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Efficacy of Preventions and Interventions for At-Risk Students in Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MA, Argosy University, 2011

BA, Park College, 1981

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Students, who are repeatedly referred to Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs), are at risk for future school dropout and for feeding the pipeline from schools to prison. In the United States, this is true especially for minority students, and regardless of referral reasons or intervention efforts. The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to examine attitudes of DAEP students and teachers regarding the influence of mandatory versus discretionary referrals, frequency and duration of referrals, and punitive versus creative interventions on positive behavioral outcomes. Data for the quantitative phase were collected via an online survey from public high school teachers in Texas (N = 107). Data for the qualitative phase were collected in semi-structured interviews with at-risk students (N = 9) regarding their lived experiences during the referral process and interventions received at DAEPs. Quantitative data were analyzed with a series of ANCOVAs, independent t-tests, and one MANCOVA that did not result in significant findings. However, student interviews revealed that the referral process lacked clarity and fairness, that all interventions were viewed as punitive, and that long assignments at DAEPs resulted in feelings of hopelessness and despair. Bandura's social cognitive learning theory served as the theoretical framework. Future studies should focus on students' understanding of the referral process, treatment intervention strategies, and appropriate length of assignments at DAEPs. This study may lead to positive social change by helping school administrators adapt referral policies to the needs of at-risk students, thereby encouraging behavioral change and reducing recidivism at DAEPs.

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Dedication

This is for my father, Walter Jesdinsky. Gone too early, and dearly missed.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my family, friends, and colleagues, who have always encouraged me to move forward, and finish this study for the benefit of at-risk students, our communities, and ultimately society.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Students who are repeatedly referred to Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs) are at a high risk for dropping out of high school, future criminality, incarceration, and recidivism (Van Acker, 2007). The problem with isolating disruptive and behavior-challenged students in DAEPs is that such punitive measures often increase the frequency and intensity of antisocial behaviors due to the concentration of these students and lack of a support system at DAEPs (Armstrong & Ricard, 2016; Mergler, Vargas & Caldwell, 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2016). That is why it is important to better understand drivers of successful outcomes among students in DAEPs. This explanatory sequential mixed methods study examined attitudes of DAEP students and teachers from their home campuses and DAEPs regarding the extent to which they thought mandatory and discretionary referrals, frequency and duration of referrals at DAEPs, as well as punitive and creative interventions were related to positive behavioral outcomes that may lead to positive social change.

Sum et al. (2009) found that one in 10 American males ages 16 to 24 who dropped out of school ended up either in prison or in juvenile detention. 54% of high school dropouts were unemployed, compared to 32% of their peers with a high school diploma and 13% of young men and women with a college degree (Sum et al., 2009). In 2008, the unemployment rate among young Black dropouts was 79%, compared to 54% for young Whites and 47% for Hispanics (Sum et al., 2009). Additionally, Sum et al.

(2009) found that young female dropouts were nine times more likely to become single mothers than their peers, who went on to earn college degrees.

De Witte et al. (2013) said that high school dropouts were more likely to be unemployed, depend on public welfare, live in poverty, display political and social apathy, and experience increased risks for mental health issues, gang involvement, and criminal activity. Jia et al. (2016) said that 12% of schools were responsible for 50% of the nation's high school dropouts and suggested a greater focus on the link between school-level factors and high school dropout rates. Delale-O'Connor et al. (2017) said that classroom settings were major contributors to what they termed the cradle to prison pipeline. Inadequate funding, lack of quality education, zero tolerance disciplinary policies, subjective teacher and administrative disciplinary practices, and criminalization of school facilities were considered major reasons for increased school dropout rates and entry into the juvenile justice system (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017).

The Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2018) cited the most common reasons for dropping out as having poor grades in core subjects, low attendance, failure to be promoted to the next grade, and behavioral problems. During the 2012-2013 school year, Texas students in grades 9-12 dropped out at a 2.2% higher rate than the state average of 6.6%, with students in grade 12 having the highest dropout rate, followed by grade 11 (TEA, 2018). Furthermore, the dropout rates for economically disadvantaged (2.6%), African American (3.3%), Hispanic (2.8%), and male students (2.5%) were reported as disproportionately higher than the state average, whereas dropout rates for White (1.1%),

multiracial (1.5%), and female students (1.9%) was reported as lower than the state average of 6.6% (TEA, 2014).

These dropout reports did not provide separate statistics for home campuses versus DAEPs; however, research in the past ten years consistently demonstrated that students, who were excluded from their home campuses repeatedly and were isolated at DAEPs, had a history of academic and social failure with negative future outcomes (Zolkoski et al., 2016). This explanatory sequential mixed methods study examined attitudes of DAEP students and teachers from home schools regarding the extent to which they thought referral type, frequency and duration, and intervention type were related to positive behavioral outcomes that could lead to positive social change. Such positive social change could be expressed as strategies to return these students to their home campuses and graduate with their peers. The expectation was that results from this study offered new information to help close the revolving door for DAEPs, reduce subsequent high school dropout rates, and stop feeding the pipeline from schools to prisons, thus bringing about positive social change.

In this chapter, possible contributors of student misbehaviors and poor attitudes towards reform are addressed by examining the impact of mandatory versus discretionary referrals, punitive versus proactive and creative prevention/intervention strategies, and variations in terms of assessments of student responses between teachers at home campuses and DAEPs. Ineffective school policies and excessive use of discretionary referrals can lead to an increase of misbehaviors and loss of response to interventions. Next is an explanation of the purpose of this study, research questions and hypotheses,

and variables, followed by a description of the theoretical framework that served as the basis of this research. Next is a description of the nature of the study and definitions of key terms. Assumptions include components of the study that were believed to be true and could not be verified. The delimitations and limitations sections include sample size and participant issues as well as potential concerns during the study. Lastly, the significance and summary sections include contributions of this study to the literature, followed by the conclusion of Chapter 1 and an introduction to Chapter 2.

Background

Following a dramatic increase in school violence and aggression in the United States between the years 1980 and 2000, and resulting public concerns over appropriate action, Congress responded with The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act and the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (Van Acker, 2007. Schools responded with the adoption of zero tolerance policies, implementing punitive measures such as suspensions and expulsions for behaviors that include violence, aggression, truancy, and drug abuse (Van Acker, 2007). Subsequently, students with antisocial and aggressive behaviors were removed from their main campuses and placed off-site to be educated in DAEPs. Mergler et al. (2014) found that exclusionary discipline measures increased from 1.7 million in 1974 to 3.3 million in 2006 across the nation.

Such short-term solutions rarely solve chronic and long-term problems with at-risk youths, unless DAEPs include proactive support systems to manage the concentration of antisocial behaviors in such places (Zolkoski et al., 2016). Originally designed to educate students who have committed felonies, DAEPs have since been used

increasingly for discretionary placements of students with less serious behavior problems involving disruptions, disobedience, and breaking school rules (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). Additionally, lack of standards for discretionary placements has allowed schools and administrators to disproportionately target minority and special education students. For example, researchers of the Texas Appleseed Study (2007) found that between 2001 and 2006, African American students were disproportionately referred to DAEPs in all categories of discretionary reasons, and special education students represented nearly one third (or 412 districts) of the DAEP population. Ironically, these punitive measures did not reduce school violence, and practices of criminalizing minor school misbehaviors only led to increased school dropout, higher levels of incarceration, and minority overrepresentation in juvenile detention facilities (Van Acker, 2007). In the past 20 years, zero tolerance policies involving expulsions, suspensions, and increased involvement of law enforcement in schools have failed to make schools and communities safer.

Alternative solutions to punitive measures were introduced in collaboration with schools, communities, the juvenile justice system, and healthcare organizations in the form of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative (SS/HS) to address a wide range of antisocial behaviors. Universal school-based programs include social norms and social development programs aimed at providing students with skills to avoid violence and resolve conflicts peacefully. However, the effectiveness of such programs has been overshadowed by modest effect sizes, and lack of sustainability due to scarce resources and the high financial costs of such programs (Gavine et al., 2016). Payton et al. (2000) found that multiple programs tend to compete with one another, lack coordination,

duplicate efforts, and are discontinued at the end of the school year. Rollison et al. (2013) suggested that schools alone did not have the capacity to address all the factors that contribute to at-risk students' antisocial behaviors.

It was important to understand that more research regarding the effectiveness of punitive and creative interventions alone did not add new information that would lead to changes in at-risk students' misbehaviors. It was not known to what extent mandatory versus discretionary referrals, frequency and duration of referrals to DAEPs, punitive versus creative interventions and teachers at students' home campuses versus teachers at the DAEPs influenced positive or negative behavioral outcomes in students (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Childs et al., 2016; Gavine et al., 2016; Kang-Brown, et al., 2013). It was not known why steadily increasing numbers of creative programs produced only modest effect sizes (Gavine et al., 2016). Furthermore, mixed methods studies on behavioral outcomes and qualitative studies on process experiences by at-risk students were lacking (Gavine et al., 2016). Thus, in this study, the gap in the literature was addressed by examining the impact of referral type (mandatory versus discretionary) frequency and duration of referrals, intervention type (punitive versus creative), and teacher type (home campus versus DAEPs) on student behavioral outcomes. Secondly, the gap in the literature was addressed by gaining insights into students' experiences involving referral type, frequency and duration of referrals, intervention type, and teacher type that impacted their attitudes towards positive behavioral change. Students' contribution may help teachers and school administrators modify their policies and intervention strategies to achieve more positive results for students, communities, and society at large.

Problem Statement

It was not known how behavioral outcomes of at-risk students at DAEPs were related to referral type (mandatory versus discretionary), frequency, and duration of referrals, intervention type (punitive versus creative), and teacher type (home campus versus DAEP). It was not known why a steadily increasing number of creative programs produced only modest effect sizes in positive behavioral outcomes of at-risk students Little progress has been made in the last decade in reducing recidivism rates of at-risk students in DAEPs, school drop-out rates, and stopping the pipeline from schools to prisons.

Per the 1995 Education Code, when students commit serious and repeated infractions against the school code of conduct, school districts may either suspend or expel them or refer them to DAEPs (Walsh et al., 2014). Placement at DAEPs is mandatory for felonies, terroristic threats, assaults, and murder and discretionary for minor misbehaviors, as determined by varying school district criteria (Armstrong & Ricard, 2016; Booker & Mitchell, 2011). Traditionally, treatment offered at DAEPs is punitive in nature (Van Acker, 2007; Zolkoski et al., 2016), and now there are many efforts to deliver proactive and creative alternative treatments that consider diverse cultures and ethnicities as well as differences in attitudes, beliefs, and environments (Fenning et al., 2011). However, referrals to DAEPs are associated with increased high-school dropout rates and future criminality, incarceration, and recidivism (Fenning et al., 2011; Fowler, 2011; Mergler et al., 2014; Sharkey & Fenning, 2012; Van Acker, 2007; Vanderhaar et al., 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2016).

A study conducted in 2005 at the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University, revealed that a history of disciplinary referrals at school is positively associated with future involvement in the juvenile justice system (Fowler, 2011). Students with more than one disciplinary infraction were 23.4% more likely to be referred to the juvenile justice system, with each additional disciplinary infraction increasing that likelihood by 1.5%, and each day of suspension from school increasing that likelihood by another 0.1% (Fowler, 2011). Vanderhaar et al. (2014) said that age of placement into DAEPs, as well as high rates of repeated placements into DAEPs, were positively related to juvenile detention before 12th grade. Referral rates for elementary students in the juvenile justice system were 52.9% within four years of first placement at a DAEP, versus 43.3% for middle school students, and 24.6% for high school students (Vanderhaar et al., 2014). Cortez and Cortez (2009) found a nearly 50% increase of students being referred to DAEPs between 1996 and 2006, with one in three students (33%) recidivating at least once. The average length of stay at DAEPs increased from 20 to 36 days in that same period (Cortez & Cortez, 2009). Booker and Mitchell (2011) suggested that research did not support the notion of repeated placements at DAEPs having a deterrent effect on future misbehaviors. Skiba (2014) found that many students viewed suspensions and expulsions as rewards rather than punishment, while Armstrong and Ricard (2016) suggested that students in DAEPs often continued their disruptive and antisocial behaviors out of frustration and feelings of hopelessness. Herndon and Bembenutty (2017) said that students at DAEPs often lacked academic motivation and gravitated towards negative peer groups and behaviors with negative consequences. It is

important to identify an effective treatment plan that will result in positive outcomes, irrespective of reasons for referral.

To date, no one has examined whether the type of referral, frequency and duration, type of intervention, and type of teacher affect behavior change of at-risk students in DAEPs, using mixed methods or qualitative approaches that include student experiences. Additionally, there may be other factors (covariates) that influence the outcome of student behavior, which are not related to the type of referrals, type of interventions, and type of teachers. Examples are teacher-student and peer relationships, as well as environmental influences, such as the effects of peer contagion and deviancy training (Texas Appleseed, 2007), and other demographic characteristics (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011; Vanderhaar et al., 2014; Zolkoski et a., 2016) . Research on teacher behavior in response to student characteristics has demonstrated a mediating effect of teacher judgments on student motivation, emotions, and performance (Kaiser et al., 2013; Urhahne, 2015). Thus, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was recommended to inform school policies regarding DAEP placement decisions, appropriate staffing, and intervention strategies (Vanderhaar et al., 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to examine attitudes of DAEP students and teachers from home schools and associated DAEPs regarding the extent to which they thought referral type, frequency and duration of referrals at DAEPs, and intervention type were related to positive behavioral outcomes. The expectation was to integrate quantitative information obtained from teachers through

online surveys with content analysis of qualitative data from interviews with DAEP students. Student contributions added rich, descriptive details to the results of the quantitative phase, informing school administrators regarding school policies that can effect positive behavioral change (Trochim et al., 2016).

Research Questions and Associated Hypotheses

The following research questions and hypotheses examined the attitudes of DAEP students and teachers from home schools and their associated DAEPs regarding the extent to which they thought referral type, frequency to and duration of referrals at DAEPs, and intervention type were related to positive behavioral outcomes. Independent variables (IVs) for teachers included teacher type (home school vs. DAEP), treatment intervention effectiveness (5 point Likert scale from extremely effective to not at all effective), intervention strategy (5 point Likert scale from mostly punitive to mostly creative), referral type (5 point Likert scale from mostly discretionary to mostly mandatory), and four demographic questions (gender, ethnicity, age group, and teaching experience) with categories appropriate to the sample of teachers. Dependent variables (DVs) included eight statements concerning the impact of frequency of referrals, duration of referrals, type of referral, and type of treatment on successful student outcomes scored on 5-point Likert scales from strongly agree to strongly disagree. There were three additional exploratory items relating treatment intervention to recidivism using a 5-point Likert scale from mostly punitive to mostly creative; the impact of peer pressure on treatment effectiveness; and staff/student cultural differences related to student outcomes, both of which were on a 5-point Likert scale from to a great extent to no extent at all.

Information from students was collected in one-on-one interviews, following a semi-structured protocol (see appendix B). All qualitative information was content coded to identify patterns and categories of responses. Notes provided anecdotal descriptions of student attitudes regarding potential drivers of success in DAEP programs.

RQ1-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the relationship between referral type (mandatory versus discretionary) and behavioral outcomes of students at DAEPs?

$H_0 1$*:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe mandatory and discretionary referrals are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

$H_a 1$*:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that mandatory and discretionary referrals are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

RQ2-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the relationship between treatment intervention type (punitive versus creative) and behavioral outcomes of students at DAEPs?

$H_0 2$*:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

$H_a 2$*:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ beliefs that creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

RQ3-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the relationship between treatment intervention strategy and recidivism?

$H_0$3: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing recidivism.

H_a3: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing recidivism.

RQ4-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the influence of peer pressure on treatment effectiveness?

$H_0$4: Teachers at home campuses and DAEPs do not differ in their beliefs that treatment effectiveness is related to adapting to peer pressure.

H_a4: Teachers at home campuses and DAEPs differ in their belief that treatment effectiveness is related to adapting to peer pressure.

