To avert conflict and criminal activity, Hobbes noted that individuals entered a social contract with the government to protect them from such predicaments. Under this social contract, the government is granted the power to use force to uphold the contract. If crimes are committed, Hobbes forwarded the notion that punishments for the crimes must be greater than the benefit of committing the crimes. Deterrence, therefore, serves to manage the social contract between the people and the government (May, 2013).

Beccaria and Bentham also believed in Hobbes' social contract and the belief that punishments for crimes must exceed the benefits of criminal activity. The philosophers noted that since rational people sought to maximize pleasure and avoid pain, a system that rewards obedience of the law and provides painful consequences for breaking the law would result in crime prevention. Fear of punishment is used as a deterrent. However, Beccaria and Bentham

believed that the sole purpose of punishment should not be to prevent crime. If so, punishment would be excessive, repressive, and lead to more crime. Punishment should match the crime committed (Freilich, 2014).

The Deterrence Theory relies on three components: certainty, severity, and celerity. That is, the more certain, severe, and swift the punishment is for a crime, the possibility of a rational individual committing said crime would decrease. Therefore, to help in crime prevention, the authorities must place emphasis on the penalties of crime to discourage citizens from breaking the law. In sum, deterrence theorists concluded that the certainty of punishment was more effective in preventing crime than the severity of punishment (Nagin, 2013).

Exclusionary discipline consequences, out of school suspensions in particular, have been used by school administrators for decades as a deterrent. This form of punishment has its roots in zero tolerance policies. The goal of zero tolerance policies was to make punishment quick and so severe that it would deter future undesirable behaviors (Curran, 2016). The deterrence theory, in the realm of education, implies that the presence of zero tolerance policies would deter students from breaking school rules. In addition, the deterrence theory assumes that all students are rational beings who are capable of measuring the cost-benefits of their actions and will be deterred from violating school rules if the costs outweigh the benefits (Curran, 2016).

The Critical Race Theory (CRT) was developed in the 1980s by mostly scholars of color who responded to critical legal studies and civil rights scholarship. The major framework of CRT is that race should be the center of discussions concerning equity and justice. CRT forwards the notion that racism is engrained within the very fabric and systems of American society and that the individual racist doesn't need to exist to note that institutional racism is widespread within the dominant culture. This is the lens in which CRT uses to examine power

structures, structures based on white privilege and white supremacy, which, in turn, perpetuates the marginalization of people of color. CRT also rejects the notions of liberalism and meritocracy because it recognizes that these ideologies are forwarded from stories told by those with wealth, power and privilege. Such stories paint a faulty picture of meritocracy leading individuals to believe that everyone who works hard can attain wealth, power, and privilege while ignoring systemic inequalities that institutional racism creates (UCLA School of Public Affairs, 2009). Theorists are concerned with disrupting, exposing, challenging, and changing racist policies that impact minority groups and that attempt to maintain the status quo. Although CRT provides an essential analysis of race and racism from a legal viewpoint, the theory has spread to many disciplines, including sociology, education, and psychology (Milner & Laughter, 2015).

The study of how race, racism, and other forms of oppression as experienced by people of color is guided by five major tenets of CRT: (a) centralizing race, racism, and multiple forms of intersecting oppressions experienced by people of color, (b) challenging dominant ideologies that justify the subordinate positions of people of color created by structural oppression, (c) centering and utilizing experiential knowledge as the foundation for research on communities of color, (d) utilizing an interdisciplinary perspective that draws across and within the boundaries of academic disciplines to answer research questions, and (e) encompassing an unapologetic stance for racial justice for communities of color (Huber & Solorzano, 2015).

According to the Critical Race Theory, racism is institutional, systematic, and endemic. Racism is not an aberration but a fundamental way in which society is organized. Sleeter (2016) discussed CRT in her investigation of how teacher education programs do not properly prepare teachers, Caucasian teachers in particular, in dealing with diversity in the classroom and thereby

perpetuating the marginalization of African American students and other students of color. What this reveals, with regard to education, is that teacher education programs continue to produce a large number of Caucasian educators who are ill equipped to teach racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse student populations which may lead to cultural mismatch (Sleeter, 2016). This mismatch can lead to higher instances of misunderstandings in the classroom setting, leading to the increased likelihood of students of color being referred for disciplinary consequences than Caucasian students at disproportionately higher rates. Such occurrences are not by happenstance but a direct product of racist systems designed to meet the needs of Caucasians and further marginalize communities of color (Rogers-Ard et al., 2013).

Related Literature

History of Zero Tolerance

The heart of the zero tolerance logic and subsequent policies is based on the presumption that strict enforcement can deter potentially disruptive behaviors both in society and in the school setting (Skiba, 2014). Zero tolerance was first conceived from the notion of “order maintenance” that can be traced back to the broken window theory which forwards the idea that allowing even the most minor of offenses to occur will encourage criminals to commit even more serious infractions. In the broken window theory, Wilson and Kelling (1982) noted that at the community level, disorder and crime are linked in a developmental sequence. For example, if a window in a structure is broken and not repaired, the remainder of the windows will be broken eventually. This circumstance is found in good neighborhoods as well as bad ones. The fundamental premise is that one unrepaired broken window is a signal to law-abiding citizens as well as would be window breakers that no one cares and breaking additional windows will cost nothing. The “broken windows” with regard to crime are not violent people or even criminals,

but unpredictable and disreputable ones like drunks, panhandlers, loud and rowdy teens, loiters, and the mentally disturbed. If these individuals are left unchecked, true criminals will believe that their chances of being caught and arrested will be greatly reduced (Wilson & Kelling, 1982).

Sociologists have accepted the ideology behind the broken window theory and subsequent social control theories that intend to deter criminal activity. The broken window theory has led to strict state and federal laws on drug distribution, illegal gun possession, and other criminal offenses. Before the inception of zero tolerance policies in the United States, Governor Nelson Rockefeller in 1973 pushed for a change in New York state law that would give mandatory 15 years to life sentences for drug dealers and drug addicts, even for those caught in possession of minor amounts of controlled substances. More specifically under this new drug law, Rockefeller mandated that selling at least two ounces of heroin, marijuana, or cocaine or possessing at least four ounces of these illegal substances warranted a minimum 15 years to life prison sentence (Bell, 2015).

Due to the perceived failure of drug rehabilitative efforts, facing the increased heroin problem, and the rise of homicide rates in New York City, Governor Rockefeller instituted perhaps the first documented zero tolerance policy in the nation. Rockefeller's shift in his perspective of drug trafficking and addiction from that of a medical problem to a criminal offense has influenced drug sentencing throughout the United States for over the past four decades (Bell, 2015). However, according to Skiba (2014), the first recorded use of the term "zero tolerance" appeared with the reassignment of 40 sailors charged with drug use on a submarine in a shipyard located in Norfolk, Virginia. In spite of the policy being controversial at its origins, it nonetheless found very powerful supporters. Soon after the shipyard incident, First Lady Nancy Reagan appeared with the Secretary of the Navy to zero in on a new "no-nonsense"

approach to drug enforcement. By 1986, Ronald Reagan's administration proposed the first zero tolerance legislation for American school districts, although the bill was defeated in Congress. Even with this defeat, it was in an era in which the overwhelming belief was that schools were being overrun with crime and violence, therefore the term "zero tolerance" echoed in the minds of the public (Skiba, 2014).

Zero tolerance policies were becoming very popular in drug legislation in many states. Because the illegal drug trade grew exponentially and the availability of semi-automatic assault rifles in the United States increased, the federal government passed the Anti-Drug Abuse Acts of 1986 and 1988. These policies established a minimum 5-year prison sentence for selling five grams of crack cocaine or selling 500 grams of powder cocaine. In addition, US customs agents were ordered to seize the property of anyone carrying trace amounts of any illegal drugs. Therefore, as illegal drug trafficking began to increase, zero tolerance policies also increased and spread quickly through local, state, and federal government in an attempt to maintain control of society (Bell, 2015). After the aforementioned drug policies and other zero tolerance initiatives began to gain the nation's attention, public outrage arose due to the disproportionately harsh prison sentences minorities received. For example, between 1974 and 2002, New York saw its prison population increase in record numbers, from 14,400 to 70,000. Also, the incarceration rates for African American males under the Rockefeller drug laws were the highest among any group with 1,516 inmates per 100,000 in the general population compared to 34 inmates per 100,000 Caucasians in the general population (Bell, 2015).

Zero Tolerance in Schools

As local, state, and the federal government continued to spread zero tolerance policies, American school districts also wanted to implement their own versions of zero tolerance policies to deter school violence and other illegal activities on school grounds. In the late 1980s, policymakers began instituting zero tolerance to school settings mandating expulsion for drugs, fighting, and gang activity (Triplett, Allen, & Lewis, 2014). The 1990s saw zero tolerance policies extended in response to highly publicized school shootings. Justification for zero tolerance was fueled by the perception that the nation was being flooded by a massive crime wave (Wilson, 2014; Mallett, 2016). Public and political concerns about high levels of crimes within and surrounding schools presented opportunities for those who were in favor of investing in increased school security measures used previous and the threat of future crime and violence to justify new security and disciplinary actions (Kupchik & Ward, 2014).

In response to pressing concerns about school crime and violence, federal, state, and local governments created a wide range of interventions. Since 2000, Congress has set aside approximately \$15 million annually to the national “Secure Our Schools” (SOS) Act, which is an amendment to the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968. This initiative (SOS) is a voluntary, matching grant program where local governments and municipalities can apply for federal funding for school safety grants administered under the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program. Funds received from this grant went toward purchasing metal detectors, locks, deterrent measures, and better lighting along with security training. The federal government paid half the cost for security measures while the state or local government provided funds for the remaining costs. Similar funds have also been provided through the Department of

Education, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and state governments (Kupchik & Ward, 2014).

Fashioned as school and student accountability programs, the aforementioned interventions encouraged increasingly aggressive security monitoring, classification, and intervention and contributed to more wide range efforts to reorganize school districts. For example, the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 instituted during the Clinton Administration mandated that states expel students from school for one year who were found in possession of a gun. The new legislation also required schools to make court referrals for students if they possessed explosive or committed arson at school. Schools were forced to comply with the Gun-Free Schools Act or risk losing federal funding (Kupchik & Ward, 2014; Wilson, 2014; Curran, 2016; Morris & Perry, 2016)). Then, in 1996, social scientist Dr. John Dilulio warned lawmakers that a “new breed” of teenagers would emerge in American society who had no respect for human life or prospects for the future. He called them “super-predators” (Super Predators, 2014).

Dr. Dilulio further described super-predators as “radically impulsive, brutally remorseless youngsters, including ever more teenage boys, who murder, assault, rob, burglarize, deal deadly drugs, join gun-toting gangs, and create serious disorder” (Bell, 2014, p. 16). Dr. Dilulio’s warning about the rise of the super-predator and the tragic shooting at Columbine High School in 1999 created fear of young men and it served as a spark to increase zero tolerance policies in schools across the nation. Although the Columbine tragedy was not the first school shooting of the decade before, it was the deadliest and had the greatest impact on society because of its extensive media coverage. This tragedy also reinforced and motivated proponents of zero tolerance policies to step up their quest to create a security environment movement within

American schools (Mallet, 2016). During the 1996-1997 school year, 79 percent of schools in the United States created zero tolerance policies for violence. Also, between 1997 and 2007, the number of high schools in the United States with armed school resource officers (SRO) tripled.