Q5-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the effects of staff/student cultural differences on student success?

$H_0$5: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that staff and student cultural differences influence behavior outcomes.

H_a5: Teachers at both home campuses and DAEPs differ in their beliefs that staff and student cultural differences influence behavior outcomes.

RQ6-Quantitative: How does the duration of referral type influence student behavioral outcomes?

$H_0$6: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that duration at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

H_a6: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that duration at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs, influences behavioral outcomes.

RQ7-Quantitative: How does the frequency of referral type influence student behavioral outcomes?

$H_0 7$*:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that frequency of referral type at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

$H_a 7$*:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that frequency of referral type at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

RQ8-Qualitative: How do students, who were referred to DAEPs, either for mandatory or for discretionary reasons, describe their attitudes towards placement at a DAEP?

RQ9-Qualitative: How do students describe their experiences of receiving treatment interventions?

RQ10-Mixed Methods: To what extent and in what ways do qualitative interviews with students serve to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the results obtained during the quantitative phase of this mixed-method study?

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's social cognitive learning theory with its concepts of observational learning (modeling) and self-regulation served as the theoretical framework for this study. In 1978, Bandura found that individuals can learn by merely observing the experiences of others through modeling and imitation, without performing that behavior themselves, and without being rewarded or punished for that behavior (Friedman &

Schustack, 2012). Thus, students who are concentrated as a group of behavior-challenged students in DAEPs, may learn aggressive and antisocial behavior by observing each other. The likelihood that the model's behavior is being imitated depends on additional factors such as characteristics of the behavior (simple or complex), the characteristics of the model (age, gender, similarity to the observer, status, competence, and power), and the saliency of the behavior. Students may behave aggressively because peers with more power and higher status behave aggressively (Friedman & Schustack, 2012).

Bandura believed that outcome expectancy of behaviors was most influential on individuals' decision to model observed behaviors Thus, when at-risk students expect to gain greater status by imitating aggressive and antisocial behavior of their peers, they may act upon it. Additionally, Bandura suggested that simple behaviors are more likely to be imitated, and so are behaviors that are admired or desired (Friedman & Schustack, 2012). Relating this concept to this study, gave a better understanding of the development of peer contagion and deviancy training, when at-risk students are placed together in DAEPs (Texas Appleseed, 2007).

Bandura's construct of self-regulation refers to individuals' internal or intrapersonal control of behavior. Bandura suggested that, in different environments, individuals' cognitive schema may break down, or they may experience deindividuation (loss of sense of identity) by being less self-conscious or by joining a group that is transient and often changing (Friedman & Schustack, 2012). Research by Herndon and Bembenutty (2017) confirmed that students in DAEPs often lack the skills to self-

regulate their behaviors and tend to engage in activities that lead to suspension, expulsion, school dropout, and incarceration.

Bandura's social-cognitive learning theory can help teachers and administrators explain why at-risk students learn novel behaviors without observable reinforcement, as well as why they learn to inhibit socially unacceptable behaviors and disinhibit socially unacceptable behaviors after they have observed a model perform such behavior. Group violence and mob behavior, as explained by Bandura's social-cognitive learning theory, are perhaps the best indicators, why the concentration of behavior-challenged students in DAEPs creates an environment that serves to exacerbate, and not reduce unwanted behaviors.

Nature of the Study

For this study, an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach with a primarily quantitative focus was used. Based on the pragmatic worldview, which emphasizes the research problem, researchers may use all available approaches to gain knowledge about a research problem (Creswell, 2014). An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was appropriate because survey research in the quantitative phase of this study provided a numeric description of teachers' attitudes and opinions about the research problem, while interviews with students added new knowledge to the phenomenon with the descriptions of students' lived experiences.

With this design, each phase was conducted sequentially, beginning with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by the collection and interpretation of qualitative data that helped explain results from the quantitative phase of this study.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data provided a better understanding of the research problem than a purely quantitative or qualitative approach and was helpful in maximizing strengths and minimizing weaknesses of either designs (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, the quantitative phase allowed generalization of findings based on statistical information, while the qualitative phase added rich descriptive details that provided context for the quantitative results (Trochim et al., 2016).

Quantitative analysis provided an objective assessment of the effectiveness of current prevention and intervention strategies and delivered data about school districts' policies concerning mandatory and discretionary placements of at-risk students with antisocial and disruptive behavior problems at DAEPs. Quantitative analyses did not reveal any variations between home campus and DAEP teacher assessments in student behaviors. The interventions at DAEPs aligned with Bandura's social-cognitive learning theory, particularly with the constructs of observational learning (modeling) and self-regulation (Friedman & Schustack, 2012).

Qualitative analysis helped in terms of gaining an understanding of students' lived experiences of being removed from their home campuses to a DAEP and receiving different types of interventions. Interviews with students consisted of semi-structured open-ended questions that solicited their feelings and attitudes about the referral process, as well as factors of intervention programs that either improved or did not improve their responsiveness to interventions. Insights gained from students' thick and rich descriptions of their lived experiences, while receiving the interventions, contributed to an increased understanding of the results obtained from the quantitative phase of this study.

Variables

Participants in the quantitative phase of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study were teachers from three different public-school districts in Central Texas and their associated DAEPs, as well as high school teachers in public school districts across Texas. IVs included teacher type (home school vs. DAEP), treatment intervention effectiveness (5 point Likert scale from extremely effective to not at all effective), intervention strategy (5 point Likert scale from mostly punitive to mostly creative), referral type (5 point Likert scale from mostly discretionary to mostly mandatory), and four demographic questions involving gender, ethnicity, age group, and teaching experience) with categories appropriate to the sample of teachers. DVs included eight statements concerning the impact of frequency of referrals, duration of referrals, type of referrals, and type of treatment intervention strategies on successful student outcomes scored on 5-point Likert scales from strongly agree to strongly disagree. There were three additional exploratory items relating treatment intervention to recidivism using a 5-point Likert scale from mostly punitive to mostly creative; the impact of peer pressure on treatment effectiveness and staff and student cultural differences related to student outcomes, both of which are on a 5-point Likert scale from to a great extent to no extent at all. Information from students was collected through one-on-one interviews and followed a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix B).

Definitions

The following terms were used throughout this study and may need further clarification:

Comprehensive Whole Child Intervention and Prevention Program: Programs that involve family, education, and community support (Koffman et al., 2009).

Creative Measures: Universal school-based programs that use social development and social norms components for the prevention of violence (Gavine et al., 2016).

Deviancy Training and Peer Contagion: An increase of misbehavior, due to the mutual effects of modeling and reinforcement between at-risk students, concentrated in the same environment (Texas Appleseed, 2007).

Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP): Schools designed to correct or manage the behavior of disruptive students who have difficulty functioning at their home campuses. These schools are not considered schools of choice (Armstrong & Ricard, 2016; Booker & Mitchell, 2011).

Discretionary Referral: Referrals given for less serious violations against school codes of conduct, such as rule breaking and disruptive behaviors (Booker & Mitchell, 2011).

Mandatory Referral: Referrals given for any behavior subject to the Federal Government's zero tolerance policies of 1994. These behaviors include felonies, terroristic threats, assault, and murder (Booker & Mitchell, 2011).

Observational Learning (also known as vicarious learning or modeling): Observational learning or modeling involves learning by watching others perform behavior, with the individual observers neither performing the behavior nor being directly rewarded or punished for the behavior (Friedman & Schustack, 2012).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): A three-tiered evidence-based disciplinary program involving behavior expectations that promote healthy school climate before misbehaviors occur that is based on students' needs (Mergler et al., 2014).

Punitive Measures: In-school/out-of-school suspensions, placement in DAEPs, expulsion, and placement in juvenile justice programs (Booker & Mitchell, 2011).

Restorative Discipline/Justice: A program adopted from the criminal justice system, which focuses on building relationships between at-risk students and their peers, as well as at-risk students and their teachers and school administrators (Mergler et al., 2014). The emphasis is on students recognizing how their behavior affects the school community, recognizing and acknowledging the harm they have done, and working to remedy the harm (Mergler et al., 2014).

Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative (SS/HS, 1999). An initiative to promote collaboration between mental health, law enforcement, and juvenile justice agencies (Rollison et al., 2013).

Self-Efficacy: The expectation or belief about how competently one will be able to enact a behavior in a situation (Friedman & Schustack, 2012).

Self-Regulation: Monitoring one's own behavior in terms of internal processes, goals, planning, and self-reinforcement (Friedman & Schustack, 2012).

Social and Emotional Learning Programs (SEL): Programs that promote students' ability to manage their emotions, to appreciate the perspective of others, to set prosocial goals, and to use interpersonal skills in solving problems (Payton et al., 2000).

Assumptions

Participants for this study were high school teachers in three public school districts in Central Texas and their associated DAEPs, and as well as high school teachers in public school districts across Texas. Participants were recruited with the permission of superintendents and the assistance of school principals. All participants were assured of privacy and confidentiality, as well as the option to withdraw from the study at any time. The assumptions were that school administrators distribute the survey in a letter to all high school teachers at their home campuses and associated DAEPs, including a link to the survey questions; that consent to participate in the study is implied when teachers access the link to the survey; that all high school teachers participate in the survey to help improve school policies regarding the processes of referrals and interventions; that all teachers return the survey in a timely manner (within two weeks of receipt); that DAEP principals assist in recruiting high school students and in obtaining letters of consent from parents, and letters of assent from students; and that all participants answer the survey and interview questions truthfully, participate voluntarily, and are interested in contributing to knowledge.

Scope and Delimitations

Scope

For this study, an explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used to examine the impact of referral type, frequency and duration of referrals, intervention type, and teacher type on behavioral change of at-risk students in DAEPs during the quantitative phase. The goal during the qualitative phase of this study was to gain an

understanding of students' experiences of mandatory versus discretionary referrals, punitive versus creative interventions and teachers at their home campuses versus teachers at the DAEPs. IVs included teacher type (home school vs. DAEP), treatment intervention effectiveness (5 point Likert scale from extremely effective to not at all effective), intervention strategy (5 point Likert scale from mostly punitive to mostly creative), referral type (5 point Likert scale from mostly discretionary to mostly mandatory), and four demographic variables (gender, ethnicity, age group, and teaching experience) with categories appropriate to the sample of teachers. DVs included eight statements concerning the impact of frequency of referrals, duration of referrals, type of referrals, and type of treatment intervention strategies on successful student outcomes scored on 5-point Likert scales from strongly agree to strongly disagree. There were three additional exploratory items relating treatment intervention to recidivism using a 5-point Likert scale from mostly punitive to mostly creative; the impact of peer pressure on treatment effectiveness, and staff and student cultural differences related to student outcomes, both of which are on a 5-point Likert scale from to a great extent to no extent at all.

Delimitations

This study included public school districts in Texas, high school teachers at home campuses and DAEPs, and high school students between grades 9 and 12 who were referred to DAEPs more than once during their elementary, middle, and high school years. The three public school districts in Central Texas were selected based on size

(between 40,000 and 50,000 students), racial distribution of students, and a driving distance of less than 50 miles to facilitate access to DAEPs for interviews with students.

The study was delimited to public high school teachers in both home campuses and DAEPs since the qualitative phase included only high school students. High school students were expected to have a longer history of referrals to DAEPs, interventions and experiences with teachers that allowed the identification of patterns in behavioral responses of students.

The study was delimited to current and former high school students at DAEPs. The focus was on students with a long history of referrals, and a balanced mix between mandatory and discretionary referrals to identify trends in referral reasons, patterns of recidivism, and to identify areas that could lead to improvements in current prevention and intervention efforts.

Limitations

The main limitation of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was that part of the data was collected in three public school districts in Central Texas to facilitate face-to-face visits between the researcher, school administrators, and students. The rest of the data were collected via the Internet from public high schools across Texas. Participants' experiences at home campuses and DAEPs may vary widely, and so do schools and DAEP programs across Texas in terms of referral policies and prevention and intervention programs. Although all school districts report disciplinary data to the TEA, they are empowered to use measures that go beyond those imposed by the Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) of 1994 (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Also, DAEPs are not required

to report directly to the TEA, so comparisons between school districts cannot be measured against any standard. For this reason, results obtained during the quantitative phase may not be used to generalize to the entire state of Texas, nor the teacher population across the nation.

Additionally, the qualitative phase of this study included only high school students between grades 9 and 12. For this reason, results were not transferrable to the entire population of at-risk students assigned to DAEPs. However, information obtained from qualitative interviews with students provided rich and descriptive details to adapt school referral and intervention policies to help these students stay at their home campuses and abstain from behaviors that result in repeated referrals, thus reducing recidivism rates of DAEPs.

Significance

This research focused first on referral and intervention types used to remove at-risk students from their home campuses and be rehabilitated in DAEPs, as well as potential variations between home campus and DAEP teachers in terms of assessment of student behavioral outcomes. Additionally, this research examined environmental factors and teacher characteristics, peer contagion and deviancy training, that may have negatively influenced intervention efforts aimed at changing antisocial behaviors. Secondly, this research focused on the experiences of students who were referred to DAEPs and were receiving treatment interventions. In the Texas Appleseed study (2007) deviancy training and peer contagion were defined as an increase of misbehavior, due to

the mutual effects of modeling and reinforcement between at-risk students, who are placed together in the same setting.

DAEPs vary widely in characteristics, ranging in focus from mostly disciplinary to mostly educational (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011). Texas is one of the states that established DAEPs to supplement the zero tolerance policies of the Safe Schools Act of 1995 (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). The purpose of DAEPs is to serve as temporary education facilities for expelled and suspended students who have violated policies or state-mandated rules of conduct (Armstrong & Ricard, 2016; Tajalli & Garba, 2014). For example, during the 2009-2010 school year, 25% of Texas' 1227 school districts (this includes charter schools) had at least one off-campus DAEP (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Of the 1237 school districts sampled in 2014, Tajalli and Garba (2014) found that only 727 school districts reported DAEP referrals. Furthermore, for the 2009-2010 academic school year, minorities represented "…more than 62% of the student population of Texas school districts" (Tajalli & Garba, 2014, p. 620). The problem is the nationwide discretionary authority of school districts to segregate students with minor behavior infractions, through expulsions and suspensions into DAEPs (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Cortez and Cortez (2009) said that four out of five students removed to Texas DAEPs were there for relatively minor offenses, ranging from "…chewing gum to talking back to a teacher to bringing cold medicine to school" (p. 6).

This project was unique because it addressed an under-researched area involving the efficacy of intervention programs in DAEPs. The results of this study provided much-needed insights into the extent the IVs influenced the efficacy of existing prevention and

intervention programs, and as well as the application of Bandura's social cognitive learning theory to help break the cycle of recidivism in DAEPs. By focusing on observable behaviors and unobservable characteristics in response to interventions, teachers and school administrators can address the alienation effects of students placed in DAEPs and support their successful return to home campuses and peer groups. A balance between punitive and proactive intervention strategies that capitalizes on meeting individual students' needs can bring about social change by reducing recidivism rates for DAEPs and the pipeline from schools to prison effects of current school alienation policies.

Summary

This chapter included an overview of issues faced by school administrators, teachers, and at-risk students who display antisocial and disruptive behaviors, that lead to a revolving door to DAEPs, eventual school dropout, criminal activity, and incarceration. The focus of this study was to understand the impact of school policies relating to mandatory and discretionary referrals of at-risk students to DAEPs, as well as punitive and creative intervention strategies and teacher characteristics on students' amenability to positive behavior change. This chapter included background information regarding the development of mandatory and discretionary referral policies for at-risk behavior-challenged students and the development of both punitive and creative interventions to manage these behaviors. The failure of these measures in producing noticeable improvements in the behaviors of these students led to the identification of a gap in current research as being the lack of mixed methods studies (Gavine et al., 2016; Skiba,

2014). A mixed methods approach was used to strengthen the weaknesses of either quantitative or qualitative methods alone, with the qualitative phase providing rich descriptive details to give context to the results of the quantitative phase (Trochim et al., 2016).