In the decade prior to the Columbine tragedy, there were other school shooting incidents with much less media coverage. These events included Bethel Regional High School in Alaska, Pearl High School in Mississippi, Health High School in Kentucky, Frontier Middle School in Washington, and Thurston High School in Oregon (Mallet, 2016). However, as noted earlier, Columbine received the most media coverage and it also happened in an environment where such violence is not common. The Sandy Hook Elementary shooting in 2012, as with Columbine, occurred in a “safe” school district: suburban, middle class, and White. This reignited public fear that such horrific violence can happen anywhere, sparking an increase in school violence prevention policies. Sandy Hook also reinforced the fears of adolescent violence and the “super-predator” mentioned by Dr. Dilulio (Mallet, 2016). In sum, the use of fear and the creation zero tolerance policies have turned schools from being institutions of learning to places that resembled juvenile correctional facilities (Kang-Brown, Trone, Fratello, & Daftary-Kapur, 2013; Mallett, 2016).

Consequently, schools soon extended the parameters of reasons for suspending or expelling students to include less serious violations like alcohol, tobacco, dress code, profanity, classroom disturbances, and insubordination (Losinski, Katsiyannis, Ryan, & Baughan, 2014). Students were also being suspended from school for pointing a paper gun at classmates, bringing a plastic knife to school to cut chicken at lunch, or bringing a plastic axe to school that was used as a prop for a Halloween costume (Skiba, 2014). In 2008, for example, a thirteen year old student was arrested for passing gas and tampering with his classmates’ computers and was

charged with causing a major school disruption. In 2009, in Chicago, twenty four 11-15 year old students at a charter school were arrested and jailed overnight for a food fight. In 2010, a middle school student was arrested for writing on her desk with a marker. Also in 2010, a successful student-athlete committed suicide after being suspended from school for possessing a legal but controlled substance (Skiba, 2014). In 2013, an elementary student was charged with brandishing a weapon for possessing a toy gun (Curtis, 2014). And in 2014, an Ohio fifth grade student was suspended from his elementary school for three days for pointing his finger in the shape of a gun and pulling an imaginary trigger while playing with his friends. The principal sent a letter home to the parents informing them that the student's finger was classified as a "level 2 lookalike firearm" (Wilson, 2014).

Zero tolerance policies were implemented to manage behavior and create a positive environment for student growth and achievement. However, these very policies have created failure and feed the school-to-prison pipeline (Wilson, 2014). The school-to-prison pipeline refers to the process by which exclusionary discipline (out of school suspension/expulsion) may force students into the criminal justice system disproportionately based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Mizel, Miles, Pedersen, Tucker, Ewing, & D'Amico, 2016). Zero tolerance policies have created such tools as school policing, increases in student searches, and very stringent rules along with harsh consequences mandated via school discipline handbooks. Along with high stakes testing, zero tolerance policies have plunged students into school failure, grade retention, and, eventually, school dropout (Wilson, 2014; Mallet, 2016). Exclusionary discipline consequences such as suspension and expulsion have become the common tools used by school officials to force compliance in the school setting. Situations once handled by school administrators are now referred to law enforcement agencies and the judicial system. In

addition, educators with inadequate classroom management skills overuse exclusionary discipline to rid their classes of students they see as problems leaving only those they deem teachable. Early predictions from supporters of zero tolerance policies stated that such inflexible policies would eliminate bias and disproportionalities based on race and gender. Yet, the opposite has occurred and such imbalances have caused minority students, particularly African American males, to be disproportionately singled out for exclusionary disciplinary consequences which places them at higher risk of school failure and encounters with the criminal justice system (Skiba, 2014).

Exclusionary Discipline, Race, Gender, and Academic Achievement

As mentioned in Chapter One, the purpose of this research was to determine if there is a substantial relationship between days missed from school due to suspension and math and reading scores on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Test for tenth and eleventh grade regular education male students. Previous studies have shown that out of school suspensions (and expulsions) are used disproportionately by race and gender which negatively impact the academic achievement gap between male and female students as well as between racial groups. To better understand the relationship between exclusionary discipline and academic achievement, each variable (race and gender) will be analyzed separately.

Exclusionary discipline and race. As the literature revealed, disproportionalities are found in exclusionary discipline and race. (Hoffman, 2012; (Rogers-Ard et al., 2013); Wilson, 2014; Skiba, 2014; Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). The disproportionate application of exclusionary disciplinary consequences, out of school suspensions in particular, on minority students has been researched for more than 20 years and continues to be a disturbing trend in the field of education. It has been found that although African American students made up 18% of America's school

population, they accounted for 34% of all students suspended from school (Butler, Lewis, Moore, & Scott, 2012; Suh, Malchow, & Suh, 2014). In addition, African American students constituted 39% of all expulsions and 42% of law enforcement referrals while in school. African American and Hispanic students accounted for 72% of those who were arrested for school related infractions, but made up only 42% of the student population (Losen, Hewitt, & Toldson, 2014).

African American students in general had more than three times the risk of receiving all forms of exclusionary discipline than Caucasian students (Butler et al., 2012; Skiba, 2014). African American students are four times more likely than their Caucasian peers to be suspended from school and two and half times more likely to be expelled (Boneshefski & Runge, 2014). Though approximately 5% of all students are suspended during any given school term, longitudinal research found that between one third and one half of students experience at least one suspension between kindergarten and twelfth grade with some studies showing a 60% school removal rate during middle and high school. African American males are disproportionately at risk with rates nearing 70% receiving at least one suspension or expulsion during their K-12 school years (Losen et al., 2014). While out of school suspensions and other forms of exclusionary discipline have shown to be ineffective in deterring negative student behaviors, recommendations for suspensions and expulsions have increased for African American male students while such referrals for Caucasian students showed little change. Between the 1980s and 2000s, the rate of African American students being suspended from school increased by 11.4% as compared to an increase of only 0.9% of Caucasian students (Hoffman, 2012; Suh et al., 2014). During the 2009-2010 school term, one in approximately six African American students was suspended from school, compared to one in 20 Caucasian students. Also, the gap

between African American and Caucasian suspension rates varied greatly by state. Some public school systems reported that one out of every two of their African American students will more than likely be suspended at least once during a given school term (Shah & Maxwell, 2012).

Although no significant differences in misbehaviors were found between African American male students and their Caucasian counterparts, African American male students experienced alarmingly higher rates of out of school suspensions (Steinberg & Lacoë, 2017). African American male students were also given out of school suspensions at rates that were at least two to three times higher than the Caucasian peers with similar disparities found in discipline referrals and expulsions, a trend that has increased over the past three decades (Skiba, 2014). African American male students were overrepresented in all categories of school discipline which included referrals to the criminal justice system, suspensions and expulsions. Yet, no real racial differences in the types of infractions committed were found suggesting that teachers and school administrators played important roles in determining who would be given disciplinary referrals and consequences (Curtis, 2014).

African American and Caucasian male students were given referrals for disciplinary action for different types of infractions as well. African American male students received more severe consequences for seemingly less severe and more subjective infractions such as insubordination, classroom noise, disrespect, threats, and loitering while Caucasian male students were routinely given referrals for smoking, leaving class or school grounds without authorization, profanity, or vandalism. It is somewhat difficult to ascertain which of these two sets of infractions is more serious. However it is quite evident that office referrals for African American male students tended to “require a good deal more subjective judgment on the part of the referring agent” (Curtis, 2014, p. 1257). Hispanic male students were suspended one to one

and a half times more than their Caucasian counterparts for committing similar offenses (Whitford, Katsiyannis, & Counts, 2016). As with African American male students, Hispanic male students were often perceived as sources of aggression or behavioral problems and warranted additional monitoring (Peguero, Bondy, & Shekarkhar, 2016). African American and Hispanic male students were suspended from school more frequently and for longer periods of time than their Caucasian peers. However, the reasons for this disproportionality were not because of differences in misbehaviors but differences in how school administrators and teachers interpreted and reacted to those misbehaviors (Nishioka, 2013; Peguero et al., 2016).

As the literature illustrated, racial disparities in who received exclusionary discipline consequences were not due to differences in misbehavior. Overwhelming evidence in the research pointed to teachers' and school administrators' racial stereotyping and lack of cultural competence (Skiba et al., 2014; Denti & Guerin, 2014). A large number of school administrators and teachers act on correspondence biases, the belief that certain students act out of "unique and enduring dispositions" such as race or culture, therefore their behavior is unlikely to change even with help. Correspondence bias blocks objectivity in how school administrators and teachers interpret and respond to minority students based on their biases about students' personalities, attitudes or their culture or race. As a consequence, they (school administrators and teachers) believe that suspensions or expulsions are the only remedies (Denti & Guerin, 2014).

The teacher workforce in most American school districts is predominantly Caucasian and female, even in the face of rapidly increasing diversity in the classrooms of America. This fact creates a within-school racial boundary (Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012). Many Caucasian students in teacher education programs enter the education profession with little previous contact with racial groups other than their own. Thus, the chance for cultural mismatch or the lack of

cultural competence as a contributing factor in the disproportionate number of discipline referrals given to minority students increases. Many Caucasian teachers, basing their interpretations of behaviors on their Eurocentric value system and middle-class socioeconomic status, may characterize African American male students' impassioned or emotive responses as being combative or argumentative (Skiba et al., 2014). Such interpretations may be traced to the racially stereotypical notion of the "dangerous Black male".

The "dangerous Black male", which framed African American males as aggressors and sexual predators, grew directly out of the institution of slavery and its aftermath (Carter, Skiba, Arrendondo, & Pollock, 2017). One of the most important principles of slavery was the need to control and discipline those who were enslaved. Slave codes were created to control every aspect of African American lives, including making it illegal for them to marry, congregate, travel without their masters' permission, or learn how to read. Any attempts by those enslaved to partake in normal human activity made them criminals and subject to harsh punishments. By the beginning of the 20th century, the racial stereotype of the dangerous black male predator had become deeply engrained in the American psyche, promoted by popular culture, politicians, and in academics. As such, fear stemming from this stereotype led to the cruel epidemic of the lynching of African American men. Between the late 1880s and 1918, more than 2,000 African American men were lynched in the US, more oft than not for minor offenses like arguing with a Caucasian man, attempting to register to vote, asking a Caucasian woman's hand in marriage, or peeping in windows (Carter, et al., 2017).

The inferiority of African Americans and other people of color continued through segregation, inequality, and Jim Crow policies. To escape overt oppression, many southern African Americans migrated north to find better opportunities, both socially and economically.

However, they were still met with attitudes and policies that reinforced stereotypes and segregation which limited their economic advancement. Decades after the Civil War saw laws and practices diverting African Americans, Native Americans, Asians, and Hispanic Americans to inferior schools while better educational opportunities along with housing and jobs were provided for Caucasians which led to economic and social advantages for them while significantly causing growing disadvantages for people of color (Carter, et al., 2017).