The problem of this study involved what is known and what is not known in current research relating to referral type (mandatory versus discretionary), intervention type (punitive versus creative), and teacher type (home campus versus DAEPs). This led to the purpose statement for this study and the development of seven quantitative, two qualitative, and one mixed methods research questions. Next, a discussion of Bandura's social-cognitive learning theory described the concepts of observational learning (modeling) and self-regulation, which provided the theoretical framework for this study (Friedman & Schustack, 2012).

Key terms were DAEPs, mandatory and discretionary referrals, punitive and creative interventions, observational learning, self-regulation, self-efficacy, deviancy training and peer contagion, and assumptions were that school administrators and principals will provide support in gaining the participation of teachers in the survey and the participation of students and their parents to conduct the interviews. The nature of the study involved components of an explanatory sequential mixed methods study and identifying the variables of the quantitative phase as referral type, intervention type and teacher type (IVs), as well as teachers' assessments of students' behavioral responses (DVs). Next, this chapter included definitions of key terms used in this study.

In the scope and delimitations part of this chapter, restrictions for this study were discussed, to include justification for the selection of the geographical location of school districts, and the selection of high school teachers and high school students as participants. Limitations of this study were generalizations of the results of the quantitative phase to all school districts in Texas, and generalizations of the findings from the qualitative phase to all at-risk students in DAEPs. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the significance of the study, which was filling the gap in an under-researched area. By using a mixed methods approach in which rich descriptive details of the qualitative phase informed results of the quantitative phase, this study can help school administrators adapt their referral and intervention policies to improve at-risk students' behavioral outcomes. In Chapter 2, the theoretical framework for this study, Bandura's social cognitive learning theory, is examined in more detail. Chapter 2 also includes an exploration of literature regarding current knowledge of mandatory versus discretionary school referral policies, punitive versus creative intervention and prevention strategies, teacher characteristics and student outcomes. This chapter added more insight into the gaps in current knowledge and why this study was needed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

It was not known to what extent referral type, frequency and duration, intervention type and teacher type were related to positive behavioral outcomes of at-risk students in DAEPs (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Childs et al., 2016; Gavine et al., 2016; Kang-Brown et al., 2013). It was not known why a steadily increasing number of creative programs produced only modest effect sizes in positive behavioral outcomes of at-risk students (Gavine et al., 2016). What was known was that little progress had been made since 2006 in reducing recidivism rates of at-risk students in DAEPs, school drop-out rates, and stopping the pipeline from schools to prisons (Gavine et al., 2016).

Repeated referrals to DAEPs, whether mandatory or discretionary, are associated with increased high-school dropout rates, future criminality, incarceration, and recidivism (Fenning et al., 2011; Fowler, 2011; Mergler et al., 2014; Sharkey & Fenning, 2012; Van Acker, 2007; Vanderhaar et al., 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2016. Additionally, the deterrent effect of repeated placements at DAEPs has not been supported in the research literature (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Skiba, 2014; Skiba et al., 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2016). Cortez and Cortez (2009) found that, across the nation, 33% of DAEP students recidivate at least once following their first placement at a DAEP.

Zero tolerance policies were implemented by the federal legislature in the form of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act and the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (Van Acker, 2007) as a response to the dramatic increase in school violence and aggression in the United States between the years 1980 and 2000. Schools adopted zero

tolerance policies by implementing punitive measures, such as expulsions and suspensions, and isolating antisocial students with chronic misbehaviors to DAEPs. However, with little success of such policies in terms of changing at-risk students' behaviors, many schools soon implemented alternative and more creative intervention strategies, such as universal school-based programs for the prevention of violence in adolescents (Gavine et al., 2016), comprehensive whole child intervention and prevention programs (Koffman et al., 2009), the SS/HS initiative, (Rollison et al., 2013), and Safe and Civil Schools, restorative justice, PBIS, and SEL to break the cycle of recidivism, school failure, and the pipeline from schools to prison effects of suspensions and expulsions, school dropout, and juvenile delinquency (Mergler et al., 2014). The problem with these newer and more positive interventions was that, despite improvements in behavioral outcomes, their effect sizes were modest, due to a lack of cost-effectiveness and sustainability beyond the current school year (Gavine et al., 2016).

To understand the effectiveness/ineffectiveness of mandatory versus discretionary referral policies and punitive versus creative interventions on at-risk students' behavioral outcomes, it was important to use quantitative and qualitative methods to inform current school policies. This chapter includes a review of the roles of mandatory and discretionary referral policies and punitive and creative intervention strategies in terms of continuance of recidivism at DAEPs, academic failure, school dropout, and future involvement of at-risk students in the juvenile justice system. This chapter also includes a discussion of Bandura's social cognitive learning theory, and how it helps to understand the effects of deviancy training and peer contagion at DAEPs. Finally, this chapter offers

possible solutions and strategies to find a balance between mandatory and discretionary referral policies and punitive and creative intervention strategies to help reduce recidivism rates at DAEPs, school dropout rates, and future involvement of at-risk students in the prison system.

Literature Search Strategy

Most of the literature was published between 2012 and 2017. However, a significant amount is older than five years, dating back to the years of 1978, 1995, and 2000. Other research articles range from the year of 2007 to 2011. It was important to include older literature in this study due to its significance in terms of understanding the historical context of school referral policies and intervention strategies. Most of the literature was peer-reviewed articles, and some were from state and government agencies such as the TEA, which provided disciplinary data and reports on school districts and DAEPs. Search terms were *at-risk students*, *antisocial behavior*, *mandatory and discretionary referral policies*, *punitive and creative interventions*, *disciplinary alternative education programs*, *social-cognitive learning theory*, *social emotional learning*, *restorative justice*, and *school discipline*. The research databases searched were Google Scholar, linked through the Walden University Library, as well as EBSCOHost, SAGE Journals, ProQuest Central, and PsycARTICLESiation, and various Journals in Educational Psychology. Furthermore, TEA websites provided school district and DAEP information, in addition to websites of restorative justice and Safe and Civil Schools, which provided information about currently employed positive intervention strategies in Texas schools.

Theoretical Foundations

Bandura's social cognitive learning theory, with its concepts of observational learning (modeling) and self-regulation was the most appropriate theoretical framework for this study to help understand teachers' and students' responses to the referral process and the intervention strategies. In the literature, CASEL's (n.d.) social emotional learning theory was frequently mentioned in support of creative intervention strategies and will be used in support of Bandura's construct of self-regulation (Caselman & Self, 2008; Fowler, 2011; Miller et al., 2015; Payton et al., 2000).

Social Cognitive Learning Theory

Bandura derived his social cognitive learning theory from Clark Hull's (1943) view that behaviors are a combination of observable and unobservable (internal) variables (Friedman & Schustack, 2012). According to Hull, these inner variables act as intervening variables between a stimulus (e. g. anger) and a response (aggression) and serve as stimuli for further responses (Friedman & Schustack, 2012). For example, a DAEP student, whose goal is to gain status in a deviant peer group, will learn a variety of aggressive behaviors to avoid the pain (basic drive) of being excluded from the group, which is often associated with being ridiculed or bullied (Friedman & Schustack, 2012). Thus, the learning occurs in the social context of a DAEP, in which negative peer groups tend to take priority over academic performance and more positive behavioral alternatives. Consistent with Bandura's social cognitive learning theory, students in DAEPs tend to lack self-regulation skills and favor negative maladaptive behaviors that

are influenced by the environment, which in turn influences their behaviors (Herndon & Bembenutty, 2017).

Similar concepts can be found in other theories to help explain why punitive interventions tend to have negative outcomes, why the influence of peer contagion and deviancy training in DAEPs may be more powerful than positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors by teachers and staff, and why proactive and creative interventions may not lead to more positive behavior outcomes. However, Bandura's concepts of observational learning (modeling), along with the characteristics of the model, such as similarity in age, gender, ethnic background, and outcome expectancy are most appropriate to explain why at-risk students decide to imitate the modeled behavior. Additionally, lack of self-regulation skills, breakdown of cognitive schemas, and deindividuation in this transient and often changing social environment, encourages students to engage in behaviors with negative consequences (Friedman & Schustack, 2012; Herndon & Bembenutty, 2017). Thus, concentration of antisocial and behavior-challenged students in DAEPs may make imitation of deviant behavior more salient than appropriate behavior modeled by teachers when outcome expectancy promises increased power and status among like-minded peers.

Koffman et al. (2009) used Bandura's social cognitive learning theory, particularly the concepts of self-efficacy and resilience to train students in cognitive, behavioral, and mindfulness strategies to overcome depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder, and to increase academic performance, social competence, and responsibility. Somers et al. (2009) used the concept of role modeling by focusing on the influence of

parents on student behavior. Additionally, Somers et al. (2009) used cognitive development theory to explain that 9th grade students still use concrete skills to pursue educational goals and need help in understanding the realities of career goals. The concept of modeling was also used in Van Acker's (2007) study to explain the influence of peers in the increase of misbehaviors of antisocial students at DAEPs. Van Acker (2007) recommended that staff and teachers in DAEPs, where at-risk students are concentrated, develop programs to "…counteract the propagation of attitudes, values, and beliefs that support antisocial behavior" (p. 7). Spaulding et al. (2010) studied the schoolwide social-behavioral climate, student problem behavior, and related administrative decisions in 1,510 schools nationwide, and found that removal of disruptive students in in-school detention rooms, without meaningful and challenging assignments, increased deviant peer-group social attention. Although the researchers did not use a theory to explain this observation, Bandura's concepts of observational learning, modeling, and imitation helped understand why students in this unstructured and boring environment became more deviant.

SEL Theory

Many of the studies of the effects of proactive and creative intervention strategies emphasize the importance of SEL. The SEL framework was developed by the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), an international effort to address health, substance abuse, violence prevention, sexuality, character, and social skills (Payton et al., 2000; Schmid Mergler et al., 2014). SEL is a research-based approach that teaches students to manage their emotions, and acquire competencies in

self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Mergler et al., 2014). These competencies can be closely compared to Bandura's concepts of self-awareness and self-regulation, in which at-risk students monitor their behavior because of internal processes of goals, planning, and self-reinforcement, and the belief that they can competently enact a behavior in a situation (Friedman & Schustack, 2012). Thus, Miller et al. (2015) used the concepts of SEL to identify best practices for school districts to screen at-risk students' social, emotional, and behavioral risks. Multi-informant methods were considered best in accurately identifying students' social, emotional, and behavioral functioning (Miller et al., 2015). Payton et al. (2000) identified the key elements of SEL to help educators in the selection of the most effective proactive intervention programs for their students' social and emotional development. The researchers concluded that two groups of theories were essential: social emotional learning, including emotional intelligence, social and emotional competence promotion, social developmental model, social information processing, and self-management; and behavior change and learning theories, including the health belief model, the theory of reasoned action, problem behavior theory, and social cognitive theory.

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to examine attitudes of DAEP students and teachers from home schools and their associated DAEPs, regarding the extent to which they thought referral type, frequency and duration of referrals, and intervention type were related to positive behavioral outcomes. Bandura's

social cognitive learning theory was used to help explain students' behavioral responses to punitive and creative interventions at DAEPs.

Literature Review Concepts

At-Risk Students

The U. S. Department of Education (n.d.) defines at-risk students as *High-Needs* students, who are at risk of academic failure, and may need additional support. This includes students who live in poverty, attend high-minority schools, are incarcerated, are at risk of not graduating in time, drop out of school without a high school diploma, are homeless, live in foster care, have disabilities, or are English language learners. The legal definition of at-risk students includes additional characteristics, such as being low academic achievers with low self-esteem, and students with discipline and truancy issues, who minimally identify with school (USLegal, n. d.). At-risk students tend to come from low socio-economic status families with drug addiction problems and pregnancies that prevent them from participating in school successfully. As they continue to experience failure, they are unable to keep up with their peers, develop negative views of the school environment, and eventually drop out (USLegal, n. d.).

Each school district has its own definition of at-risk students, based on demographic characteristics, and unique individual situations; however, three common themes emerge from the literature review: at-risk students are generally African American students (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Fowler, 2011; Gregory et al., 2016; Payne & Welch, 2013; Skiba, 2014; Skiba et al., 2014; Tajalli & Garba, 2014); at-risk students have major behavioral issues that prevent teachers from teaching the rest of the students

(Irby, 2014; Lamont et al., 2013; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Skiba, 2014; Skiba et al., 2014); and at-risk students are mentally or physically impaired (Fowler, 2011; Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011; Vanderhaar et al., 2014). Overwhelmingly, African American and special education students were more likely to be suspended, expelled, or referred to DAEPs for similar behaviors than their White counterparts (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Fowler, 2011; Fenning et al., 2012; Mizel et al., 2016; Schick, 2012; Tajalli & Garba, 2014; Texas Appleseed, 2007). For example, Tajalli and Garba (2014) found that African American students represented 29.3% of the total population in 207 DAEPs, while the overall African American student population in Texas was only 14%. School factors, such as district size and wealth, played a greater role in disciplinary policies than student factors (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Brown et al. (2013) concluded that, primarily students of color and students with special education needs, were disciplined at a greater rate and received harsher punishments for discretionary infractions. Mizel et al. (2016) confirmed that an increase in frequency of suspensions came with an increase in racial disproportionality. Misbehaviors of African American and special needs students were found to be less serious and more subjective in interpretation than misbehaviors of their White counterparts (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Fowler, 2011; Vanderhaar et al., 2014). Insubordinate and disruptive behaviors of minority and special needs students places them at greater risk for not graduating with their peers (Mizel et al, 2016).

DAEPs

Since the 1960s, a diverse field of alternative education programs has been developed to meet the needs of students, who cannot be successful in traditional K-12

public schools (Van Acker, 2007). These alternative school programs target the needs of at-risk students, disruptive students, advanced placement students, charter schools, and home-schooled children (Van Acker, 2007). Most of these alternative education programs are schools of choice for students, who are at significant risk for school failure and dropout within traditional school settings. Lagana-Riordan et al. (2011) reported an increase of alternative schools in the United States from 2,606 alternative schools in 1993 to over 10,900 in 2001, serving 612,000 students, or 1.3% of the total public schools' student population.

There are many different types of alternative education schools, however, ranging from mostly disciplinary to mostly academic in nature, and in between (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011). It is important to distinguish these diverse types of alternative schools from DAEPs, whose focus is discipline, and which cannot be selected by students and their parents as schools of choice. DAEPs are alternative education sites, either within a public-school district or outside of it, where administrators send at-risk students for periods of time, if they repeatedly fail to respond to the schools' interventions for minor misbehaviors or have committed offenses that meet the standards for mandatory placement. Vanderhaar et al. (2014) described two types of alternative schools: one for students experiencing academic difficulties, and at risk for dropping out, the other type for antisocial, dangerous, or disruptive students. The first type of alternative schools are schools of choice for students and their parents to select, while the latter type are DAEPs that are selected for students by school administrators, and where choice is not an option. The current study focused on DAEPs.

Texas is one of few states that have established DAEPs to educate students, who have been expelled or suspended for violations of the school code of conduct or state-mandated rules (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). In school year 2009/10, approximately 307 of the 1227 public school districts in Texas had at least one off-campus DAEP (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). In a report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 2010, Vanderhaar et al. (2014) found that the demand for DAEPs for dangerous and disruptive students outweighed the supply, especially in urban school districts.

Additionally, the characteristics of DAEPs vary widely, due to the lack of regulation and accountability at state and district levels (Vanderhaar et al., 2014). For the most part, school administrators have the authority to design the curriculum and disciplinary policies and are not required to report statistics for DAEPs. Tajalli and Garba (2014) found that for the academic year 2009/10, 727 out of 1237 school districts reported DAEP data, and only 207 districts provided complete information. DAEPs with small school sizes, low student to teacher ratios, caring staff, individualized instructions, and parent/community involvement were more effective and had more positive student outcomes (Vanderhaar et al., 2014). DAEPs with a punitive focus, racial segregation, intense social control, a lack of resources, and an unchallenging curriculum, were found to have negative student outcomes and were ineffective (Vanderhaar et al., 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2016). Few studies exist on the effectiveness of DAEPs (Simonson & Sugai, 2013), particularly qualitative studies that explore the experiences of at-risk students, who attend DAEPs (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011). Mixed methods or qualitative research that provide the insights of at-risk students on their experiences at DAEPs, could

add valuable new information to quantitative studies, regarding schools' referral policies and intervention strategies that help keep these students in school, and graduate with their peers.