Negative racial stereotypes rooted in the American consciousness continues today, including the “dangerous Black male” typecast, and are played out via television and other media outlets which reinforces bias. Such stereotypes, developed throughout the centuries of discrimination and oppression, contribute to lowered academic expectations for many children of color (Carter, et al, 2017). As noted earlier, the majority of American school teachers are female, Caucasian, and middle class and may carry common racial stereotypes with them into schools which can cause them to misinterpret behaviors of students of color, particularly African American males. These misperceptions/misinterpretations of student behavior by Caucasian educators may have worsened discriminatory discipline practices leading to the disproportionalities found in minority students receiving exclusionary disciplinary consequences (Skiba et al., 2014). African American students, in general, face a decisive disadvantage relative to their Caucasian classmates when they are taught by Caucasian teachers. Variations in skin tone among African American students may also play a role in how they are perceived by their Caucasian teachers (Thompson & McDonald, 2015). Bias with regard to skin tone has the potential to shape teachers’ perceptions and expectations of darker skinned students’ learning ability and behavior and, therefore, influence how said teachers treat them in the classroom setting relative to how they treat lighter skinned African American students (Thompson &

McDonald, 2015). When teachers are less tolerant of students who they deem to be low performers, they (teachers) may be more inclined to remove these students from the classroom setting for minor offenses that could have been handled without the use of exclusionary discipline thereby hampering academic achievement in the educational process (Thompson & McDonald, 2015). More pointedly, African American students receive overall lower average ratings from their Caucasian teachers on both ability and behavior than Caucasian students and even lighter skinned students of the same race (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Thompson & McDonald, 2015). This problem is exacerbated when students attend schools that are more segregated (Thompson & McDonald, 2015).

Schools with a high concentration of racial/ethnic minority students tend to be under-resourced and have larger student-teacher ratios (Martinez, McMahon, & Treger, 2016). High student-teacher ratios may create impersonal school environments that are counter-productive in student growth and have negative impacts on positive adult relationships. The lack of positive interactions between students and teachers may translate into more behavioral problems and subsequent referrals for disciplinary action (Martinez et al., 2016). Also, such schools face a plethora of challenges such as poverty and violence and it is more likely that students are drawn from the surrounding communities that experience these same problems (Morris & Perry, 2016). The cross section between racial/ethnic concentration and student behavior and achievement have social implications regarding students in segregated social contexts which puts them at a disproportionately higher risk (Martinez et al., 2016; Morris & Perry, 2016) The significance of racial/ethnic concentration suggests that behavior and academic ability are linked to contextual factors and relying on exclusionary disciplinary responses to improve behavior and academic

success disregards the underlying social problems that filter into the school setting from the neighborhoods from which students live (Martinez et al., 2016; Morris & Perry, 2016).

Exclusionary discipline and gender. As with race, disproportionalities in exclusionary discipline were also found when analyzing gender. Findings consistently show that male students are overwhelmingly more likely to receive exclusionary discipline consequences than females (Whitford et al., 2016). During the 2010-2011 school term, for example, Brown and Di Tillio (2013) found that 72% of office discipline referrals were given to male students across all racial/ethnic lines. Male students tend to cope with stressful events by externalizing their behavior in the form of rule breaking or aggression more often than female students, who more than often internalize their behavior. As a result, male students were given office discipline referrals at higher rates than female students (Martinez et al., 2016).

Male students make up approximately 51% of the student population of public schools nationally but received 70% of out of school suspensions. Conversely, females make up 49% of the student population but represented only 30% of those who were suspended from school. Male students are given exclusionary discipline consequences at rates between two to four times higher than female students. Numerous studies have reported that the odds of exclusionary discipline consequences being given to male and female students for committing the same behavioral infractions have been higher, with a range of 1.24 to more than two times higher, for males versus females (Finn & Servoss, 2014). It has been hypothesized that this gender gap in exclusionary discipline is due to the fact that teachers may view boys as more defiant, disruptive, and aggressive than girls (Skiba et al., 2014).

This pattern of disproportionality between gender and exclusionary discipline may involve paternalistic gender bias (i.e. ignoring violations of female students). Smolkowski,

Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, and Horner (2016) noted that there is a substantial proportion of bias in exclusionary discipline, with regard to gender, found in elementary schools due to the function of teachers having low odds of referring female students, Caucasian females in particular, for disciplinary consequences. This pattern can also be found in the legal setting for adults in that female criminal defendants are treated more favorably than their male counterparts in effect attributing to benevolent forms of explicit and implicit sexism. Roughly 76% of teachers in the United States are female and 82% are Caucasian. Of those numbers, approximately 62% of teachers are Caucasian females, 20% are Caucasian males, 5% are African American females, and 2% are African American males. Due to their group membership or paternalistic attitudes towards certain groups in certain circumstances, teachers may be less likely to label the behaviors of Caucasian female students, in particular, as meriting disciplinary action than they would for males in general (Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016).

There is validity in the conclusion that male students receive exclusionary discipline consequences at extremely higher rates than female students. However, this is not the case across minority groups. Evidence has revealed that African American female students receive exclusionary disciplinary consequences at about the same rate as Caucasian males and at a higher rate than Hispanic and Asian male students. Additionally, African American female students have seen the greatest rate increase of referrals for exclusionary disciplinary consequences in recent years (Finn & Servoss, 2014; Skiba et al., 2014; Whitford et al., 2016, Morris & Perry, 2017). Female students in general tend to be referred for exclusionary disciplinary consequences for insubordination more than male students. However, African American female students are disproportionately targeted for punishment for this infraction. Although all female students exhibit similar assertive behaviors, Caucasian and Hispanic females were not viewed as being

loud and overbearing and did not receive admonishments to behave like “ladies” as directed towards African American females (Hannon, DeFina, & Bruch, 2013).

It has also been documented that among African American female students, those with darker skin tones are more likely to be suspended when compared to their peers with lighter skin color (Hannon, et al., 2013). This phenomenon is found in general with all African American students (Thompson & McDonald, 2015). Therefore, skin tone, even within the same race or ethnicity, as well as across all races, may potentially play a role in the likelihood of receiving a discipline referral and subject to exclusionary disciplinary consequences (Hannon, et al., 2013; Thompson & McDonald, 2015). Lastly, the severity of school infractions was also determined by race and gender. African American male students were twice as likely to be given discipline referrals for minor to moderate offenses, yet African American female students were over three times as likely as Caucasian female students to receive these referrals (Morris & Perry, 2017).

Morris and Perry (2017) concluded that the relationship between race and types of school infractions is intensified within this school population when factoring in the intersection of race and gender. No significant effects of race or the intersection of race and gender were found when more serious offenses such as weapon possession, drug or alcohol possession, and other major law infractions were committed by all students. However, African American female students were disproportionally targeted for less serious but more ambiguous infractions such as disruptive and/or aggressive behavior, disobedience, and dress code infractions. When comparing the effects of race across gender groups, it was found that the gap between African American female students and Caucasian female students is much larger for these subjective infractions than is the gap between African American male students and Caucasian male students (Morris & Perry, 2017).

Exclusionary discipline and academic achievement. The achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students has been a major concern for policy makers and educators for some time. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the gaps in mathematics and reading achievement between African American and Caucasian students have narrowed in the past 40 years, but a significant difference in scores remain. For example, African American students, on average, scored 31 points lower than Caucasian students in eighth grade math and 26 points lower in eighth grade reading in 2013 (Morris & Perry, 2016). As noted by Morris and Perry (2016), African American students have made continual gains in closing the achievement gap since school desegregation in the 1960s, but this progress has leveled off in 1990 and has experienced fluctuations since. In fact, the gap in NAEP reading for twelfth grade African American and Caucasian students is wider now than it was in 1992 (Morris & Perry, 2016).

A variety of explanations have been offered by scholars concerning the existence of differences in academic achievement based on race. Some scholars stated that racial gaps in school readiness were present when students first entered school which suggests that inequities outside the school setting played a significant role. In this line of thought, the focus was on family and surrounding community effects ranging from economic to parental incarceration. Another outside of school factor was student ambivalence towards school. This oppositional culture model forwards the notion that minority students view schools as white oriented and thus prompts resistance towards academic achievement and disengagement from school (Morris & Perry, 2016). Other explanations are found within education. While outside of school influences helped explain the achievement gaps by socioeconomic status, it didn't by race in essence. Morris and Perry (2016) noted that other scholars pointed to de facto school segregation, which

decreased throughout the 1980s but saw an increase beginning in the 1990s. In addition, certain characteristics of predominately minority schools hinder student achievement, such as funding and student-teacher ratios. Lastly, processes within schools, such as ability grouping or tracking, may suggest that learning opportunities for minority students are hindered by restrictions caused by instructional differentiation which increases learning gaps over time (Morris & Perry, 2016). While past scholars, according to Morris and Perry (2016), examined school and non-school factors, exclusionary discipline was not thoroughly factored in as a source in the existence of the achievement gap.

Exclusionary discipline has few behavioral or academic benefits for those students subjected to such consequences. Yet, it does have catastrophic impacts on the academic performances of students. Out of school suspensions contribute very little to improve student behavior and may, in fact, increase student anger and apathy towards school. Such punishments can weaken the bonds between students and their school which may increase the likelihood of them committing future school infractions (Morris & Perry, 2016). Removing students from the classroom environment due to being suspended or expelled places them at higher risk of falling behind their classmates leading to academic failure, coming into contact with other out of school youth, increased school dropout rates, and encounters with law enforcement (Allday & Christle, 2015; Peguero et al., 2016; Steinberg & Lacoë, 2017). Students recommended for suspension or expulsion in early grades tended to perform at lower academic levels than their classmates who have never been suspended. And as these students moved into higher grades from lower grades, their academic success decreased illustrating that early academic failure due to exclusionary discipline is a risk factor for school failure, lower graduation rates or higher dropout rates and, eventually, contact with the criminal justice system (Skiba, 2014; Allday & Christle, 2015).

Evidence has shown that being suspended just once in grade 9 doubles the likelihood of dropping out of school, from 16% for those who were never suspended to 32% for those suspended just once (Kang-Brown et al., 2013; Triplett et al., 2014). Each additional suspension increased the risk of school drop out by approximately 20% (Losen, et al, 2014). And students who are suspended have a higher risk of being arrested over time relative to their peers who have never been suspended from school (Mowen & Brent, 2016).

Opponents of severe and overused exclusionary discipline consequences like out of school suspensions and expulsions have long lamented that these harsh penalties do nothing to deter negative behaviors in the school setting and, in fact, cause more harm to students. Literature on this subject has concluded that weak attendance, for any reason, correlates with lower test scores on state exams and schools with high suspension rates typically fare worse on these exams than schools with low suspensions/expulsions rates (Noltemeyer, Ward, & McLoughlin, 2015; Gottfried & Kirksey, 2017). For example, during the 2005-2006 school term in a Midwestern urban school district, a sample of 3,500 African American male students who missed at least one or more days of school due to suspension was used. According to the data, these students missed a combined total of 3,714 school days during that academic year. As a result, their performances on their state's standardized tests, particularly in math and science, were severely affected (Lewis, Butler, Bonner III, & Joubert, 2010). Nationally, during the 2011-2012 academic year, 1.55 million students were suspended at least twice from school. By conservative estimates, public school students lost a combined total of 18 million days of instruction in one school year because of exclusionary discipline. Without a doubt, this has devastating consequences on student achievement in the classroom and on standardized tests (Redfield & Nance, 2016). Also, even when African American student enrollment and

socioeconomic status were controlled for, schools' suspension rates continued to be an important predictor of their pass rates on state exams in both elementary and secondary schools (Noltemeyer et al., 2015).