Zero Tolerance

Zero tolerance policies in schools resulted from growing concerns over drug use and trafficking, violence, and gang-related fights and activities around school grounds (Schick, 2012). In 1994, the federal government enacted the GFSA, making it a crime for anyone to bring a gun in and around schools (FindLaw, 2017). The GFSA of 1994 was later amended as part of the elementary and secondary education act of 1965 (ESEA), which became the no child left behind (NCLB) laws during the Bush administration (FindLaw, 2017). Together, these laws tied federal funding for school districts to the adoption of the zero tolerance policies on weapons, resulting in 94% of schools implementing zero tolerance policies for weapons and firearms, 87% of school districts extending zero tolerance policies to bringing or using alcohol in and around school grounds, and 79% of school districts issuing mandatory suspensions and expulsions for violence and tobacco use, including the possession of nail files, paper clips, scissors, plastic knives as weapons, as well as aspirin, Midol and Certs as drugs (Schick, 2012). The enforcement of zero tolerance policies for weapons and firearms, however, is complicated by students' constitutional rights, which limit the types of searches school administrators can do to find weapons, in addition to State laws and attitudes towards gun control, which often run counter to the federal government's mandates of gun bans (FindLaw, 2017).

Congress passed the first federal gun control law, the National Firearms Act, as a response to escalating mob violence, and the use of Tommy guns in gang wars (Kim, 2013). This National Firearms Act taxed firearms under 18 inches long, as well as machine guns, and required gun owners to register their firearms (Kim, 2013). Following the assassinations of John F. Kennedy in 1963 and Martin Luther King in 1968, the Gun Control Act of 1968 prohibited the sale of firearms to convicted felons, drug users, and the mentally ill; required weapons dealers to become licensed; restricted interstate weapons sales and raised the legal age to purchase a weapon to 21 (Kim, 2013). In 1993, after the attempted assassination of President Reagan in 1981, the Brady Handgun Violence Act was enacted, which created a system of background checks of licensed gun buyers that is maintained by the FBI (Kim, 2013). However, strong opposition from the National Rifle Association, with the goal to nullify the 1968 Gun Laws, as well as many loopholes in the various gun control bans, make it difficult for the FBI to inspect gun dealers, or the transfer of weapons between individuals (Kim, 2013). For example, the 1993 Handgun Violence Prevention Act did not include private sales of weapons (Kim, 2013). Additionally, Roth and Koper (1999) found that murders were rarely committed with banned weapons and magazines listed in the Crime Control Act of 1994. In the over 62 mass shootings that occurred since 1982, with twenty-five of them having been committed since 2006, and seven in 2012, most of the perpetrators had obtained their weapons legally (Kim, 2013). These facts raise questions about the effectiveness of all gun control laws. Gun ownership in Texas is among the least restrictive, and although

firearms are prohibited on or near school grounds, exceptions may exist for individuals with permits to carry concealed weapons (FindLaw, 2017).

Following the Columbine High School massacre of 1999, many school districts extended their zero tolerance policies beyond the federal mandates for weapons, alcohol, and drugs, to a wide range of much less harmful misconduct, such as disruptive behaviors and other nonviolent offenses (Brown et al., 2013). For example, in Florida, the number of out-of-school suspensions increased by 14% between school years 1999-2000 and 2004-2005, with 76% of the 27,000 students referred to the Department of Juvenile Justice being referred for misdemeanor offenses, such as disorderly conduct (Schick, 2012). In Indiana, 95% of students were suspended from school during school year 2002-2003 for disruptive and non-violent behaviors, while only 5% of students were suspended for the possession of dangerous substances or weapons (Schick, 2012). Suspensions and expulsions increased nationally 40 percent from one in 13 students in school year 1972-1973 to one in nine in school year 2009-2010 (Brown et al., 2013; Mizel et al., 2016). In a study, conducted in Texas in 2011 by the Public Policy Research Institute at the Texas A&M University, researchers concluded that most suspensions and expulsions involved minor violations of the schools' codes of conduct, such as insubordination or classroom disruptions, instead of the offenses mandated by the Texas zero tolerance laws (Brown et al., 2013). Additionally, the widespread use of discretionary decisions by school administrators in suspending and expelling students for minor infractions of the schools' codes of conduct, unfairly targeted African American and Hispanic students (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). A study conducted by the Children's Defense Fund in 1975 revealed that

school suspensions for African American students in 3000 school districts comprised two-thirds of all students (Tajalli & Garba, 2014). Booker and Mitchell (2011) confirmed the overrepresentation of African American students in DAEPs nearly 35 years after the study's publication; however, they found that Hispanic students were proportionally represented, while Asian American students were underrepresented.

School Discipline

In 2014 Texas had 1227 public school districts, including 202 charter schools, with a 5.1 million student population that is 51.8 percent Hispanic, 29.4 percent Anglo, 12.7 percent African American, and 3.7 percent Asian (Ramsey, 2015). The largest school district is Houston Independent School District (ISD), with 210,716 students, followed by Dallas ISD, with 159,487 students; Cypress-Fairbanks ISD with 111,173 students; Northside ISD in Bexar County, with 101,549 students, and 14 other school districts that have between 50,000 and 100,000 students each (Ramsey, 2015). About 60.2% of Texas public school students classify as economically disadvantaged (Ramsey, 2015). White students represent small minorities in most school districts, with only 1.8% in San Antonio ISD, 2% in Aldine ISD, 4.7% in Dallas ISD, and 8.2% in Houston ISD, while Hispanic students represent the majority in 11 of the top 20 districts, and African-American students over 20% of the student population in six of the top 20 districts (Ramsey, 2015). When students violate the school code of conduct, school administrators use a variety of disciplinary options, based on school policies and the severity of the misconduct. These measures can range from redirection by teachers, counseling, visits to the principal's office, meeting with parents, to in-school suspensions, out-of-school

suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to DAEPs and the juvenile justice system. Referrals to DAEPs are either mandatory or discretionary.

Mandatory Referrals

In 1994, the US Federal government mandated referrals of students to the juvenile justice system and placement into DAEPs for offenses, such as murder, assaults, and terroristic threats, as punishment under the zero tolerance policies (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). The goal was to reduce the significant increase in school crime and juvenile violence between the late 1980s and 1990s. To receive federal funding on education, school districts were required to adopt zero tolerance policies on weapons, and subsequently, many schools across the nation enforced strict zero tolerance policies that expanded beyond the federally mandated weapons ban (FindLaw, 2017). Based on public fear over where the next school shooting would take place, schools broadened the scope of mandatory suspensions, expulsions, and referrals of students to the juvenile justice system, and isolation in DAEPs, to include drugs, alcohol, tobacco, fighting, disruptive behaviors, and other nonviolent offenses (Schick, 2012). Brown et al. (2013) found that federal funding for full-time law enforcement, security guards, metal detectors and cameras in schools tripled between the school years of 1996-97 and 2007-08, despite empirical evidence that juvenile crime had peaked in 1994 and was steadily decreasing over the following decade.

Hirschfield (2008) suggested that the increased criminalization of student discipline was the result of a moral panic framework, in which the public and school administrators sought punitive solutions to perceived threats of violence that did not

actually exist. In Texas, mandatory removal of students is determined by the State of Texas Education Code of the Safe Schools Act, Chapter 37, Sections 37.001-37.022 (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). Accordingly, any conduct that meets the Penal Code definition of a felony, for example, assault causing bodily harm, the use, possession, sale, or delivery of alcohol or illegal drugs, abuse of a volatile chemical, public lewdness or indecent exposure, retaliation against any school employee, and making a bomb/terroristic threat, whether false or real, within 300 feet of school property or a school-related event, are reasons for mandatory removal of students to a DAEP (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). The TEA (2016) reported the mandatory placement of 39,115 students to DAEPs, for the school year 2015-16, in their State level annual discipline summary report. Conduct punishable as a felony, overwhelmingly involved the use or possession of controlled substances/drugs and was reported in 22,850 violations for that school year (TEA, 2016). To confirm Brown et al.'s (2013) findings that juvenile crime in schools was decreasing, and rarely involved the use of weapons, and to place a perspective on Hirschfield's (2008) *moral panic* theory, it is noteworthy that the TEA's (2016) State level annual discipline summary report for school year 2015-16 listed only 324 offenses, relating to the prohibition of weapons.

Discretionary Referrals

Discretionary reasons for removal of students from home campuses to DAEPs are less clear than mandatory reasons and are largely determined by school administrators and the schools' codes of conduct in each district. The misbehaviors typically include rule-breaking and disruptive behaviors, such as truancy, insubordination, profanity,

talking during instructional time, bullying, pushing and shoving peers, and arguing among peers and with authority (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Skiba et al., 2014). Discretionary reasons for placements of students into DAEPs are generally not reported publicly; however, Texas is one of the few states that publishes such data (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). Accordingly, 70% of students were referred to DAEPs for discretionary reasons in school year 2005-2006 (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). In comparison to the 39,115 mandatory placements of students at DAEPs, the TEA's (2016) State Level Annual Discipline Summary report listed 51,066 discretionary placements of students at DAEPs, for the school year of 2015-16. Interestingly, discretionary reasons for referrals vary significantly between ethnicities, with African-American students being referred for disobedience, disruptive behavior, fighting, and inappropriate behaviors, while Caucasian students were suspended for tobacco, alcohol, drug, and weapons possession (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). There were 1,328,118 Local code of conduct violations reported for school year 2015-16, with the top misconduct involving 48,544 incidents of fighting/mutual combat, followed by 15,669 cases of unexcused absences or truancies, 5,770 incidents of tobacco possession and use, and 4,641 incidents of assaults on non-district employees (TEA, 2016).

Punitive Interventions

Punitive interventions include suspensions, expulsions, isolation of behavior challenged students at DAEPs, and the transfer of school discipline to the juvenile courts. Gregory et al. (2016) confirmed earlier findings by Fenning et al. (2012) that suspensions and expulsions continue to be the most common disciplinary measures in schools, despite

research in the last two decades indicating that they are ineffective in reducing undesirable behaviors in favor of more desirable and prosocial behaviors. Suspensions and expulsions, coupled with repeated referrals of students to DAEPs for minor infractions, are positively related to academic failure, school dropout, and entry of at-risk students into the juvenile justice system (Sharkey & Fenning, 2012; Mizel et al., 2016; Teasley, 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2016). Based on the 2007 Texas Appleseed study of 16 states, Fowler (2011) suggested that using discretionary decisions to criminalize minor student misbehaviors, to suspend and expel, lead to student push out, dropout, and the notorious school to prison pipeline, experienced by the juvenile justice system. Brown et al. (2013) concluded that students, who were suspended or expelled from school on a single discretionary decision, not involving a weapon, were three times as likely to end up in juvenile courts in subsequent academic years. In a call to action and based on the ineffectiveness and negative impact of punitive disciplinary school policies, Fenning et al. (2011) recommended that school districts review such policies and consider more proactive and creative responses. Lamont et al. (2013) warned that expelled or suspended students, who were left unsupervised at home, were more likely to associate with deviant peers and to engage in further inappropriate behavior, further increasing risks and social costs. Additionally, Skiba (2014) emphasized that zero tolerance policies have not worked to improve student behaviors or school safety in the past 15 years, advocating for the collaboration of schools, families, community, and law enforcement, in using a diverse array of creative strategies to improve school safety. Teasley (2014) emphasized that research on the effectiveness of zero tolerance policies to deal with students'

antisocial behaviors, have neither deterred such behaviors, nor improved academic achievement. Instead, zero tolerance policies have served as "…catalysts for the school-to prison pipeline" across the Nation (Teasley, 2014, p.1310).

Creative Interventions

To counter the negative effects of exclusionary disciplinary strategies, many schools across the country have since implemented more proactive and creative strategies, such as restorative discipline, PBIS, or SEL (Mergler et al., 2014).

Restorative discipline in schools models a successful strategy employed in the criminal justice system's restorative justice programs, holding students responsible for their misbehaviors (Mergler et al., 2014). Students, administrators, and teachers focus on building relationships that allow students to right the wrongs, committed by their misbehaviors (Mergler et al., 2014). Although reactive in nature, it is considered a creative and positive approach that uses student conferences, peer mediation, restitution, and community service to change the way students understand their misbehaviors (Payne & Welch, 2015). Restorative discipline includes victims, perpetrators, and the community in recognizing the harm, committed by misbehaviors and crime, holding the perpetrator accountable, and correcting the harm done (Mergler et al., 2014). Payne et al. (2015) found that students preferred restorative discipline over traditional punitive measures of expulsions and suspensions; however, suggested that failure or success of restorative discipline depended on a complete change in philosophy by the entire school community: administrators, teachers, and students alike. Instead of modifying behaviors, students must be taught to recognize the negative impact of their misbehaviors on the

greater school community (Payne & Welch, 2015).

Additionally, African American students were less inclined to use student conferences, peer mediation, restitution, and community service, with the odds decreasing by a factor of .95 for student conferences, by a factor of .97 for peer mediation, by a factor of .98 for restitution, and by a factor of .96 for community service (Payne & Welch, 2015). Since the program is new on the market of available proactive and creative intervention strategies in schools, more research will be needed to evaluate the effectiveness of restorative discipline programs in schools. Implementing school districts have experienced an 84% drop of off-campus suspensions and a 30% drop of in-school suspensions (Teasley, 2014). However, despite the growing use of restorative discipline in the United States in the last 5 years, research involving school-based restorative discipline programs is lacking (Teasley, 2014).

PBIS is a proactive intervention strategy, in which students are taught behavioral expectations and are rewarded for meeting the standards set by the community (Mergler et al., 2014). PBIS is praised for minimizing the need for exclusionary discipline, improving school climate, and changing student behaviors (Mergler et al., 2014). It is based on a three-tier behavioral support system: tier 1 teaches students school-wide behavior expectations, tier 2 addresses student misbehaviors in small groups and tier 3 focuses on individual students, who do not respond to tier 1 expectations (Mergler et al., 2014). PBIS implementing schools have reported reductions of disciplinary incidents between 20% and 60% in approximately 18,000 schools since 2012, increased academic performance, decreased truancy, and improved school climate and safety (Mergler et al.,

2014). The common denominator between restorative discipline and PBIS is the student's consideration of an entire school community versus the individual.

SEL is another research-based program that teaches students five essential social emotional learning competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Mergler et al., 2014). Payton et al. (2000) suggested that SEL competencies originated from two theoretical models, the first one including social emotional learning theories, such as emotional intelligence, social and emotional competence promotion, social development, social information processing, and self-management. The second set of theories includes behavior change and learning theories, such as the health belief model, the theory of reasoned action, problem behavior theory, and social-cognitive learning theory (Payton et al., 2000).

The Austin ISD (AISD) in Texas has created its own Department of Social and Emotional Learning in 2013 and has implemented SEL programs in over half of its schools in 2013, with the goal to teach the five critical SEL skills to all students by school year 2015-16 (Mergler et al., 2014). SEL principles are included in instructions weekly, are part of all lesson plans, while progress and effectiveness are evaluated in district-wide school climate surveys with students (Mergler et al., 2014). One of the AISD high schools reported a 20% drop in academic failures, and a 28% reduction of disciplinary referrals in the second year of implementation (Mergler et al., 2014). Payton et al. (2000) described essential features of highly effective and successful SEL programs to include a combination of theory-based research and best educational practices that use key competencies of the SEL program. Accordingly, students should learn 17 skills and

attitudes that are based on awareness of self and others, positive attitudes and values, responsible decision-making, and social interaction skills (Payton et al., 2000). Additionally, school based SEL programs should focus on curriculum design, coordination with community resources, educator preparation and support, and program evaluation (Payton et al., 2000).