Students also become more frustrated with school leading them to become disinterested and disillusioned with the educational process. Suspended students are disengaged from the flow of classroom instruction and are more likely to experience alienation from school (Curtis, 2014; Finn & Servoss, 2014). Similarly, students, beginning in elementary school, who were suspended began to disengage from academics, as well as other social interactions, thereby increasing their chances of later suspensions in middle and high school (McNeill, Friedman, & Chavez, 2016). When suspended or expelled students return to school, they may receive minimal support from their teachers in assisting them in catching up with their classmates. Consequently, the probability of them falling further behind is greatly increased, subjecting them to the higher prospects of grade retention (Finn & Servoss, 2014).

The literature reveals that the repeated use of exclusionary discipline does not improve the learning environment. In fact, regularly suspending or expelling students from school directly disadvantages the students who are given these consequences and the school as a whole (Skiba, 2014; Redfield & Nance, 2016). Student underachievement more often leads to negative student behavior in the classroom. It is common for low performing students to misbehave out of frustration or embarrassment in the classroom when they have low academic performance or fail to meet grade level requirements. When these students begin to feel as though school is not working for them, that they will more than likely not be admitted to college, not have access to good jobs, or not have a promising future, many of them will have less inclinations to follow school rules or take school seriously. This leads to classroom and school misbehavior,

disengagement from school, and antisocial behavior. Students who are not suspended from school often suffer from these misbehaviors as well (Redfield & Nance, 2016). In addition, many non-suspended students begin to resent school administrators who overly use exclusionary discipline. These students develop a cynical distrust of formal school authority and the likelihood of lower school morale sets in. In sum, overly punitive school environments undermine true institutional authority and creates student apathy for good students as well as poorly behaved students (Perry & Morris, 2014).

The irony in the literature on exclusionary discipline policies is that the very creation of such was intended to make schools safer and increase academic achievement, but the opposite has occurred. Missed classroom instruction due to out of school suspensions and expulsion contradicts the goal of student achievement and high stakes standardized tests. The unintended consequences push students even further down the path to academic failure, retention, and eventual school dropout (Wilson, 2014). Thus, exclusionary discipline has an undesirable impact on suspended students, placing them at even greater risk of academic failure and negative social outcomes (Curran, 2016).

Georgia Milestones Tests

The Georgia Milestones Tests assess how well students are mastering the educational standards set forth by the Georgia Department of Education (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Georgia Milestones were created and developed to replace the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) and the End-of-Course Test (EOCT). Students from grades 3 through 8 take an end-of-grade test (EOG) in English/language arts and mathematics while students from grades five and eight are tested in science and social studies. High school students take an end-of-course assessment (EOC) for each of the four core subject areas designated by the State Board

of Education which are English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Scores from this assessment give parents and students valuable information about their level of achievement and their preparedness for the next level of learning, whether it be grade promotion or college/career readiness (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). School districts and boards of education also use the results from the Georgia Milestones to test the quality of educational opportunities provided in the state. The assessment serves as an invaluable tool of the state's accountability system – the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). Georgia Milestones is a customized program designed to fit the needs of Georgia's students (Georgia Department of Education, 2015).

The Georgia Milestones consist of three types of questions – multiple choice, open ended (constructed-response) items in English/language arts and math for all grades and courses, and a writing component (in response to various passages read by students) at every grade level and course within the English/language arts assessment. The number of questions range from 30 to 73 for each content area. There will be a transition to online administration over time, with online administration as the primary mode of administration. Paper and pencil administration will serve as the primary mode until the online transition is complete (Georgia Department of Education, 2015).

The development of the Georgia Milestones began over four years ago with the input of Georgia educators from K-12 as well as those from the university and technical college systems. To ensure test validity and reliability, every item on the test was reviewed by these Georgia educators no fewer than two times. This tedious process was to ensure that each test items on the Georgia Milestones was aligned with the Georgia academic standards for each content area. The final stage of test development was to produce scores and distribute the results. Scores are

reported as scale scores and performance levels. By paying close attention to each phase of the test development process, the state can ensure that the Georgia Milestones is a valid and reliable instrument (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). The assessment is administered at the conclusion of the course regardless of grade level. These tests serve as final exams for the courses and are worth 20% of the student's final grade (Georgia Department of Education, 2015).

Standardized tests nationwide that are similar to the Georgia Milestones often reveal racial achievement gaps. According to The Educational Opportunity Monitoring Project (n.d.), one potential explanation for the achievement gap is the socioeconomic disparities between African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic family units. African American and Hispanic households are typically headed by parents who have lower incomes and lower levels of educational attainment than their Caucasian counterparts. Families with higher incomes and educational levels usually can provide more educational assistance for their children which can produce more positive academic outcomes (The Educational Opportunity Monitoring Project, n.d.). However, there is no mention of how exclusionary discipline may play a role in the existing achievement gaps. Further analysis of the results of these tests, including the Georgia Milestones, coinciding with disciplinary records may uncover yet another explanation as to why there exists an academic achievement gap.

Summary

The key prevailing theme of the literature in this review was the overrepresentation of African American male students receiving exclusionary discipline and the negative impacts on their academic and social outcomes. This information has been widely known for decades after several research endeavors on the subject. Yet, the literature revealed that although exclusionary

disciplinary consequences have proven to be ineffective in curbing negative behaviors in the classroom and that it negatively impacts African American students, males in particular, at alarmingly higher rates, school administrators across the nation continue to use this form of punishment at increasing rates (Shabazain, 2015; Hoffman, 2012). There have been efforts to decrease the number of African American students receiving out of school suspensions and expulsions (Denti & Guerin, 2014). A variety of alternatives to exclusionary disciplinary consequences have been suggested in the literature such as the implementation of culturally relevant professional development for classroom management, the establishment of a culturally and ethnically diverse discipline advisory committee that would review each discipline referral submitted by school administrators and determine the appropriate consequences for the misbehavior in question, enforcing a “three strikes” policy for non-violent offenses, placing students on behavioral contracts, and giving students after school detention (Lewis et al., 2010; Barton & Nishioka, 2014; Denti & Guerin, 2014).

The literature also points out the disparities between male and female students who receive exclusionary disciplinary consequences (Whitford et al., 2016). It has been found that female students are less likely to be given exclusionary discipline consequences than male students for committing the same infractions (Finn & Servoss, 2014). In addition, African American female students receive exclusionary disciplinary consequences at higher rates than Caucasian and Hispanic female students, at about the same rate as Caucasian male students, and more than Hispanic and Asian male students (Morris & Perry, 2017). However, the research does seem to lack information on how much exclusionary discipline also affects the academic outcomes of Caucasian and Hispanic male students. Because the overwhelming majority of the research on exclusionary discipline has focused on its impacts on African American male

students, very little focus, if any, has been directed towards investigating the impacts on Caucasian male student academic achievement. The data, with regards to the disproportionate representation of Hispanic students receiving exclusionary discipline, has been less clear. Although Hispanic male students have been one to one and a half times more likely than Caucasian male students to be suspended from school, the findings in the research have been mixed due to the influx of Hispanic immigrants, making this population the fastest growing group in the nation. And because of this, there are changing dynamics across different regions in the United States (Brown & Di Tillio, 2013; Finn & Servoss, 2014; Martinez et al., 2016). Be that as it may, the gap in research dealing with these two groups suggests the need for further research efforts. Next, Chapter Three will provide an in-depth review of the research design, research questions, and hypotheses along with the participants and setting of the study. Instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis methods will also be covered.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

A predictive correlational design was used to determine if there is a significant relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspensions and math and reading achievement scores for tenth and eleventh grade regular education, male students who received one or more suspensions during the prior school term. This chapter provides a detailed review of the research design used for this study, research questions and hypotheses, and participants and setting. In addition, the instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis methods for this study will be covered.

Design

A predictive correlational design was used for this study. Such a design is most appropriate in determining if two variables are significantly related and if predictions can be made based on that relationship. As noted by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), prediction studies are used by educational researchers to identify variables that forecast academic outcomes. Prediction research in many instances has sought to make short-term predictions of student performance in certain courses of study while others have aimed at long-term predictions of academic success (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

There are two variables in this study; days missed from school due to suspension (predictor variable) and math and reading achievement scores (criterion variables). Math and reading scores from the Georgia Milestones Assessment System were used. This standardized testing system is a comprehensive summative assessment program given to students in grades 3 through 12. The Georgia Milestones assesses how well students have mastered learning objectives in the state-adopted content areas of English/language arts, mathematics, science, and

social studies (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Discipline records which included the number of days participants in the study missed from school due to exclusionary discipline consequences, along with test scores, were obtained from the Georgia Department of Education. This research design determined if the direction of these two variables have a positive, negative, or no relationship (Gall, et al., 2007).

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

RQ1: Is there a predictive relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and analytic geometry scores for tenth grade male students on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments?

RQ2: Is there a predictive relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and end of course (EOC) test scores in American Literature for eleventh grade male students on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments?

Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for this study were:

H₀₁: There is no significantly predictive relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and analytic geometry scores for tenth grade male students on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments.

H₀₂: There is no significantly predictive relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and end of course (EOC) test scores in American Literature for eleventh grade male students on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments.

Participants and Setting

The participants in this study included all male students in grades 10 through 11 who

received one or more out of school suspensions during the previous school term. These students were randomly selected from 4 of 22 high schools located in a suburban metro Atlanta school district during the fall semester of the 2016-2017 school year with similar demographic data. The school district is in a middle-income suburb outside of Atlanta, Georgia. The student population in this school district is 102,000. The racial/ethnic background in this school district is 63.9% African American, 11% White (Caucasian), 16.7% Hispanic, 6.4% Asian, and 2% other (DeKalb County School District, 2017). The school district has a diverse population which will give it population validity where results of the study can be generalized to the larger school population of the state (Gall, et al., 2007). For the purposes of this study, African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic male students were used because these groups represent the three largest racial groups in the school district. Asians and other ethnic groups were not used because of their small numbers in the district's school population.

Convenience sampling was used in this study. As mentioned by Gall et al. (2007), this is appropriate because all the data needed for the study have already been collected. Also, researchers in education often use convenience sampling because participants (and data) are readily available and easily accessed (Warner, 2013). The target population consisted of all African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic male students in grades 10 and 11 who had one or more suspensions during the previous school term (Gall et al., 2007).

Of the 22 high schools in the district, four were used and data from the target population in these schools were randomly selected for this study. The four high schools included in this study have similar demographics and discipline policies. Regarding the sample size, the required sample for a medium effect size with statistical power of 0.7 at the 0.05 alpha level is 66 (Gall et al., 2007). The effect size measures the strength of a relationship between the predictor variable

and criterion variable in an analysis (Cohen, 1988). The number of participants was 93, which exceeded the minimum requirement.

Instrumentation

Archival data from the metro Atlanta suburban school district's databases were analyzed for this correlational study. Analytic geometry and American Literature EOC scores from the Georgia Milestones Test and discipline records are stored at each school in the school district. However, the data was retrieved from the Georgia Department of Education.

2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments

The purpose of the Georgia Milestones Assessments is to assess how well students are mastering the educational standards set forth by the Georgia Department of Education (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Georgia Milestones were created and developed to replace the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) and the End-of-Course Test (EOCT). Students from grades three through eight take an end-of-grade test (EOG) in English Language Arts and mathematics while students from grades five and eight are tested in science and social studies. High school students take an end-of-course assessment (EOC) for each of the four core subject areas designated by the State Board of Education which are English/Language Arts, mathematics, science, and social studies (Georgia Department of Education, 2015).

Scores from this assessment can provide parents and students with valuable information about their level of achievement and their preparedness for the next level of learning (promotion to the next grade, next course, or college/career) (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). School districts and boards of education use Georgia Milestones results to test the quality of educational opportunities provided in the state. The assessment serves as a vital tool of the state's accountability system – the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI)

(Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Georgia Milestones, as stated by the Georgia Department of Education (2015), is a customized program designed to fit the needs of Georgia's students.

Test development began over four years ago and involved K-12 Georgia educators as well as those from the university and technical college systems. Every item on the test has been reviewed by these Georgia educators no fewer than two times (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). This process was to ensure that the test items on the Georgia Milestones were aligned with the Georgia academic standards for each content area. The assessment is administered at the conclusion of the course regardless of grade level. These tests serve as final exams for the courses and are worth 20% of the student's final grade (Georgia Department of Education, 2015).

The Georgia Milestones consist of three types of questions – multiple choice, open ended (constructed-response) items in English/Language Arts and math for all grades and courses, and a writing component (in response to various passages read by students) at every grade level and course within the English/Language Arts assessment. The number of questions range from 30 to 73 for each content area. There will be a transition to online administration over time, with online administration as the primary mode of administration. Paper and pencil administration will serve as the primary mode until the online transition is complete (Georgia Department of Education, 2015).

Scores on the Georgia Milestones range from 140 (Lowest Obtainable Scale Score – LOSS) to 830 (Highest Obtainable Scale Score – HOSS) (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). The four performance levels on the Georgia Milestones Assessments are beginning learners, developing learners, proficient learners, and distinguished learners. Students classified

as beginning learners are those who do not yet demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this course of learning (215 to 474 for Coordinated Algebra; 185 to 474 for Analytic Geometry; 220 to 474 for 9th Grade Literature and Composition; 190 to 474 for American Literature and Composition). Developing learners are students who demonstrate partial proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this course of learning (475 to 524 for Coordinated Algebra; 475 to 524 for Analytic Geometry; 475 to 524 for 9th Grade Literature and Composition; 475 to 524 for American Literature and Composition). Students who are classified as proficient learners demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this course of learning (525 to 593 for Coordinated Algebra; 525 to 595 for Analytic Geometry; 525 to 586 for 9th Grade Literature and Composition; 525 to 589 for American Literature and Composition). Lastly, distinguished learners are students who demonstrate advanced proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this course of learning (594 to 790 for Coordinated Algebra; 596 to 810 for Analytic Geometry; 587 to 735 for 9th Grade Literature and Composition; 590 to 750 for American Literature and Composition) (Georgia Department of Education, 2015).

According to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), “validity refers to the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores entailed by proposed uses of tests” (Georgia Department of Education, 2016, p. 1). In establishing a test’s validity, clear identification of the purpose of the test is needed (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). As noted by GaDOE (2016), the state legislature identified the purpose of the Georgia Milestones as being an instrument to measure how well students have mastered the state’s content standards. Also, additional goals of the assessment are to identify areas where students need improvement, inform various stakeholders of the progress towards meeting the

standards of the state, meet requirements of federal accountability, and determine the overall quality of education in Georgia (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). In sum, the validity of the Georgia Milestones relies mostly on how well the instrument matches the content standards and how the score reports inform students, parents, and educators about the students' performance (Georgia Department of Education, 2016).

The development of the Georgia Milestones test depended heavily upon the inclusion of educators from around the state which included K-12 Georgia educators as well as those from the university and technical college systems (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). Every item on the test was reviewed by these Georgia educators no fewer than two times (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). This process was to ensure that the test items on the Georgia Milestones were aligned with the Georgia academic standards for each content area. The final stage of test development was to produce scores and distribute the results. Scores are reported as scale scores and performance levels. By paying close attention to each phase of the test development process, the state can ensure that the Georgia Milestones is a valid instrument. The Georgia Milestones' alignment with state content standards and reliance of input from Georgia educators at each phase of test development is critical to the test's validity (Georgia Department of Education, 2016).

For the Georgia Milestones, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is one reliability measure reported (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Cronbach's alpha of internal consistency reliability measures the degree to which test responses remain uniform over a period of time. The reliability coefficient ranges for the Georgia Milestones for all subjects are 0.85 to 0.94 indicating high internal consistency (Warner, 2013). The reliability coefficient for math (Coordinate Algebra, Analytic Geometry, Algebra I, and Geometry) on the Georgia Milestones

ranges from 0.89 to 0.94. The reliability coefficient for reading (Ninth Grade Literature and Composition and American Literature) on the Georgia Milestones ranges from 0.87 to 0.89 (Georgia Department of Education, 2016).

Discipline Records

Discipline data regarding out of school suspension are maintained at each high school as well as at the district's central office. However, for this study, the data was retrieved from the Georgia Department of Education. The data consist of the assigned students' race and the length of suspensions. In this study, the discipline data used came from the 2015-2016 school term. Participants who were randomly selected for this study were in grades 9 and 10 during this timeframe and were moved on to grades 10 and 11 respectively. Regarding data collection, a member of the Georgia Department of Education's staff collected the data using an Excel spreadsheet to document the necessary data for each participant in the study. All participants were assigned a nondescript numerical code to protect their identities. Personal identifiable information such as social security number, name, age, and school were not recorded.

Procedures

Prior to securing approval from Liberty University's Internal Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A), the researcher obtained permission from the Georgia Department of Education to receive archival data which included analytic geometry and American Literature EOC scores from the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones and out of school suspension data for all male students in grades 10 and 11 who received one or more out of school suspensions the previous school term (see Appendix B). Students were placed in groups according to their grade level. Four out of the 22 high schools in the district were used for the study. Once data was received from the Georgia Department of Education for students who met the criterion from these schools, their

information was saved on a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 24.0 (SPSS) for Windows. Each participant was assigned a number and their names along with other identification information were deleted to ensure confidentiality. All electronic data were securely stored on the researcher's computer. Hard copies of collected data were locked securely in a file cabinet located in a local high school.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this correlational study was to examine the relationship between absenteeism due to suspensions and math and reading scores from the 2016 – 2017 Georgia Milestones Test for tenth and eleventh grade regular education, male students. The focus of this study was on determining if the criterion variables of math and reading scores from standardized tests were affected by the predictor variable of days miss from school due to suspensions using a bivariate regression. Bivariate regression is used when a researcher is interested in predicting the effect of the predictor variable (days absent due to suspensions) on the criterion variables (math and reading achievement scores) (Warner, 2013).

Bivariate regression, like the Pearson's r , assumes that the relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion variable is linear and describes the strength and direction of that relationship. The r values range between -1.00 and +1.00 (Warner, 2013). A positive r value indicates a positive relationship, meaning, as the number of days suspended from school increase, the scores on the math and reading Georgia Milestones test increase as well. On the other hand, a negative r value will indicate a negative relationship in that as the number of days suspended from school increase, the scores on the math and reading Georgia Milestones test will decrease (Warner, 2013). A value of 0 represents no linear relationship exists between the two variables and values of -1.00 or +1.00 indicate a perfect negative linear or a perfect positive

linear relationship respectively, which rarely occurs. The closer the r value is to -1.00 or +1.00, the stronger the linear relationship. The closer the r value is to 0, the weaker the linear relationship (Warner, 2013).

Before beginning the bivariate regression analysis, the data needed to be screened to check for outliers. There were six assumption tests that needed to be performed as well. The first assumption determined whether the two variables could be measured on an interval or ratio level. Next, in independent observation, the observations within each variable were independent. The assumption of normality assumes that the population distributions were normal. To check for normality, a histogram and the Shapiro-Wilk test were used. The Shapiro-Wilk test is best used when the sample population is small (Foster, 2017). In this study, there were 93 male students who were suspended from school during the 2015-2016 school term. Out of that sample, 47 were tenth graders who took the 2016-2017 EOC analytic geometry test and 46 who completed the 2016-2017 EOC American literature test. Therefore, the Shapiro-Wilk test was most appropriate.

To test for the assumption of bivariate outliers, a scatter plot between the predictor variable and the criterion variable was used. The purpose for the use of a scatter plot was to look for extreme bivariate outliers. It was assumed that the relationship between the two variables of days missed from school due to suspension (predictor) and math and reading scores from the Georgia Milestones test (criterion) were linear. To check for such linearity, a scatter plot was used. Lastly, a test for the assumption of bivariate normal distribution was conducted. A scatterplot was used again between the predictor variable and the criterion variables. The classic “cigar shape” should be present (Foster, 2017).

After all assumptions tests were completed, the bivariate regression analysis was conducted to determine if there was a significantly predictive relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and math and reading achievement scores on the Georgia Milestones for all male students in grades 10 and 11. The results of this analysis provided a correlation coefficient which determined the strength of the relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion variables. The Pearson's r analysis was repeated separately for days missed due to suspension and math and reading scores from the Georgia Milestones to view each content area separately.

Summary

This study used a bivariate regression to examine the hypothesized relationship between absenteeism due to suspensions and math and reading scores from the 2016 – 2017 Georgia Milestones Test for tenth and eleventh grade regular education, male students. The independent variables of this study were not manipulated in any fashion. The data used was obtained from the archives of the Georgia Department of Education during the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school terms. This data included archived 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Test scores, disciplinary data from the 2015-2016 school term, and demographic data. Lastly, the study used a bivariate regression to determine the strength of the relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion variables.

Chapter Three covered the methodology and data that were instrumental in addressing the research questions and hypotheses of this study. In addition, participants, setting, instrumentation, and procedures were discussed. Data analysis and assumption tests were also included. In the next chapter, the theoretical frameworks and related literature will be discussed. Chapter Four will cover the findings of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study was to investigate the relationship between days missed from school due to exclusionary discipline practices and math and reading achievement scores on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Test for tenth and eleventh grade regular education male students. This study relied on the archival data from the Georgia Department of Education which included 2015-2016 discipline records and 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Tests EOC results for analytic geometry for tenth grade male students and American Literature EOC results for eleventh grade male students. This chapter explains the descriptive statistics for each variable and the findings from the bivariate regression conducted for the research questions.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a predictive relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and analytic geometry scores for tenth grade male students on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments?

RQ2: Is there a predictive relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and end of course (EOC) test scores in American Literature for eleventh grade male students on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments?

Null Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no statistically significant difference between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and analytic geometry scores for tenth grade male students on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments.

H₀2: There is no statistically significant difference between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and end of course (EOC) test scores in American Literature for eleventh grade male students on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments.

Descriptive Statistics

The sample in this study consisted of regular education, tenth and eleventh grade African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic male students ($N = 93$), who were administered the Georgia Milestones test during the 2016-2017 school term and received at least one out of school suspension during the 2015-2016 school term. The average time served in out of school suspension (OSS) was 1.62 days ($SD = .955$). The mean score for the 2016-2017 analytic geometry EOC was 482.55 ($SD = 39.10$) and 479.76 ($SD = 43.837$) for the 2016-2017 American Literature EOC. Detailed descriptive statistics are covered in Tables 1-2 below.