Research on the effectiveness of such proactive intervention strategies in restrictive settings, such as DAEPs, however, was still missing. Simonson and Sugai (2013) studied the effectiveness of PBIS in alternative education settings and found that there is a common misperception that all students require tier 3 (intensive individualized) supports, to the exclusion of tier 1 (universal) and tier 2 (targeted group) supports. Instead, critical elements within each tier may need to be adapted and intensified, based on each student's individual needs (Simonson & Sugai, 2013). More research was necessary to understand what kind of integrated continuum of support is required in an alternative education setting to ensure academic, social behavior, and special curricula needs in an environment, where student attendance varies in length of stay, and frequency of enrollment (Simonson & Sugai, 2013). This confirmed earlier conclusions by Simonson, Britton, and Young (2010) that empirical research on the effectiveness of school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) in alternative schools was lacking, and apparently was still true three years later in 2013.

Mergler et al. (2014) suggested that improvement of school discipline, using proactive and creative intervention strategies largely depended on the degree of fidelity, with which the strategies are implemented. Childs et al. (2016) confirmed this finding;

however, concluded that fidelity of implementation did not produce any difference in the rate of change between higher and lower implementing schools. They observed an immediate drop in discipline referrals in the beginning of SWBP implementation, that could be sustained over time; however, change did not occur faster in higher versus lower implementing schools. In a comparison of 14,000 schools, Vancel et al. (2016) found that successful implementation of SWBP was causally related to teacher buy-in. Results from the study revealed that high school teachers were particularly challenged in administering discipline policies and teaching behaviors correctly (Vancel et al., 2016). Gregory et al. (2016) had similar findings about the impact of restorative discipline on teacher-student relationships. Students associated teachers, implementing higher levels of restorative discipline, with more positive student-teacher relationships and more equitable disciplinary practices across racial and ethnic groups (Gregory et al., 2016).

Restorative discipline, SEL, PBIS, and SWPBS, all require dedication and hard work (Mergler et al., 2014). Rollison et al. (2013) contended that schools alone do not have the capacity to plan, develop, and implement the growing number of proactive and creative intervention programs. Instead, school districts should collaborate with families, community organizations, and the juvenile justice system to coordinate the individual needs of at-risk students (Rollison et al., 2013; Teasley, 2014). Gavine et al. (2016) explained the small effect size of Universal School-Based primary prevention programs with the lack of sustainability, lack of follow-up beyond the current school year, and lack of cost-effectiveness. Gregory et al. (2016) suggested that single training workshops for teachers be replaced with ongoing support during the implementation process. Instead of

conducting more outcome evaluations, Gavine et al. (2016) recommended that more qualitative studies be conducted that involve process evaluation with the students, who receive the interventions. They confirmed earlier research by Lagana-Riordan et al. (2011) that few mixed methods or qualitative studies existed in the current research literature, seeking the opinions and perceptions of at-risk students in DAEPs.

Recidivism

Recidivism is the repeated return of at-risk students to DAEPs, whether that is more than once during all their school years, repeatedly within their elementary, middle school, and high school years, or sometimes within the same school year (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Vanderhaar et al., 2014). Length of stay at DAEPs is determined at the discretion of the school districts' administration and can range from a few days to several months. Exceptions are violations of the 1994 GFSA, for which Congress mandated that local school districts expel students for at least one year (Brown et al., 2013). In a discussion of the effectiveness of DAEP placements and interventions, Booker and Mitchell (2011) commented about the revolving door effect of DAEPs, suggesting that such severe and repeated punishment did not have a deterrent effect on juvenile delinquent populations. Few information about recidivism rates at DAEPs exist, including the demographic characteristics of student recidivists (Booker & Mitchell, 2011).

Booker and Mitchell (2011) found that 8% of students in DAEPs in Pennsylvania returned to the DAEPs within the same year; however, 37% continued into the next academic school year. Vanderhaar et al. (2014) confirmed the cyclical nature of DAEP

referrals of the same students after the first placement, suggesting that DAEPs were ineffective in deterring or changing the behaviors that lead to their continued expulsions and exclusions from home campuses. Consequently, time of first placement at DAEPs is important. 52.9% of elementary students experienced subsequent juvenile detention within less than 4 years of first placement, with 5th graders having the highest detention rate (55.6%) after the first placement at a DAEP (Vanderhaar et al., 2014). Middle school students recidivated at a rate of 43.3% within less than two years, and high school students at a rate of 24.6% within less than one year (Vanderhaar et al., 2014).

A search of the TEA's (2016) discipline reports, and the National Center for Education Statistics (2017) discipline data, did not produce any statistics on recidivism rates for DAEP placements. The TEA's (2016) State level annual discipline summary for school year 2015-16 reported 82,784 on/off campus DAEP placements, with 4,822 placements continued from the previous year. Cortez and Cortez (2009) reported the recidivism rate across the nation to be 33%. Researchers and promoters of creative and proactive behavior intervention strategies have described significant reductions in school dropout rates, discipline referral rates, and an increase in academic success. High implementing schools of the PBIS approach in Florida, reported a decrease of 15% in office disciplinary referrals, an 18% decrease in in-school suspensions, and an 8% decrease in out-of-school suspensions (Mergler et al., 2014). These findings support results from a study, conducted by Simonson et al. (2010), which revealed that the implementation of SWPBS in an alternative school setting significantly decreased serious incidents, with 83% of students with disabilities, and aggressive tendencies, responding

to the primary tier of SWPBS in the second year after implementation. Simonson and Sugai (2013) said that in a restrictive setting such as DAEPs, the critical components of PBIS may need to be intensified within each tier. It is important to make data-based decisions, and to establish a continuum of positive behavioral support, especially in an environment, where students are transient, with lengths of stay ranging between three days, 30 to 60 days, and longer (Simonson & Sugai, 2013). Although SEL, PBIS, and SWPBS implementation have been credited with significant reductions in disciplinary referrals, and improvement of school climates and safety (Fowler, 2011; Mergler et al., 2014; Sharkey & Fenning, 2012), the current literature did not provide statistical information that would allow comparison to traditional punitive measures. More transparency of recidivism rates between punitive and creative interventions were needed.

Clearly, the implementation of proactive and creative interventions versus strictly punitive interventions, in the last two decades, has led to more positive results in the prevention of student dropout, reduction of antisocial and other delinquent behaviors, the development of prosocial behaviors and skills, increased academic achievement, and the reduction of the schools-to-prison pipeline effect (Sklad, Diekstra, De Ritter, Ben, & Gravesteijn, 2012). A meta-analytical review of 75 studies revealed that the greatest effects of school-based social-emotional and behavioral programs were realized in students gaining increased social skills, and decreasing antisocial behaviors (Sklad et al., 2012). The study confirmed that most proactive and creative interventions relied on the concepts of Bandura's social-cognitive learning theory to address students' social and

emotional development (Sklad et al., 2012). The emphasis of the most effective programs was on development versus merely prevention, since social and emotional competencies are considered protective factors that may reduce the likelihood of students, facing risk factors, will engage in problem behaviors (Sklad et al., 2012).

Smaller, indirect effects of Sklad et al.'s meta-analysis included the reduction of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress, prevention of drug abuse, improved attitudes toward school, increased academic achievement, prevention of aggressive and antisocial behaviors, and the promotion of positive or prosocial attitudes and behaviors. Of the 75 studies, 16 studies came from other countries, 11 from European countries, and five from other parts of the world. All studies were conducted between 1995 and 2008, since it was important for the researchers to include the influence of emotional intelligence in their review of the effectiveness of proactive and creative intervention strategies (Sklad et al., 2012). Additionally, Sklad et al. (2012) included research on all students, not only at-risk children. The delimitations are important, since findings for a wide variety of different programs, nationally and internationally, revealed that a high quality of implementation was key to successful outcomes. Accordingly, Sklad et al. (2012) define high quality implementation as having "…a sound theoretical base, well defined goals, strong focus and explicit guidelines, through training and quality control, feedback on intervention effects, and consistent staffing" (p. 894). Regarding feedback from outcome statistics, and stakeholders, the current study filled the gap by exploring the feedback from at-risk students on their lived experiences of receiving the interventions. Qualitative and mixed

methods studies with at-risk students have been identified in the literature as lacking (Gavine et al., 2016; Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011; Vanderhaar et al., 2014).

Empirical research findings differ on whether multiple integrated prevention and interventions lead to greater success than those with a single outcome goal. Sklad et al. (2012) suggested that many social and emotional skills development programs often focus on specific goals, for example assisting children with emotional and social disorders, substance abuse problems, truancy, delinquency, violence, and aggression. However, their goal was to concentrate on universal school-based programs that used an integrative approach to meet the needs of all students, not only at-risk students, or students with special needs (Sklad et al., 2012). They did not provide an opinion on the superiority of one approach versus the other.

A group of authors for the Journal of Research conducted a study on adolescence, titled *Targeting High-Risk, Socially Influential Middle School Students to Reduce Aggression: Universal Verses Selective Preventive Intervention Effects*. They suggested that more is not necessarily better. The results of the study were that selective interventions that considered social influence of peers and family had a positive effect in reducing aggression of middle school students. Universal approaches had no significant effect in the general population, thus combining the two programs did not produce any significant advantage (Projectjora12067-cr, 2014). Gavine et al. (2016) confirmed the limited effectiveness of universal school-based programs; however, suggested that a combination of social development (SD) and social norms (SN) approaches had the greatest success in reducing proviolent and pro-aggressive behaviors. Brown et al. (2013)

concluded that the most effective prevention and intervention programs in schools are based on reinforcement of positive behaviors and focused on problem behaviors of the individual student on a case-by-case basis to meet individual needs.

In the last 5 years, restorative discipline, PBIS, and SEL programs have received greater attention in the research community, as the programs of choice to address at-risk student misbehaviors, reduce dropout rates, recidivism, increase academic success, and high school completion. Whether proactive and creative intervention programs use selective approaches to target specific behavior problems, or universal programs to address a myriad of misbehaviors, the research community seems to be united in the conclusion that high fidelity of implementation, teacher training and support, theoretical foundations, data-based evaluations and decisions, and follow-up in subsequent years after implementation, are critical to the effectiveness and success of each program, but are still lacking today (Fowler, 2011; Gavine et al., 2016; Payton et al., 2000). Gavine et al. (2016) stated that evidence of sustainability of proactive and creative intervention programs was lacking, and that follow-up evaluations were not conducted after the school year ended, or when students graduated and left school. These findings confirmed Payton et al.'s (2000) conclusions, 16 years after their research, that creative interventions are usually of short duration and are not continued beyond the current school year. This is particularly true for multiple intervention strategies that tend to compete for time and funding, are poorly organized, and frequently lack the support of the community, parents, and teachers (Payton et al., 2000; Teasley, 2014; Vancel et al., 2016). Additionally, many studies emphasize the lack of research on referral type and intervention type in DAEPs,

especially qualitative and mixed-method studies, seeking the opinion and perceptions of at-risk students (Gavine et al., 2016; Gut & McLaughlin, 2012; Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011; Vanderhaar et al., 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2016).

The IVs included teacher type (home school vs. DAEP), treatment intervention effectiveness (5 point Likert scale from extremely effective to not at all effective), intervention strategy (5 point Likert scale from mostly punitive to mostly creative), referral type (5 point Likert scale from mostly discretionary to mostly mandatory), and four demographic variables (gender, ethnicity, age group, and teaching experience) with categories appropriate to the sample of teachers. DVs included eight statements concerning the impact of frequency of referrals, duration of referrals, type of referrals, and type of treatment intervention strategies on successful student outcomes scored on 5-point Likert scales from strongly agree to strongly disagree. There were three additional exploratory items relating treatment intervention to recidivism using a 5-point Likert scale from mostly punitive to mostly creative; the impact of peer pressure on treatment effectiveness, and staff and student cultural differences related to student outcomes, both of which are on a 5-point Likert scale from to a great extent to no extent at all.

Current knowledge, regarding these variables, was derived from quantitative studies, using historical data, secondary data, and surveys. Additionally, most of the studies in schools were conducted at students' home campuses, due to the lack of regulation and accountability of DAEPs at state and district levels (Vanderhaar et al., 2014). What was known about the variables was that:

Referral type, regardless of mandatory or discretionary, isolate at-risk students at DAEPs from their peers at home campuses with negative future outcomes, such as school dropout, lack of job opportunities and involvement in the criminal justice system (Zolkoski et al. 2016); referral type, regardless of mandatory or discretionary, often increase the frequency and intensity of antisocial behaviors, due to the concentration of these students and lack of a support system at DAEPs (Armstrong & Ricard, 2016; Mergler, Vargas & Caldwell, 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2016); discretionary referrals have been used increasingly to place students with less serious behavior problems, such as disruptions, disobedience, or breaking school rules, at DAEPs (Booker & Mitchell, 2011); punitive interventions, such as expulsions and suspensions, have failed to make schools and communities safer in the past 20 years, but are still mandatory, when students commit felonies (Skiba, 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2016); creative interventions have produced only modest effect sizes, due to lack of sustainability, scarce resources, high cost (Gavine et al., 2016), lack of coordination, duplication of efforts, and competition (Payton et al., 2000); creative interventions result in more positive behavior outcomes, when coordinated with students' families and community leaders (Rollison et al., 2013); recidivism rates across the nation average 33%, following first placement at a DAEP (Cortez & Cortez, 2009); repeated referrals to DAEPs, whether mandatory or discretionary, do not demonstrate a deterrent effect for future placements (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Skiba, 2014; Skiba et al., 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2016); and peer pressure to engage in negative behaviors at DAEPs reduces positive responses to interventions,

due to the concentration of antisocial youths at these schools (Herndon & Bembenutty, 2017).

Few qualitative and mixed methods studies exist investigating how at-risk students experience the referral process, interventions, and staff/student cultural differences at DAEPs (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011; Simonson & Sugai, 2013). What was not known about the variables was how behavioral outcomes of at-risk students at DAEPs are related to referral type, teacher type, intervention type, recidivism, peer pressure, and staff/student cultural differences, due to the lack of these studies in restrictive settings (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Childs et al., 2016; Gavine et al., 2016; Kang-Brown et al., 2013; Simonson & Sugai, 2013). It was not known how these variables impact student outcomes, based on the lived experiences of at-risk students at DAEPs (Gavine et al., 2016; Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011; Vanderhaar et al., 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2016). It was not known if mixed methods studies, comparing data collected from surveys with teachers at both home campuses and DAEPs, and insights gained from at-risk students regarding their lived experiences could provide new knowledge that may lead to positive social change.

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 2 began with an introduction of key search terms and the research data bases used to review the literature for current information on the research topic, followed by a discussion of various theories used in the literature. Bandura's social cognitive learning theory was selected as the most appropriate theoretical framework to help explain behavioral outcomes of at-risk students, who received mandatory or discretionary

referrals at DAEPs, and were receiving subsequent punitive and creative interventions. In addition, CASEL's (n.d.) concept of SEL was used in support of Bandura's construct of self-regulation. The literature review continued with a description of the key concepts that were important in understanding the proposed study.

Keeping students with persistent behavior problems from recidivating at DAEPs, eventually dropping out of school, and entering the juvenile justice system, is a great challenge for schools, communities, and the juvenile justice system. Research in the past 25 years, following the adoption of zero tolerance policies in the mid-1990s, has consistently shown that polices, such as expulsions and suspensions, do not have any deterrent effect on the most behavior challenged and antisocial students (Brown et al., 2013; Skiba et al., 2014; Teasley, 2014; Zolkowski et al., 2016). Dissatisfaction with the adverse effects of punitive interventions, particularly on minority students, has led to the implementation of more proactive and creative interventions, such as PBIS, SEL, Restorative discipline, SWPBS, and universal school-based prevention and intervention programs (Brown et al., 2013; Gavine et al., 2016; Payne & Welch, 2013; Payton et al., 2000; Mergler et al., 2014; Simonsen et al., 2010; Simonsen & Sugai, 2013).