Table 1

SPSS v.24 Descriptive Statistics for the variables of OSS and Analytic Geometry

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
2015-2016 OSS Assignment	93	1.62	.955	1	5
2016-2017 EOC Score Anal. Geo.	93	482.55	39.100	416	594

Table 2

SPSS v.24 Descriptive Statistics for the variables of OSS and Amer. Literature

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
2015-2016 OSS Assignment	93	1.62	.955	1	5
2016-2017 EOC Score Amer. Lit.	93	479.76	43.837	372	590

Data Screening

Data screening for this study was conducted on the predictor variable of days missed from school due to out of school suspension (OSS) and the criterion variables of analytic geometry and American Literature. Screening included checking for extreme outliers and inconsistencies. Scatter plots (see Figure 1 and 2) were used to reveal extreme outliers and histograms were used to determine if there is a normal distribution of data. No inconsistencies or errors were found after a visual inspection. The histogram showed a normal distribution meeting the requirements of data screening (see Figures 3, 4, and 5).

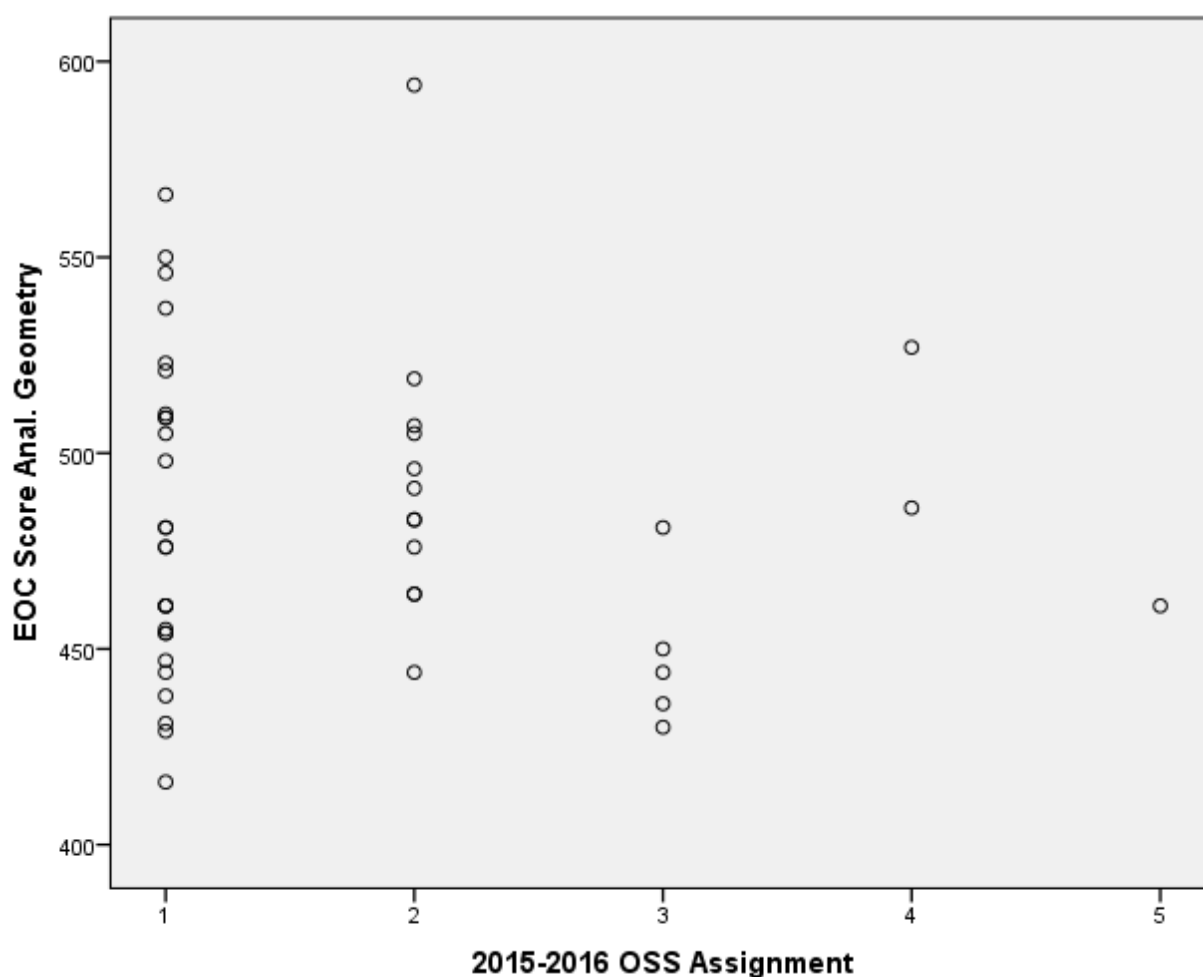


Figure 1. Scatterplot of OSS and EOC Anal. Geo. determining presence of relationship.

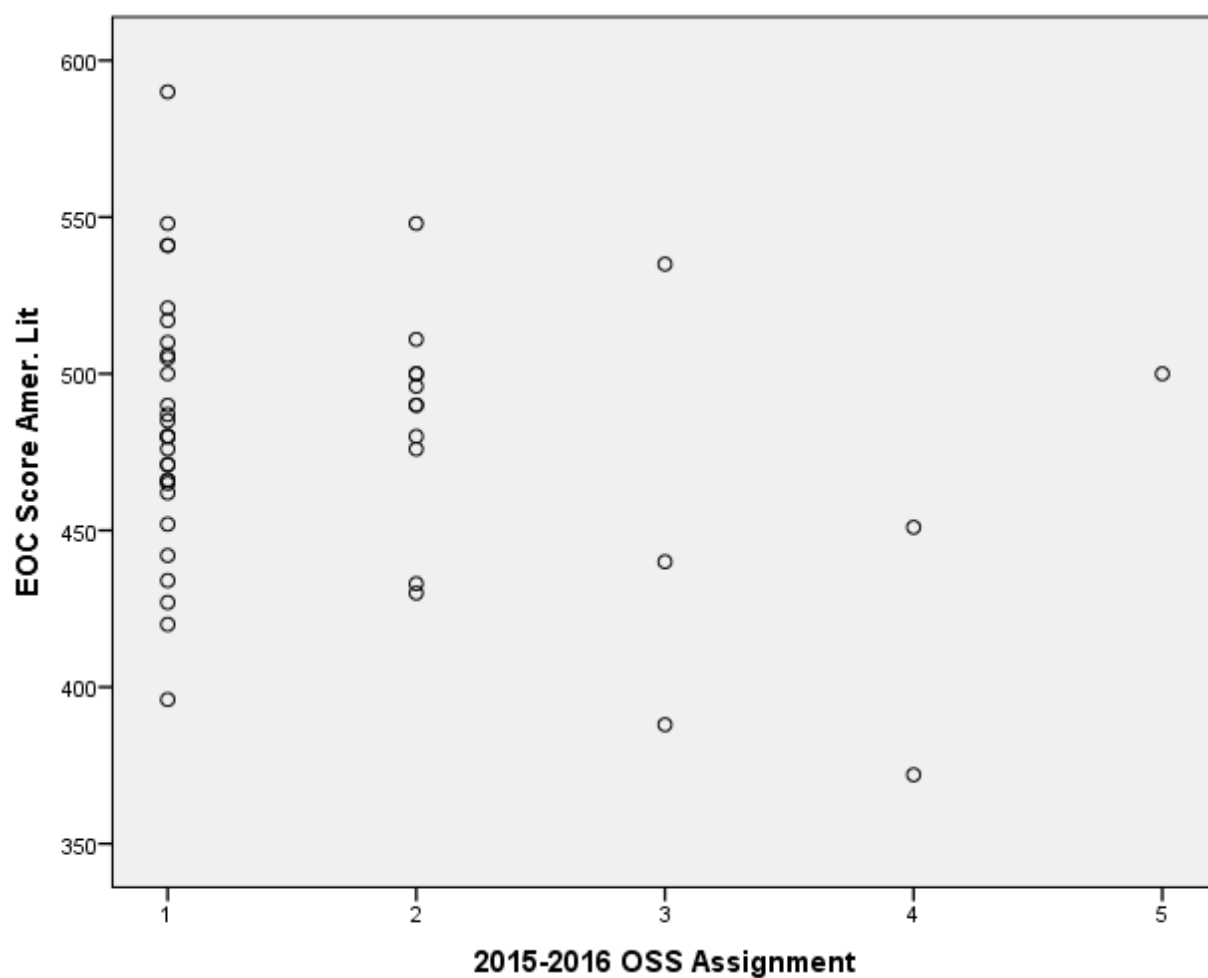


Figure 2. Scatterplot of OSS and EOC Amer. Lit. determining presence of relationship.