An initiative by the U. S. Department of Justice and the U. S. Department of Education in 2011 to change disciplinary philosophies from punitive-reactive to creative-proactive options, with the goal to keep at-risk students in school, and out of the prison systems, revealed the gap in the current literature (Brown et al., 2013). More research was needed to evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of creative-proactive programs. More qualitative research, exploring the lived experiences of at-risk students,

receiving the interventions at DAEPs, was needed. The literature review resulted in four IVs (referral type, intervention type, teacher type, and treatment effectiveness), including four demographic variables (gender, age, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience), one DV (successful student outcomes, including eight statements concerning the impact of frequency of referrals, duration of referrals, type of referrals, and type of treatment intervention strategies), and three explorable CVs (recidivism, peer pressure and staff/student cultural differences). A description of what was known and what was not known about these variables resulted in seven quantitative, two qualitative, and one mixed methods RQs, designed to provide answers and new insights to existing knowledge.

Chapter 3 includes the setting, research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, threats to validity, and issues of trustworthiness. The methodology section includes a discussion of participant selection logic, instrumentation, quantitative and qualitative components of this study, and the data analysis plan. Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion of ethical procedures, including protection of participants and treatment of confidential data.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to examine attitudes of DAEP students and teachers from home schools and their associated DAEP in Texas regarding the extent to which they thought referral type, frequency and duration, and intervention type were related to positive behavioral outcomes. This study consisted of two sequential parts. The first part was a quantitative study in which the survey method was used to collect data from high school teachers in three public school districts in Central Texas, including associated DAEPs, as well as high school teachers in public school districts across Texas. The survey included 25 questions regarding the attitudes of teachers from at-risk students' home campuses and associated DAEPs about the extent to which they thought mandatory and discretionary referrals, frequency and duration of referrals, and punitive and creative interventions were related to positive behavioral outcomes for at-risk students. The second part was a qualitative study consisting of interviews with nine (n = 9) current and former high school students from three different DAEPs to gain an understanding of students' lived experiences involving the referral process and subsequent treatment interventions. The two parts of this study included information about current school referral policies and treatment interventions as well as their effectiveness in terms of achieving positive behavior change, reducing recidivism rates, and stopping the pipeline from schools to prisons. Chapter 3 includes the setting, research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, threats to validity,

and issues of trustworthiness. Additionally, strategies for quantitative and qualitative data collection, as well as analysis techniques, and research questions are discussed.

Setting

The setting for the quantitative phase of this study was three nonrandomly selected public-school districts in Central Texas, as well as additional randomly selected school districts across Texas. Quantitative data were collected using the survey method via SurveyMonkey.com. This setting was relevant to this study because it allowed all high school teachers in public school districts in Texas and associated DAEPs to participate in the survey anonymously and at their convenience. The advantages of online surveys include low cost, speed, and better response rates than other forms of data collection (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). School administrators were able to quickly distribute access to the online survey to all teachers in the school districts through the Human Resources department, thus providing encouragement and support for participation. With the permission of superintendents and principals, all high school teachers in three nonrandomly selected school districts were recruited to complete the online survey. High school teachers from randomly selected school districts across Texas were invited via the Internet using SurveyMonkey.com as the recruiting platform. Survey participants were advised that participation in this study was voluntary, and their personal data would be kept confidential. Additionally, participants were asked to agree that they complete the online survey within 2 weeks of receiving it.

The setting for the qualitative part of the study was DAEP campuses where at-risk student interviewees were receiving interventions. Former DAEP students were

interviewed in a private room at a local library, empty classroom, church, or park bench. IRB approval for interviews with at-risk students was obtained in a telephone conversation (IRB, personal communication, June 14, 2018). Interviews caused minimum disruption to daily routines of the students, teachers, and DAEPs, and provided perspective to the interviews in the students' natural environment. Students were assured that participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous, and they could withdraw from the study at any time. This information was included in the student assent (see Appendix E) and parent consent letters.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

The following research questions and hypotheses were intended to examine attitudes of DAEP students and teachers from home schools and their associated DAEPs regarding the extent to which they thought referral type, frequency and duration, and intervention type were related to positive behavioral outcomes. IVs included teacher type (home school vs. DAEP), treatment intervention effectiveness (5 point Likert scale from extremely effective to not at all effective), intervention strategy (5 point Likert scale from mostly punitive to mostly creative), referral type (5 point Likert scale from mostly discretionary to mostly mandatory), and four demographic variables (gender, ethnicity, age group, and teaching experience) with categories appropriate to the sample of teachers. DVs included eight statements concerning the impact of frequency of referrals, duration of referrals, and type of referral, as well as type of treatment on successful student outcomes scored on 5-point Likert scales from strongly agree to strongly

disagree. There were three additional exploratory items relating treatment intervention to recidivism using a 5-point Likert scale from mostly punitive to mostly creative, the impact of peer pressure on treatment effectiveness, and staff/student cultural differences related to student outcomes, both of which are on a 5-point Likert scale from to a great extent to no extent at all. Information from students was collected in one-on-one interviews following a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix B). All qualitative information was content coded to identify patterns and categories of responses. Notes included anecdotal descriptions of student attitudes regarding potential drivers of success in DAEP programs.

RQ1-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the relationship between referral type (mandatory versus discretionary) and behavioral outcomes of students at DAEPs?

$H_0 1$*:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe mandatory and discretionary referrals are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

$H_a 1$*:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that mandatory and discretionary referrals are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

RQ2-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the relationship between treatment intervention type (punitive versus creative) and behavioral outcomes of students at DAEPs?

$H_0 2$*:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

H_a2: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ beliefs that creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

RQ3-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the relationship between treatment intervention strategy and recidivism?

$H_0$3: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing recidivism.

H_a3: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing recidivism.

RQ4-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the influence of peer pressure on treatment effectiveness?

$H_0$4: Teachers at home campuses and DAEPs do not differ in their beliefs that treatment effectiveness is related to adapting to peer pressure.

H_a4: Teachers at home campuses and DAEPs differ in their belief that treatment effectiveness is related to adapting to peer pressure.

Q5-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the effects of staff/student cultural differences on student success?

$H_0$5: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that staff and student cultural differences influence behavior outcomes.

H_a5: Teachers at both home campuses and DAEPs differ in their beliefs that staff and student cultural differences influence behavior outcomes.

RQ6-Quantitative: How does the duration of referral type influence student behavioral outcomes?

$H_0$6: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that duration at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

H_a6: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that duration at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs, influences behavioral outcomes.

RQ7-Quantitative: How does the frequency of referral type influence student behavioral outcomes?

$H_0$7: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that frequency of referral type at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

H_a7: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that frequency of referral type at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

RQ8-Qualitative: How do students, who were referred to DAEPs, either for mandatory or for discretionary reasons, describe their attitudes towards placement at a DAEP?

RQ9-Qualitative: How do students describe their experiences of receiving treatment interventions?

RQ10-Mixed Methods: To what extent and in what ways do qualitative interviews with students serve to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the results obtained during the quantitative phase of this mixed-method study?

Numerous studies have examined the detrimental effects of isolating behavior-challenged students in DAEPs, and the use of punitive interventions to rehabilitate

antisocial students, who persistently violate the law and school policies. Just as many studies have focused on more proactive and creative interventions as an alternative to punishment, which have produced better results to varying degrees. Few researchers have used mixed methods approaches to determine whether referral type (mandatory versus discretionary), intervention type (punitive versus creative), and teacher type (home campus versus DAEP) result in positive behavior change of at-risk students.

Based on a pragmatic worldview, this study qualified for a mixed methods design by focusing on the research problem, using multiple approaches to gain the most knowledge and best understanding of the problem (Creswell, 2014). The strength of this mixed methods study was that it enabled the researcher to draw liberally from both quantitative and qualitative data, thus minimizing the limitations of either research approach alone (Creswell, 2014). By using a mixed methods approach, this study provided a more complete understanding of the impact of referral type, intervention type, and teacher type on at-risk students through the combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative phase delivered objective numerical data about the research problem, while the qualitative phase helped explain the results of the quantitative phase by adding the students' subjective perspectives.

Using this explanatory sequential mixed methods design, quantitative data were collected in the first phase, and qualitative data in the second phase. The quantitative phase included a series of analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) to identify differences between the two teacher groups (home campus versus DAEP) in their evaluation of the effects of referral type, treatment type, treatment effectiveness, and teacher type on

students' behavioral outcomes, while holding constant the most common referral type and treatment intervention strategies used at their associated DAEPs. A series of independent groups *t*-tests were conducted to identify differences between the two teacher groups in their evaluations of student behavioral responses to referral type, treatment type, treatment effectiveness, and teacher type, and in their assessments related to recidivism, peer pressure, and cultural differences. Additionally, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to identify how teacher group evaluations of student behaviors are moderated by demographic variables (gender, ethnicity, age group, teaching experience).

The qualitative phase of this study included phenomenological interviews with nine (n = 9) current and former high school students from three to four DAEPs to explore their lived experiences of being referred to DAEPs, and of receiving various types of interventions. In phenomenology, the sample size is relatively small, usually 10 or fewer participants (Rudestam & Newton, 2015 p. 124). The students' responses helped understand how changes in school referral policies could increase the efficacy of interventions, leading to positive behavior change, reduction in recidivism rates, and diminished future involvement in the prison system. Phenomenological research involves the identification of phenomena, for example the behavioral responses of at-risk students to the type of referrals and type of interventions, as experienced by the students at DAEPs (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Data from both phases was analyzed and interpreted separately. The results from the quantitative phase were used to plan the components of the qualitative phase, for example, the type of interview questions and the purposefully

selected participants. The goal of the qualitative phase was to add depth and additional insights to the results of the quantitative phase (Creswell, 2014).

Role of Researcher

The role of the researcher consisted of establishing contact with the superintendents of three nonrandomly selected and similarly sized school districts and to obtain approval for recruiting teachers and students for this study. The researcher coordinated teacher participation in the online survey with the superintendents and principals, via a letter that contained instructions and a link to the online survey. Additionally, the role of the researcher was to conduct interviews with the students, and to collect, analyze, and interpret the data. The researcher's own school district was excluded from this study to avoid any bias or possible ethical conflicts. The researcher did not have any personal relationship with administrators, teachers, and students in the selected school districts. All participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time to eliminate the perception of a power imbalance. With the support of school administrators, the researcher obtained informed consent from teachers, students, and parents, explained the purpose of the study, and assured the participants of confidentiality and anonymity of their personal information. An execution plan is provided in Appendix C.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The population of interest for the quantitative part of this study were all high school teachers from three nonrandomly selected school districts in Central Texas and

their associated DAEPs, as well as high school teachers from all public high schools across Texas. The teacher population in each of the three school districts ranged from 1,100 to 6,000 individuals. The demographics included male and female teachers of all racial groups and adult ages, as well as teacher experience. Only school districts with their own DAEPs, either on or off campus, were included. These variables were important, because Booker and Mitchell (2011), Fowler (2011), Mergler et al. (2014), Van Acker (2007, and Vandehaar et al. (2014), all described the ineffectiveness of segregating anti-social students from their peers into DAEPs. Fenning et al. (2011) addressed the detrimental effects of punitive measures, such as expulsions and suspensions, and Gavine et al. (2016) emphasized that the more creative interventions, such as restorative discipline and PBIS, while significantly more effective than punitive measures, also failed to reduce recidivism, school dropout rates, and future involvement in the prison system. It was important for this study to understand the differences between home campus and DAEP teachers, regarding student behavioral outcomes to referral type, intervention type, and teacher type.

Student participants for the qualitative phase consisted of nine (n = 9) current and former high school students in three DAEPs, ranging in age from 15 to 18 years. Former DAEP students were a rich source of information for the student interviews. Each student participant had one or more referrals to a DAEP, either for mandatory or discretionary reasons, and experienced both punitive and creative interventions. It was important for this study that student participants were able to provide unique information about their lived experiences of the referral process and subsequent interventions. The aim was to

discover the missing link between current school referral policies, and intervention strategies that could lead to more positive behavior outcomes.

Recruitment

The following procedure was used for the recruitment of teacher and student participants for this study:

Teacher Surveys. Superintendents of the nonrandomly selected school districts were contacted to obtain agreement for conducting online surveys with prospective teacher participants. Once agreement was obtained, superintendents or their designated representatives provided an email list of all high school teachers in their district. An email invitation with an explanation of the study and endorsement letter, was sent to all potential participants. The email invitation included instructions from the researcher and a link to SurveyMonkey.com, where respondents found a 25-item survey to complete. Additional teacher survey responses were obtained by sending the invitation with the link to the survey directly to all public high school teachers via SurveyMonkey.com. Teachers in one school district received a hard copy of the email invitation, including the link to the survey, in their school's distribution box, as per superintendent's request. One week after the initial email, a second email was sent to all high school teachers as a reminder. A third email reminder was sent to teacher participants in two of the school districts, one week after the second reminder. Teachers, who received a hard copy of the survey invitation, did not receive any reminders, as per request. Respondents were allowed two weeks to complete and return the survey.

Student Interviews. Principals of the DAEPs were contacted to obtain approval

for conducting student interviews. Once approval was obtained from the DAEP principals, students were informed of the purpose of the study and invited to participate in the interviews. Interested student participants received a flyer to take home to their parents. Former students of DAEPs were contacted in person at their places of work, or by telephone and, if interested to participate in the interviews, were asked to sign an adult consent form prior to the interview.

Participation

Teacher participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality in the email letter and again in the instructions. Informed consent was implied by their participation in the survey. Teachers were informed that their participation was strictly voluntary. Student participants signed a letter of assent. Parents of students under the age of 18 years signed a letter of consent. Former students signed a letter of consent. Date, time, and location of the student interviews was coordinated with the DAEPs' principals and the volunteer students. Each student interview was conducted face-to-face with the researcher. Student participants and their parents were assured of confidentiality. Student participants were compensated with a $5 gift card upon completion of the interviews. IRB approval for the $5 gift cards was obtained in a telephone conversation (IRB, personal communication, June 14, 2018). To address any power imbalances, and possible ethical considerations, students were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Data Collection

Data from the quantitative surveys was downloaded to Excel from SurveyMonkey.com and imported into SPSS 24 for statistical analysis. Data obtained

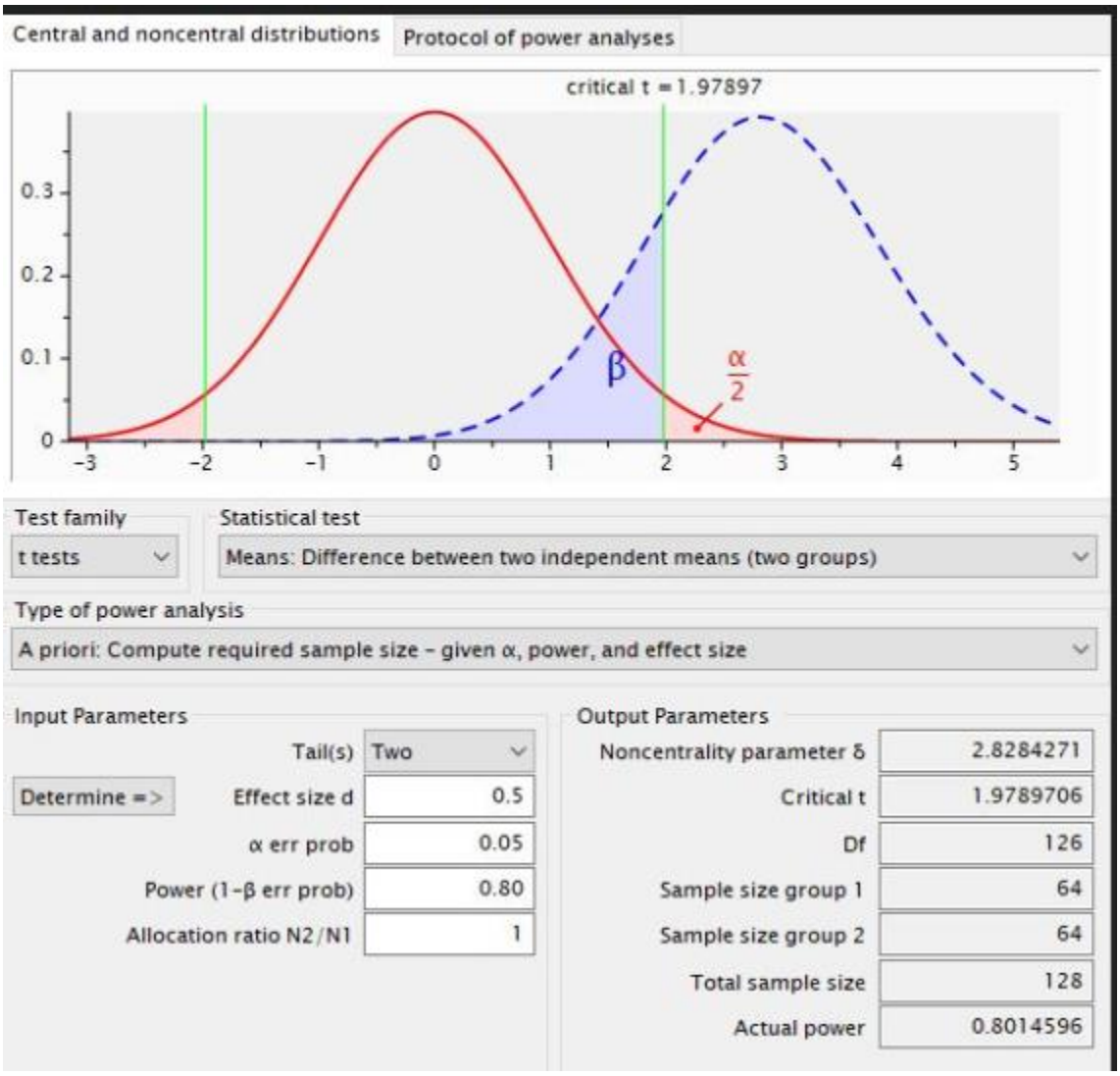
from the student interviews was transcribed verbatim.

Sampling Strategy

The sample size for the quantitative part of this study was calculated with G*Power analysis (see Figure 1), using the following criteria: An independent groups *t*-test with two groups of teachers (home campuses versus DAEPs); medium effect size of $d = .5$; a series of ANCOVAs with two independent groups of teachers (home campuses and DAEPs), medium effect size of $\omega^2 = .25$; and a MANCOVA with two groups of teachers (home campuses and DAEPs) and ethnicity, medium effect size of $\omega^2 = .25$, an alpha level of .05, and a power of .80 for all three tests. The analyses resulted in a total sample size of $n = 128$ (*T*-Test) and $n = 269$ (ANCOVAs/MANCOVA). To detect a genuine effect, and as recommended by Cohen (1988, 1992), researchers normally use an alpha level of .05 and a statistical power of .80 (Field, 2013).

Figure 1

*G*Power Analysis*



Note. Independent groups *t*-test with medium effect size of *d* = .5, alpha of .05, power of .80, two independent groups of teachers (home campus and DAEP).

For the qualitative part of the study, criterion sampling was used to recruit nine (*n* = 9) DAEP students, who met the following criteria: high school student, between 15 and 18 years of age, referred to a DAEP more than once, for both mandatory and discretionary reasons, and experience with both punitive and creative interventions. In phenomenology, the sample size is relatively small, usually 10 or fewer participants (Rudestam & Newton, 2015 p. 124). The goal with such a small sample size is the analysis of significant statements, the generation of meaning units, and essence descriptions (Creswell, 2014).

Instrumentation

The data collection instrument for the quantitative phase was a researcher-developed online survey with 25 questions for the teacher participants (see Appendix A). Three of the survey questions were designed for teachers to best describe characteristics of their DAEPs in terms of the effectiveness of treatment interventions, the most common treatment intervention strategy, and the most common referral type. Each of the 11 DVs on the teacher survey were not designed as an instrument but represented 11 separate DVs. The data collection instrument for the qualitative phase was a researcher-developed face-to-face interview protocol with 12 semi-structured questions for the student participants (see Appendix B).

Quantitative Components

The participants in the quantitative phase of this study were high school teachers from three public school districts in Central Texas, and their associated DAEPs, as well as high school teachers in all public-school districts across Texas. The participants were

briefed on the purpose of the study and consented to participating in the online survey (SurveyMonkey.com) by accessing a link. The rationale for choosing the online survey design was that it is economical to use, and has a rapid turnaround time (Creswell, 2014). All participants were asked to complete the online survey within two weeks of receiving the invitation. The survey was cross-sectional and served the purpose of generalizing results from the samples (n = 107) to the teacher population (N = 333,029.1) in Texas, excluding charter schools (TEA, 2016).

Survey Questions. The survey questions were developed, based on the literature review, indicating that neither punitive nor creative interventions produced the desired behavioral outcomes in at-risk students (Gavine et al., 2016). The online survey included four questions to solicit demographic data from the teacher participants (gender, age group, ethnic identity, and years of teaching experience) and one question asked whether teachers teach at the High School campus or the DAEP. Another question asked teachers to select the most commonly used type of referrals and type of interventions at their schools, and 19 questions focused on the following research questions:

RQ1-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the relationship between referral type (mandatory versus discretionary) and behavioral outcomes of students at DAEPs?

RQ2-Quantitative: How do teachers at both home campuses and DAEPs view the relationship between treatment intervention type (punitive versus creative) and behavioral outcomes of students at DAEPs?

RQ3-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the

relationship between treatment intervention strategy and recidivism?

RQ4-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the influence of peer pressure on treatment effectiveness?

RQ5-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the effects of staff/student cultural differences on student success?

RQ6-Quantitative: How does the duration of referral type influence student behavioral outcomes?

RQ7-Quantitative: How does the frequency of referral type influence student behavioral outcomes?

Reliability. As a measure of reliability, Cronbach's alpha was used to establish a measure of internal consistency for the 11 DVs.

Validity. Face validity was established by agreement among a panel of professionals that the 11 items were designed to assess how a specific item can measure the degree to which a respondent believes there are drivers of behavioral outcomes among students. In addition, the panel of professionals was asked to reach agreement on whether type of referral, duration of referral, frequency of referral, and intervention strategy assess relevant content related to behavior outcomes. This agreement served as content validity.

Procedures for Pilot Studies

A pilot study was conducted to improve the interview questions, format, and scales, and to establish content validity of the scores (Creswell, 2014). The panel of experts was assembled, consisting of the dissertation committee members and three

volunteer teachers from the Temple Independent School District. Teachers met as a focus group and completed the survey, with the purpose of establishing face and content validity. Feedback from the dissertation committee and the teacher focus group during the pilot study was used to revise the survey questions to meet the needs in the main study in relation to the research questions.

Recruitment. Recruitment of teacher participants for the pilot study occurred in person with volunteer high school teachers from the Temple Independent School District. Volunteer teachers were informed of the purpose of the focus group initially upon recruitment, and again at the start of the focus group session. Participation was limited between two and three teachers on a first come, first served basis. Date, time, and location of the focus group was coordinated with the participants.

Participation. Volunteer teachers were advised that their participation in the pilot study was strictly voluntary, anonymous, and confidential, and that they could withdraw from participation in the pilot study at any time. All teacher participants signed a consent form at the start of the focus group session.

Data Collection. Data collection occurred via a discussion of the survey questions, to determine understanding of the questions, appropriateness, and coherence in relation to the research questions. Feedback from the teacher participants in the focus group was used to revise the survey questions and to validate the instrument (Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative Components

Following the quantitative phase of this study, nine (n = 9) current and former

volunteer students from three different DAEPs in three school districts in Texas were interviewed. The nature of the questions (see Appendix B) was informed by the analysis and interpretation of the quantitative data to allow for a better understanding of the quantitative results and answer the following research questions:

RQ8-Qualitative: How do students, who were referred to DAEPs, either for mandatory or for discretionary reasons, describe their attitudes towards placement at a DAEP?

RQ9-Qualitative: How do students describe their experiences of receiving treatment interventions?

RQ10-Mixed Methods: To what extent and in what ways do qualitative interviews with students serve to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the results obtained during the quantitative phase of this mixed-method study?

The pilot study was used to establish the legitimacy of the interview questions. Content validity was achieved by transcribing the students' responses verbatim, and by identifying significant statements, meaning units, and essence descriptions (Creswell, 2014).

Participants and their parents signed a written informed consent form, prior to the interviews, and understood that the interviews will be transcribed verbatim. Each participant received instructions to answer the interview questions honestly. The participants were identified by an alpha numeric identification code to protect their privacy and to ensure anonymity. Additionally, differences and similarities in responses between students and teachers were identified.

Data Analysis Plan

In this explanatory sequential mixed methods study, the quantitative phase preceded the qualitative phase. IBM SPSS Version 24 was used to analyze the data collected during the quantitative phase. Data cleaning occurred, using a rigid protocol of removing incomplete surveys, and respondents, who took less than a reasonable amount of time to complete the survey. Analyses included three different statistical tests to test the subsequently listed hypotheses: an independent groups *t*-test with one categorical IV, teacher group, (teachers at home campuses and teachers at DAEPs), and seven DVs (reducing antisocial behaviors), scored on 5-point Likert scales; a series of ANCOVAs with teacher groups (home campus and DAEP) as one IV and seven DVs (reducing antisocial behaviors), while covarying the effects of the most common referral type, general treatment intervention strategies, the effectiveness of treatment interventions, and years of teaching experience at associated DAEPs, scored on 5-point Likert scales; and one MANCOVA with two IVs (teacher groups and ethnicity), and referral type, intervention type, frequency and duration of referrals, treatment effectiveness, most common referral type, general treatment strategies, peer pressure, recidivism, and staff/student cultural differences as DVs, while controlling for gender, age, and years of teaching experience (CVs), on 5-point Likert scales.

H_01: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe mandatory and discretionary referrals are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

H_a1: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that mandatory and discretionary referrals are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

H_02: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

H_a2: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ beliefs that creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

H_03: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing recidivism.

H_a3: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing recidivism.

H_04: Teachers at home campuses and DAEPs do not differ in their beliefs that treatment effectiveness is related to adapting to peer pressure.

H_a4: Teachers at home campuses and DAEPs differ in their belief that treatment effectiveness is related to adapting to peer pressure.

H_05: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that staff and student cultural differences influence behavior outcomes.

H_a5: Teachers at both home campuses and DAEPs differ in their beliefs that staff and student cultural differences influence behavior outcomes.

H_06: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that duration at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

H_a6: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that duration at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs, influences behavioral outcomes.

H_07: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that frequency of referral type at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

H_a7: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that frequency of referral type at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

The results of the study were interpreted, using Bandura's social-cognitive learning theory with its concepts of observational learning (modeling) and self-regulation (Friedman & Schustack, 2012), as well as CASEL's (n.d.) SEL theory with its concept of self-awareness.

The qualitative phase helped explain differences in behavioral outcomes of at-risk students, and the expectations of teachers, based on current school referral and intervention policies. Qualitative interviews with student participants in three DAEPs focused on the missing link between referral types, intervention types, demographic characteristics and positive versus negative behavioral outcomes (see Appendix B). The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were content coded and analyzed to identify significant statements, to generate meaning units, and to develop essence descriptions (Creswell, 2014).

Threats to Validity

The major threat to validity existed in the fact that the samples for each phase of the study were drawn from different populations. The sample unit for the quantitative phase were teachers, while the sample unit for the qualitative phase were students in the school district's associated DAEPs. Prior to conducting statistical analyses, inter-school differences were assessed to determine if school should be a control variable. The interviews of the student participants during the qualitative phase included questions that addressed the results of the quantitative phase.

The survey questions for the quantitative part of this study were designed to measure the effectiveness of referral and intervention types in relation to the behavioral outcomes for at-risk students. This established construct validity. The predictive validity of the survey instrument was assessed by correlating the results of this study to findings of previous research, in which different instruments were used (Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias, & DeWaard, 2015). Cronbach's alpha was used for all DVs as a measure of internal consistency.

External Validity

Threats to external validity may arise through the interaction of the setting, when participants respond or behave in a specific manner, due to their characteristics (Creswell, 2014). This study was conducted in Texas, and consequently, the results may not be generalized to the teacher and student population in other states. Generalizability of the results from the qualitative part of this study cannot be assumed, since the sample size is relatively small, and the intent of this portion of the study is not to generalize to students

or schools outside of the selected DAEPs. Furthermore, validity in qualitative research is established through accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2014). The accuracy of the qualitative results was ensured by the thick and rich descriptions of the participants' experiences of the referral and intervention types at DAEPs. Additionally, discrepant information about significant statements, meaning units, and essence descriptions were identified, and peer reviews added validity to the findings.

Internal Validity

Threats to internal validity may arise from experiences of the participants (history), which will be unknown to the researcher, as well as from certain characteristics of the participants (selection), which may affect the ability to interpret the findings correctly (Creswell, 2014). These threats were addressed by collecting all data within the same period, and by randomly selecting teacher and student participants within the nonrandomly selected school districts (Creswell, 2014).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility in this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was established by recruiting the appropriate sample sizes for each phase. For the quantitative phase, a G*Power analysis with an independent groups *t*-test with two groups of teachers (home campuses versus DAEPs); medium effect size of $d = .5$; a series of ANCOVAs with two groups of teachers (home campuses and DAEPs), medium effect size of $\omega^2 = .25$, and one MANCOVA with two groups of teachers (home campuses and DAEPs) and ethnicity, medium effect size of $\omega^2 = .25$, an alpha level of .05, and a power of .80 for all three

tests, resulted in a total sample size of $n = 128$ (t-test) and $n = 269$ (ANCOVAs and MANCOVA). A total of 507 teachers participated in the surveys, however, a rigid data cleaning protocol resulted in a total sample size of $n = 107$.

For the qualitative phase of the study, the goal was to recruit up to 12 student volunteers, which is more than the recommended number of participants for a phenomenological study (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). More than three DAEPs were contacted to achieve the required number of participants, which resulted in a total of nine ($n = 9$) current and former students. Credibility was achieved by identifying significant statements, meaning units, essence descriptions, and by using peer reviews.

Transferability

Transferability was achieved through the thick and rich descriptions of the students' experiences of the referral types, intervention types, demographic characteristics, and the resulting behavioral responses.

Dependability

Dependability was achieved with a detailed description of the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, the selection of participants, and the methods of data collection. A list of the interview questions is included in the appendices to this proposal to provide clarity and focus (see Appendix B).

Confirmability

Confirmability is the equivalent of objectivity in quantitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In qualitative research, however, objectivity means that researchers understand how their biases can influence their interpretation of research results and take

appropriate measures to have their findings confirmed (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This was achieved through structured reflexivity and the review of all data and results by an external auditor, to ensure that the findings were accurate and free of bias (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Ethical Procedures

The IRB (2018) checklist was followed to avoid potential ethical conflicts. The first step was to procure a letter of cooperation from the school districts' superintendents. A copy of the agreements was provided to the IRB. Next, a signed written consent form from the participants in this study, including the parents of minors, was obtained. A copy of the consent form will be provided to the IRB upon request. It was important that all participants understood that participation in this study was voluntary, and that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally, the treatment of human participants complied with Standard 8 of the APA's *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (EPPCC, 2010).

In the surveys, teachers were not required to provide personal identification to protect their privacy, and to address ethical concerns, for example, fear of job loss. Demographic data questions included male/female, age range, ethnicity, years of experience. All survey and interview participants were assigned an alpha-numeric code to ensure the participants' anonymity. All data, transcripts, and surveys were secured and accessed by the researcher only.