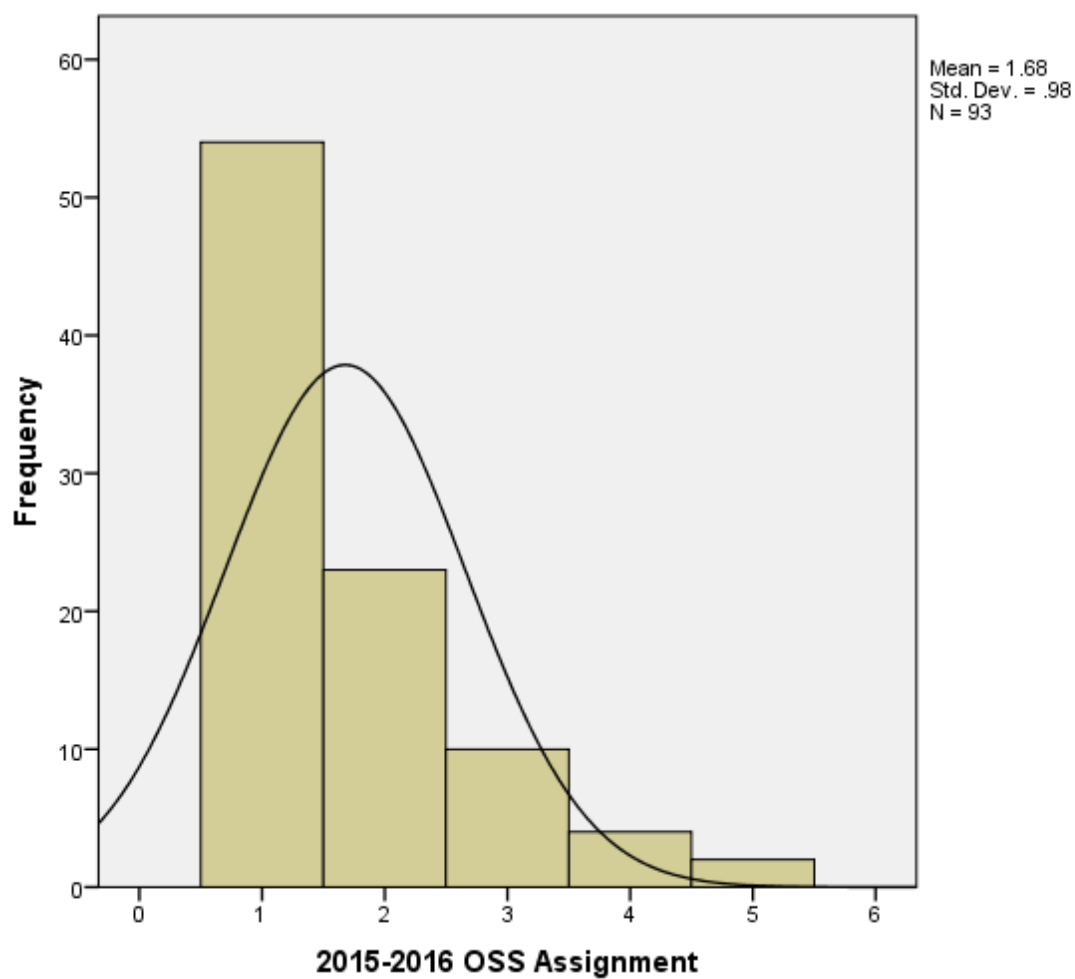


Figure 3. Histogram of the number of days assigned out of school suspensions

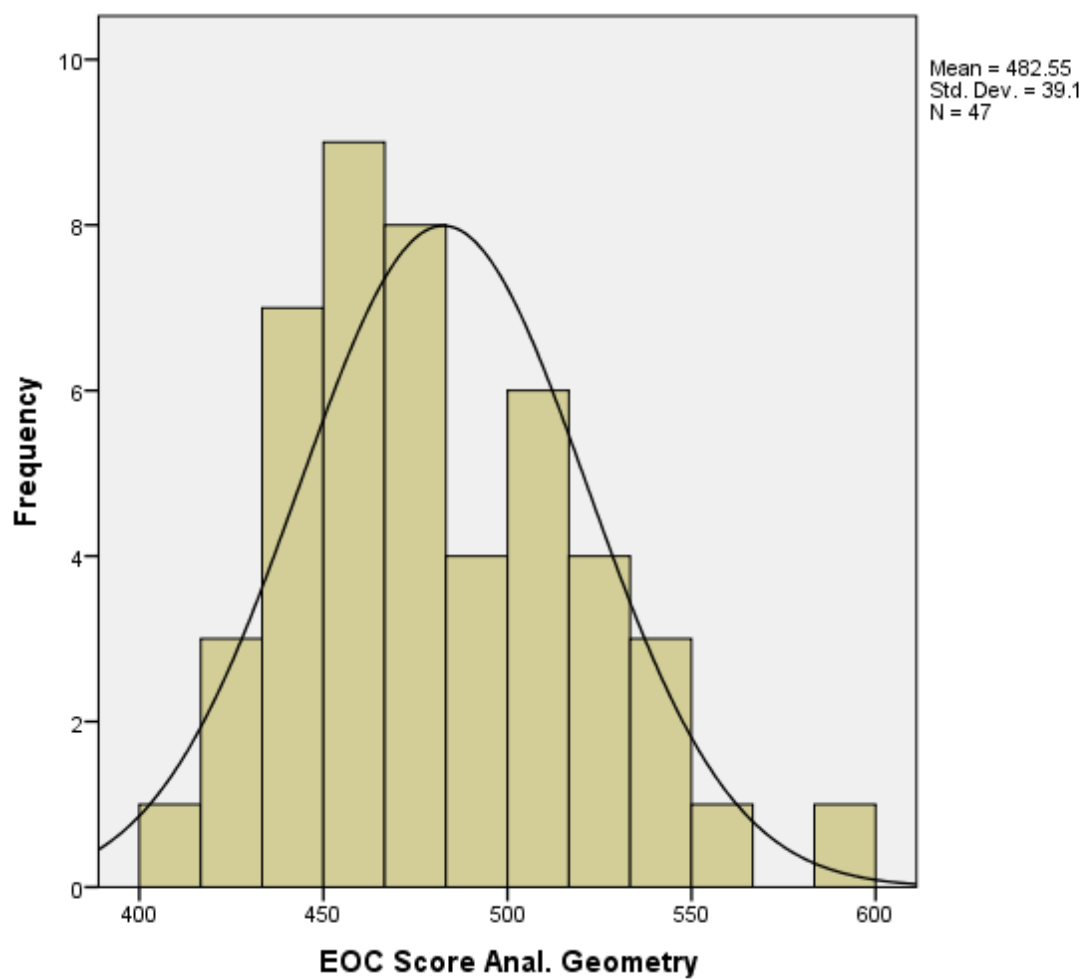


Figure 4. Histogram of EOC Analytic Geometry scores of male students who missed at least one day of school due to OSS.

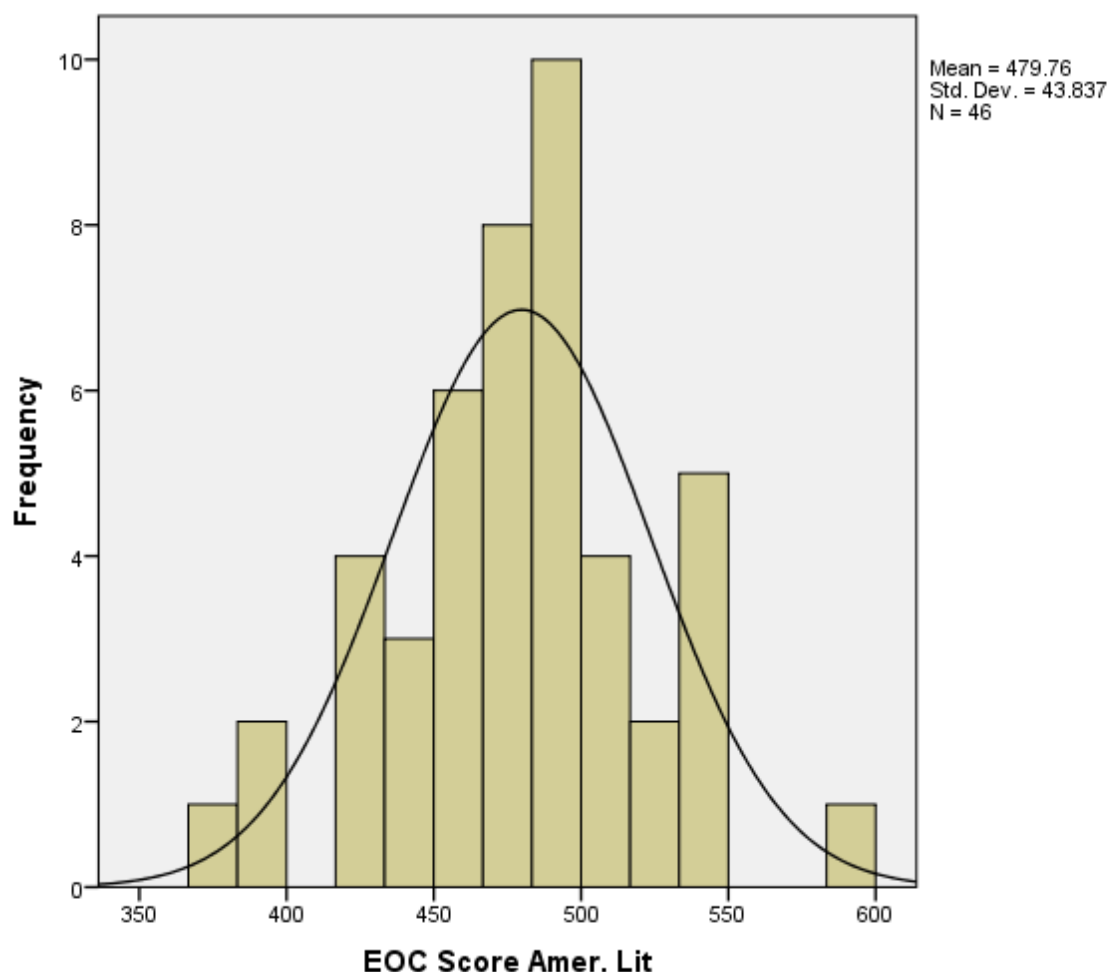


Figure 5. Histogram of EOC American Literature scores of male students who missed at least one day of school due to OSS.

Assumptions

A Pearson's product-moment correlation was utilized to assess the relationship between days missed from school due to out of school suspensions and EOC scores on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Tests in analytic geometry and American Literature. A total of 93 male African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic students were used in this study. Of the total number participants, 47 students completed the EOC analytic geometry test (tenth grade) and 46 completed the EOC American Literature test (eleventh grade). The variables were assessed for

normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. As noted earlier, a scatter plot was used to check for extreme outliers (See Figures 1 and 2). No extreme outliers were found.

Shapiro-Wilk was used to test the assumption of normality. No violations for EOC analytic geometry and EOC American Literature were found. See Table 3 for Shapiro-Wilk test results.

Table 3.

Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality

Variables	Statistics	df	Sig.
2016-2017 EOC Score Anal. Geo.	.965	47	.169
2016-2017 EOC Score Amer. Lit.	.985	46	.818

Histograms (See Figures 3, 4, and 5) provided an analysis of the relationships between days missed from school due to out of school suspensions, EOC scores for analytic geometry, and EOC scores for American Literature. Skewness was found in the histograms of days missed from school due to out of school suspensions, EOC scores for analytic geometry, and EOC scores for American Literature. According to Warner (2013), normal distribution is shown by having a value of 0 for skewness and kurtosis. However, the acceptable ranges for skewness and kurtosis is between -2.00 and +2.00. In addition, Table 4 shows the skewness and kurtosis results.

Table 4

Description of Skewness and Kurtosis

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
2015-2016 OSS Assignments	1.542	1.965
EOC Score Anal. Geometry	.668	.238
EOC Score Amer. Lit.	-.169	.688

Results**Null Hypothesis One**

The first null hypothesis was as follows:

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant difference between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and analytic geometry scores for tenth grade male students on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments.

Upon visual inspection of the scatterplot to determine a relationship between the variables of out of school suspension (OSS) and EOC analytic geometry, a Pearson's product-moment correlation was conducted to determine if there was a significantly predictive relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and analytic geometry achievement scores on the Georgia Milestones for African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic male students in the tenth grade. Preliminary analyses showed a linear relationship with both variables being distributed normally as shown by the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test ($p > .05$) with no outliers. The results showed a significant but weak negative correlation between days missed from school due to OSS and EOC analytic geometry scores on the Georgia Milestones Assessment, $r(45) = -.087, p = .169$. This illustrates that as the number of days of out

of school suspensions (OSS) increased, the scores on the EOC analytic geometry decreased, thus allowing the researcher to reject the null hypothesis. The correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed). Refer to Table 5 for the Pearson correlation test results.

Table 5

Pearson Correlations Between 2015-2016 OSS Assignment and EOC Analytic Geometry Scores

		2015-2016 OSS Assignment	EOC Score Anal. Geometry
2015-2016 OSS Assignment	Pearson Correlation	1	-.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.562
	N	93	47
EOC Score Anal. Geometry	Pearson Correlation	-.087	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.562	
	N	47	47

Null Hypothesis 2

The second null hypothesis was as follows:

H₀₂: There is no statistically significant difference between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and end of course (EOC) test scores in American Literature for eleventh grade male students on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments.

Upon visual inspection of the scatterplot to determine a relationship between the variables of out of school suspension (OSS) and EOC test scores in American Literature, a bivariate regression analysis was conducted to determine if there was a significantly predictive relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and American Literature achievement scores on the Georgia Milestones for African American, Caucasian, and

Hispanic male students in the eleventh grade. Preliminary analyses showed a linear relationship with both variables being distributed normally as shown by the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test ($p > .05$) with no outliers. The results showed a significant but weak negative correlation between days missed from school due to OSS and EOC American Literature scores on the Georgia Milestones Assessment, $r(44) = -.214, p = .818$. This illustrates that as the number of days of out of school suspensions (OSS) increased, the scores on the EOC American Literature decreased, thus allowing the researcher to reject the null hypothesis. The correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed). Refer to Table 6 for the Pearson correlation test results. Table 6.

Pearson Correlations Between 2015-2016 OSS Assignment and EOC American Lit. Scores

		2015-2016 OSS Assignment	EOC Score Amer. Lit.
2015-2016 OSS Assignment	Pearson Correlation	1	-.214
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.152
	N	93	46
EOC Amer. Lit. Score	Pearson Correlation	-.214	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.152	
	N	46	46

Summary

Chapter Four detailed the results from the data analysis which was used to answer the research questions. This study investigated the relationship between days missed from school due to exclusionary discipline practices and math and reading achievement scores on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Test for tenth and eleventh grade regular education male students.

Research questions, null hypotheses, descriptive data along with data screening, assumption tests, data analysis, and results of the study were also included in this chapter. The findings showed a significant but weak negative correlation between days missed from school due to OSS and EOC analytic geometry scores on the Georgia Milestones Assessment. In addition, findings showed a significant but weak negative correlation between days missed from school due to OSS and EOC American Literature scores on the Georgia Milestones Assessment. Chapter Five will discuss the findings, implications, and limitations of the study. It will also give recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The findings from this study addressed the gap in literature by showing how exclusionary discipline not only negatively affected African American male students disproportionately, but how it negatively impacted Caucasian and Hispanic male students' academic achievement as well. The study added to the body of research showing how the overuse of exclusionary discipline has devastating consequences for students in that the more days missed from school due to OSS, the lower the test scores on standardized tests. The implications of this study impact educators, school leaders, school districts, and policy makers who seek to find alternatives to the overuse of exclusionary discipline in order to keep students in the classroom.

Discussion

The purpose of this correlational study was to examine the relationship between absenteeism due to out of school suspensions and math and reading scores from the 2016 – 2017 Georgia Milestones Test for tenth and eleventh grade regular education, male students. Participants in this study included 93 male students from various racial backgrounds (African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic) in grades ten through eleven who had received one or more suspensions during the previous school term. Days missed from school due to suspension served as the predictor variable. This study focused on determining if there was a predictive relationship between days missed from school due to suspension and end of course (EOC) test scores for analytic geometry for tenth grade male students and EOC test scores for eleventh grade male students in American Literature from the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones.

The first research question asked if there was a relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and analytic geometry scores for tenth grade male students

on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments. The results from this research question were aligned with previous research on exclusionary discipline and academic achievement. Said results showed a negative relationship between days missed from school due to out of school suspensions (OSS) and academic achievement. The more students missed days from school due to OSS, the lower their test scores were on the Georgia Milestones Assessments in analytic geometry.

The results of this study are quite consistent with previous research findings. As noted by Morris and Perry (2016), exclusionary discipline has very few behavioral or academic benefits for students who are given such punishments. In fact, exclusionary discipline, out of school suspensions in particular, have catastrophic effects on the academic performances of students as forwarded by Wilson (2014) who stated that students who missed valuable classroom instruction increased their likelihood of lowered academic achievement. Students who are removed from the classroom due to out of school suspensions have the increased likelihood of falling behind their classmates which, in turn, leads to academic failure and disillusionment with the academic process (Allday & Christle, 2015; Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). In addition, Skiba (2014) stated that schools with higher rates of suspensions have lower success on standardized tests than schools with lower numbers of out of school suspensions, regardless of student racial/ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic status.

The second research question asked if there was a relationship between the number of days missed from school due to suspension and end of course (EOC) test scores in American Literature for eleventh grade male students on the 2016-2017 Georgia Milestones Assessments. The results from this research question were also aligned with previous research on exclusionary discipline and academic achievement. The results also showed a negative relationship between

days missed from school due to out of school suspensions (OSS) and academic achievement on EOC test scores in American Literature. The more students missed days from school due to OSS, the lower their test scores were on the Georgia Milestones Assessments in American Literature. Kang-Brown et al. (2013) and Triplett et al. (2014) noted that evidence revealed that being suspended from school just once in the 9th grade doubles the chances of students dropping out of high school from 16% for those who have never been suspended from school to 32% for those who were suspended just once. Even more alarming is that each additional suspension increased the chances of dropping out of school by nearly 20% (Losen., et al, 2014). Lastly, Noltemeyer et al. (2015) and Gottfried and Kirksey (2017) concluded that having low school attendance, regardless of reason, is associated with lower standardized test scores and schools with very high out of school suspension rates usually fare worse on such tests than schools with lower suspension rates.

Implications

The implications of this study are quite serious in that it provided evidence that out of school suspensions (OSS) correlates with lower test scores on standardized tests, namely the Georgia Milestones Assessments in analytic geometry and American Literature. Previous research showed that African American male students received disproportionate amounts of exclusionary discipline consequences when compared with their Caucasian peers, even when the offenses were similar (Nishioka, 2013). Also, African American students, males in particular, are found to be four times more likely than their Caucasian peers to be suspended from school and two and half times more likely to be expelled (Boneshefski & Runge, 2014). However, this study fills the gap in literature by bringing light to how Caucasian and Hispanic male students also suffer disproportionately with regard to exclusionary discipline and how this practice

negatively affects their academic achievement. Past studies have shown that male students in general overwhelmingly receive out of school suspensions (OSS) than their female counterparts (Whitford et al., 2016; Martinez et al., 2016). As mentioned by Finn and Servoss (2014), male students make up about 51% of the student population in American public schools but receive approximately 70% of out of school suspensions. On the other hand, female students make up roughly 49% of the student population nationally but receive only 30% of out of school suspension consequences. When looking at the results of this study and past studies, no data supports the use of OSS as being effective in reducing unwanted school behavior and improving school safety (Skiba, 2014).

Limitations

There are a few limitations in this study. As noted by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), correlational studies can be used to make predictions and though the results of this study found a negative relationship between days missed from school due to exclusionary discipline (out of school suspensions) and test scores in analytic geometry and American Literature from the Georgia Milestones Tests for tenth and eleventh grade male students, respectively, it cannot be assumed that days missed from school due to out of school suspensions alone caused lower test scores. Other unmeasurable variables could have taken place before or during the testing day that may have negatively impacted student achievement scores. For example, the participants in the study may not have had high levels of motivation on the day of testing. Also, students in the study may not have been in the best of health on the day of testing or didn't acquire enough sleep the evening before testing. Students may have been required to test in a different classroom setting they were not accustomed to and have teachers proctoring the test with whom they are not

familiar. And students in the study could have been low achievers prior to being suspended which may have negative effects on the criterion variables.

As stated earlier, the results of this study did find a negative relationship between days missed from school due to out of school suspensions and test scores in analytic geometry and American Literature for tenth and eleventh grade male students. However, these results should not be generalized. Participants in the study were limited to 93 tenth and eleventh grade African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic male students in four high schools in a large suburban school district and the results should not be generalized to other grade levels or school districts, particularly smaller, rural school districts with limited student diversity. Noticeably omitted from the study were Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander students because of their low population numbers in the school district. In addition, this study only used analytic geometry scores for tenth grade male students and American Literature scores for eleventh grade male students on the Georgia Milestones Test. While the Georgia Milestones Test is a valid and reliable testing instrument, use of the scores in this study should not be generalized in other grade levels or content areas (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). Similarly, the results of this study should not be generalized to other standardized tests given in other states. Not all states have tests identical to the Georgia Milestones Assessments.

Recommendations for Future Research

The recommendations for future research were found in the limitations of this study. These recommendations are for parents, educators, school district leaders, and policy makers. Future studies can use these recommendations to improve student achievement on standardized tests with particular focus on decreasing the number of days missed from school due to OSS.

1. The first limitation dealt with student motivation and health prior to testing.

Future similar studies that would replicate the methods of this study could also include surveys to gauge student attitudes, health prior to testing, and attitudes concerning testing accommodations to get a broader sense of how they felt prior to testing. With regard to testing accommodations, students can be polled to get a sense of how they felt about the proctor (unfamiliar teacher) during testing and the actual testing location.

2. The next recommendation coincides with determining if students who were suspended prior to testing were already low achievers in analytic geometry or American Literature. Gaining access to archival data which includes students' previous grades in math and reading/language arts prior to taking standardized tests would make results from future research on this subject more robust.
3. The number of participants in this study was limited to 93 tenth and eleventh grade African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic male students in four high schools in a large suburban school district. The researcher recommends including all male students in grades nine through twelve to get a more generalized result. In addition, the inclusion of smaller school districts, particularly in rural areas with limited diversity, could also make future studies more inclusive. As noted earlier, Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander male students were not included in this study because of their low population numbers in the school district. However, including this student population would help determine if exclusionary discipline practices negatively impact them as well with regard to standardized tests such as the Georgia Milestones Assessments.

4. Lastly, this study only used analytic geometry scores for tenth grade male students and American Literature scores for eleventh grade male students on the Georgia Milestones Test. The research suggests using other instruments to assess student academic achievement which would include other content areas such as science and social studies as well as including male students in grades nine through twelve.

Conclusion

The reoccurring theme of this study was the use of exclusionary discipline, out of school suspensions in particular, and its effects on academic achievement. Past studies have primarily focused on the overuse of exclusionary discipline and its negative consequences on African American male students. As found in those studies, African American males were overrepresented in receiving exclusionary discipline consequences and the factors behind this problem were discussed (Butler et al., 2012; Skiba, et. al., 2014; Losen et al., 2014). In addition, various recommendations were given in said studies to lower the number of out of school suspensions for African American male students (Denti & Guerin, 2014; Martinez et al., 2016).

However, there was a gap in the literature when it came to focusing on the effects of exclusionary discipline on the academic achievement of Caucasian and Hispanic male students. Males in general received exclusionary discipline at higher rates than female students who committed the same infractions (Finn & Servoss, 2014). As with African American male students, Caucasian and Hispanic male students also suffered academically when they missed school due to exclusionary discipline practices as found in this study. Educational leaders, teachers, and policy makers must continue to create alternatives to out of school suspensions in order to keep students in the classroom. Over-reliance on exclusionary discipline exposes students, males in particular, to unintended consequences such as academic failure, school

dropout, and increased probabilities of contact with the criminal justice system. The overuse of exclusionary discipline, as noted by Denti and Guerin (2014), is "last refuges of a weak administrator". Accordingly, strong educational leaders will find ways to keep students in their buildings, thereby ensuring that America will continue to have a competent and educated populace.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Letter of IRB Approval

Appendix B Permission Correspondence from Cooperating Department of Education

Appendix A

Letter of IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY®

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

July 31, 2018

Dante' L. Ferguson, Sr.

IRB Application 3227: Correlational Study of Out of School Suspension and Academic Achievement for Tenth and Eleventh Grade Male Students

Dear Dante' L. Ferguson, Sr.,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Your study does not classify as human subjects research because it will not involve the collection of identifiable, private information.

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by submitting a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Application number.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in identifying whether possible changes to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

██████████, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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Appendix B

Permission Correspondence from Cooperating Department of Education

Regarding a letter of permission, the [REDACTED]'s Office of Legal Services takes the position that all data files distributed in response to data requests are in the public domain, and as such are free to use, and possession of the file is de facto permission to use the data contained in the file. As such, we will not provide letters of permission or sign forms of permission for individual requests. In short, if you were not allowed to use the file we would not provide the file, and so the very fact of you having the file means you have permission to use it. Further questions regarding the permission issue should be directed to the Department's Legal Services office – [REDACTED], or [REDACTED]@doe.k12.ga.us.

[REDACTED]

Systems Analyst

Office of Technology Services

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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