Data integrity and confidentiality was safeguarded by storing the results of this study (transcripts, interview notes, and survey responses) in a locked cabinet that was

only accessed by the researcher. Anonymity of participants' personal information was accomplished by using alpha-numerical codes, including the final report. All data will be destroyed 5 years after completion of the study.

Study participants received a copy of the survey and interview questions. The interviews were conducted in a location, and at a time agreed to by the principals and current and former students of the DAEPs. Additionally, student participants were compensated with a $5 gift card. Ethical concerns over potential coercion or power imbalances were addressed by assuring students that their participation in this study was strictly voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time.

Summary

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to examine attitudes of DAEP students and teachers from home schools and their associated DAEPs, regarding the extent to which they thought referral type, frequency and duration, and intervention type were related to positive behavioral outcomes. The setting for the quantitative phase was described as an online platform to survey teachers in three school districts in Central Texas, including their associated DAEPs. The setting for the qualitative phase was described as the natural environment of at-risk students assigned to DAEPs. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was selected as the appropriate approach for this study, to answer seven quantitative, two qualitative, and one mixed methods research question. The results from the qualitative phase helped explain the results from the quantitative phase by adding depth and increased understanding (Creswell, 2014).

The methodology section included a description of the population of interest for both phases and the calculation of the sample sizes. G*Power analyses produced a sample size of $n = 128$ teacher participants for the quantitative phase. Criterion sampling was used to select between nine ($n = 9$) student participants for the qualitative phase. A pilot study, consisting of the dissertation committee and an expert panel of teacher professionals was used to establish content validity of the survey and interview questions. The data analysis plan for the quantitative part of the study was identified as IBM SPSS Version 24, while the analysis of the qualitative phase of the study was based on the identification of significant statements, meaning units, and essence descriptions (Creswell, 2014).

Threats to internal and external validity were discussed, which consisted of history and selection of participants (internal validity), and participant characteristics (external validity) respectively. Issues of trustworthiness included credibility, which was established by calculating the appropriate sample size; transferability, which consisted of the students' thick and rich descriptions of their experiences; dependability, which was achieved by using the appropriate research design for this study; and confirmability, which was achieved by an external audit trail (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Lastly, in Chapter 3, a discussion of ethical procedures and concerns included strict adherence to the guidelines of Walden University's IRB (2018) checklist, and the APA's EPPCC (2010) for the protection of human participants, confidentiality and treatment of data, and the right of participants to withdraw from the study at any time. In Chapter 4, the findings

from the quantitative and qualitative phases are presented, including statistical tests and analyses, and quotes from transcripts in support of the research questions.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to examine attitudes of DAEP students and teachers from students' home campuses and associated DAEPs in Texas regarding the extent to which they thought referral type, frequency and duration of referrals, and intervention type were related to positive behavioral outcomes. The study consisted of two parts. During the quantitative phase, a self-constructed survey with 25 questions was emailed to teachers in two school districts in Central Texas. The email letter included a link to the survey, which was delivered by SurveyMonkey.com. Consent was implied when teachers clicked on the link. One school district required dissemination of the survey by hard copy, which was placed into teachers' distribution boxes by the school's secretary. Additional data were collected via the Internet throughout the entire state of Texas using SurveyMonkey.com and the same 25 survey questions to increase the number of respondents from 42 teachers in those three school districts to 107 teachers. The qualitative phase consisted of interviews with DAEP students currently enrolled at the three local school districts, as well as former DAEP students. Together, both phases of the study served to answer the following research questions and confirm or disconfirm associated hypotheses:

RQ1-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the relationship between referral type (mandatory versus discretionary) and behavioral outcomes of students at DAEPs?

$H_0$1: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe mandatory and discretionary referrals are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

H_a1: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that mandatory and discretionary referrals are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

RQ2-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the relationship between treatment intervention type (punitive versus creative) and behavioral outcomes of students at DAEPs?

$H_0$2: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

H_a2: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ beliefs that creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

RQ3-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the relationship between treatment intervention strategy and recidivism?

$H_0$3: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing recidivism.

H_a3: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing recidivism.

RQ4-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the influence of peer pressure on treatment effectiveness?

$H_0$4: Teachers at home campuses and DAEPs do not differ in their beliefs that treatment effectiveness is related to adapting to peer pressure.

H_a4: Teachers at both home campuses and DAEPs differ in their beliefs that treatment effectiveness is related to adapting to peer pressure.

Q5-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the effects of staff/student cultural differences on student success?

H_05: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that staff and student cultural differences influence behavior outcomes.

H_a5: Teachers at both home campuses and DAEPs differ in their beliefs that staff and student cultural differences influence behavior outcomes.

RQ6-Quantitative: How does the duration of referral type influence student behavioral outcomes?

H_06: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that duration at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

H_a6: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that duration at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs, influences behavioral outcomes.

RQ7-Quantitative: How does the frequency of referral type influence student behavioral outcomes?

H_07: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that frequency of referral type at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

H_a7: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that frequency of referral type at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

RQ8-Qualitative: How do students, who were referred to DAEPs, either for mandatory or for discretionary reasons, describe their attitudes towards placement at a DAEP?

RQ9-Qualitative: How do students describe their experiences of receiving treatment interventions?

RQ10-Mixed Methods: To what extent and in what ways do qualitative interviews with students serve to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the results obtained during the quantitative phase of this mixed-method study?

This chapter includes the results of a pilot study conducted to ensure that the survey questions were focused on the research questions and the purpose of the study. This chapter also includes the setting in which student interviews took place, demographics of both teacher and student participants, the data collection process, data analyses and results, as well as evidence of trustworthiness. Lastly, a summary of the chapter is provided.

Pilot Study

Since the teacher survey questions were researcher-constructed, it was necessary to pilot test the instrument to establish face and content validity (Creswell, 2014). For this purpose, a panel of experts was convened as a focus group, consisting of two female and one male teacher with a combined teaching experience of over 50 years. Recruitment occurred in person on a first come, first served basis. The focus group convened at an agreed upon venue that was suitable for the meeting. Prior to the discussion, the panel of experts was advised that their participation was strictly voluntary, anonymous, and

confidential and that they were free to withdraw from the panel at any time. The participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and received a copy of the survey and research questions for review. Subsequently, they were asked to complete a paper copy of the survey.

After the panel of experts had completed the survey, they proceeded to the discussion of the survey questions in relation to the research questions. All three participants stated that the questions were easy to understand, clear and appropriate for assessing how teachers evaluate at-risk students' behavioral outcomes after referrals and intervention strategies at both their home campuses and DAEPs. One teacher participant commented that some of the questions may be viewed as redundant; however, all agreed that changes to the survey questions were not necessary. The members of the focus group appeared comfortable, open, and confident in their feedback to one another. The pilot study took between 45 and 60 minutes to complete.

Setting

The quantitative part of the study was conducted online per email invitation, after obtaining a letter of cooperation from the superintendents of three local school districts. Superintendents and principals of two school districts provided the email addresses of all high school teachers at their home campuses and associated DAEPs. One school district requested that the high school secretary distribute the survey invitation in hard copy to their teachers' mailboxes at the high school's distribution office. The hard copy invitation was the same email letter, used in the email invitations, containing the link to the survey. By clicking on the link, teachers implied informed consent. Additionally, statewide

survey invitations were sent out via SurveyMonkey for all public high school teachers in Texas to complete the online survey.

The qualitative part of the study was conducted primarily in unused offices, conference rooms and classrooms in the school districts' DAEPs, where high school students were recruited and interviewed, after parental consent was obtained. The setting was appropriate for the student interviewees, because the students were present at school, the interviews took place during their lunch hour, the students were able to eat lunch, and their normal classroom routines were not disrupted. The setting also provided maximum privacy during the interviews. In the case of two students, the setting was an empty park bench, because the school district did not allow access to any school premises for the purpose of conducting research. The park bench was selected in agreement with the students' parents and the students because the weather was nice, and the location afforded the required privacy for the interview. For some former students, the setting was an empty church building, which was selected after the COVID-19 outbreak, when classrooms, offices, conference rooms, or libraries were no longer available. The church was located near the former students' residences and afforded the necessary privacy for the interviews, because services were no longer conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Demographics

Information obtained from the survey participants in the quantitative phase of this study consisted of general demographic data, such as gender, ethnic group, age group, years of teaching experience, and the location of employment (home campus versus

DAEP). Additionally, the demographic data were broken down by its source: responses collected from the three school districts versus responses collected from additional internet queries. The demographic data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Teachers	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	34	32
Female	73	68
Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	60	56
African American	10	9
Hispanic	29	27
Asian	4	4
Other	4	4
Age Group		
20-30 years of age	27	25
31-40 years of age	25	23
41-50 years of age	24	22
51-60 years of age	16	15
60 + years of age	15	14
Years of Teaching Experience		
Less than 5 year	30	28
Between 5 and 10 years	29	27
Between 11 and 20 years	28	26
Between 21 and 30 years	14	13
Moore than 30 years	6	6
Location		
Home Campus	79	74
DAEP	28	26
Source		
School Districts	42	39

Teachers	*n*	%
Internet	67	61

Note: N = 107 for all categories, except Source, where *N* = 109. Two respondents (*n* = 2) started the survey but did not complete it.

Data Collection

Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative portion of the study included a sample of 107 (*N* = 107) teacher participants, who were employed in public school districts throughout the State of Texas. Forty-two (*n* = 42) teacher participants responded from three nonrandomly selected school districts in Central Texas, while 67 (*n* = 67) teacher participants responded from public school districts throughout the entire State of Texas. All teacher participants received an invitation to a researcher constructed online survey, using SurveyMonkey.

The online survey consisted of 25 questions, including four demographic questions (gender, ethnic group, age group, and years of teaching experience), one question on the location of employment (home campus versus DAEP), one question on available intervention strategies (punitive versus creative) in the districts, 17 questions, targeting research questions on intervention type (punitive versus creative) and referral type (mandatory versus discretionary), using 5-point Likert-type scales, and one open-ended question that allowed teacher participants to provide suggestions for process improvement. A disqualifying question was added to the internet survey collection across the State of Texas to ensure that only public high school teachers, who taught either at the students' home campuses or their associated DAEPs, completed the survey.

The online survey was sent out twice to two school districts over a period of four months, with each school district's teacher participants receiving an email reminder two weeks after the first email invitation was sent. A third school district did not allow email invitations to be sent to their teachers. For this reason, a hard copy of the same email invitation, including the link to the survey, was dropped off in the school secretary's office for distribution to each high school teacher's inbox. Hard copies were not provided a second time. Internet invitations via SurveyMonkey.com were sent to public high school teachers twice over a period of four months. All data collected via SurveyMonkey.com were transferred directly from SurveyMonkey.com into SPSS 24 for data cleaning and analyses.

Variations from the original data collection plan consisted of making hard copies of the online survey invitation in one school district. To accommodate all high school teachers at both the home campus and its associated DAEP, the secretary suggested that 300 copies be provided. After the copies were dropped off at the secretary's office, further communication with school officials and follow-up inquiries were unsuccessful. It was evident, though, that the school district's DAEP teachers participated in the survey.

The low response to the survey from the three nonrandomly selected school districts in Central Texas (n = 42), required another variation from the original data collection plan, which was the internet collection of survey responses from public high school teachers across the entire state of Texas via SurveyMonkey.com. To ensure that the data were comparable to the results of the local school districts, a trial sample of 30 (n = 30) teacher participants was collected first. After it was determined that the results were

similar and reliable for the purpose of this study, a second data collection was completed approximately one month later, which resulted in a total of 65 (n = 65) valid survey responses between the two sample collections.

Unusual circumstances consisted of internet survey responses that had to be eliminated, due to respondents taking less than a reasonable time to complete the survey. For example, many teachers completed the survey between less than one to two minutes, answering 25 questions. Most survey participants from the three local school districts completed the survey between three and more than seven minutes. The researcher and the teachers in the pilot study completed the survey on paper and averaged more than five minutes to finish it. Other internet survey respondents provided nonsensical answers to the open-ended question, such as "JSUDUDHUD". These survey participants were deemed "not credible" and, for this reason, their responses were removed. Data cleaning will be addressed in the data analysis section.

Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative portion of the data collection process consisted of a sample of nine student participants (n = 9). Student participants at two nonrandomly selected school districts were given a flyer, along with a parent consent form and a student assent form to take home to their parents. Students who had their parents' consent were instructed to place a sealed envelope, containing their parents' consent, in a locked box at their respective DAEPs. Former students were recruited either in person in local businesses, such as grocery stores, department stores, and restaurants or by telephone. Interviews were subsequently scheduled at an agreed upon date, time, and location. All student

participants were assigned an alpha-numeric code and responded to 12 semi-structured interview questions about their lived experiences during the referral process, while receiving interventions at the DAEPs, and their perceptions of what worked for them and what did not work. Demographic data was not collected. All students were given a copy of the assent and consent forms, as appropriate. All students received a $5 gift card, regardless of whether they completed the interview or not. Student interviews were conducted over a period of 8 months in private offices, conference rooms, empty classrooms, a church, and park benches, all of which afforded the required privacy.

Variations from the original data collection plan consisted of the inclusion of former DAEP students in the interview participant pool, after it became apparent that the recruitment of current DAEP students would take much longer than was reasonably possible, due to scheduling conflicts and the shelter in place order. Former students were more readily available and accessible. Another advantage was that they were 18 years and older, were able to sign their own consent forms, had their own transportation and were able to meet for the interview in the evening and on weekends. The input of former students was expected to be as valuable as the insights of current DAEP students. The IRB approved the recruitment of former students after a change request was submitted.

Unusual circumstances encountered in the process of data collection was the COVID-19 pandemic, which closed all Texas schools after spring break of 2020. To complete the qualitative data collection before the IRB's deadline on 25 May 2020, it was best to recruit the remaining student interviewees (n = 5) to achieve the required sample size of nine students (n = 9) from the former DAEP student pool.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Results

A series of ANCOVAs were conducted for research questions one through four, and survey question 23 to evaluate the null hypotheses by detecting the differences in means between independent groups, while controlling for the influence of a CV on the DV. ANCOVAS have four underlying assumptions (Green & Salkind, 2014, p. 190-191):

The DV must be normally distributed for any specific value of the covariate and for any level of a factor. The variances of the dependent variables for the population distribution in assumption one must be equal. The cases must represent a random sample from the population and the scores on the dependent variable are independent of each other. Homogeneity of slopes is similar for all groups, which means that the variances can be assumed to be equal, if $p > 0.05$. The assumptions were not violated in any of the ANCOVA tests conducted.

The results of the ANCOVAs, associated with research questions one through four, and survey question 23, the IVs, DVs, CVs used, are presented below:

RQ1-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the relationship between referral type (mandatory versus discretionary) and behavioral outcomes of students at DAEPs?

H_01: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe mandatory and discretionary referrals are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

H_a1: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that mandatory and discretionary referrals are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

IV: Teacher groups at home campuses, teacher groups at DAEPs.

DVs: Survey question 7 "Students with mandatory referrals to a DAEP exhibit more antisocial behaviors than students with discretionary referrals", and survey question 8 "Students with discretionary referrals to a DAEP have better behavioral outcomes than students with mandatory referrals".

CV: Survey question 17 "On a scale from mostly discretionary to mostly mandatory, how would you characterize the most common referral type at your associated DAEP?"

For the first DV (survey question 7), there was no statistically significant difference between teachers at the home campuses and teachers at DAEPs in their views that mandatory referrals to DAEPs resulted in more antisocial behaviors than discretionary referrals, while controlling for the most common referral type used at their associated DAEP, F (1, 102) = .525, p = .470, partial η^2 = .01. A comparison of the estimated marginal means showed that teachers at home campuses (mean=2.570) and teachers at the DAEPs (mean=2.734) were nearly identical in their beliefs that mandatory and discretionary referrals were equally as effective in reducing antisocial behaviors. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained.

For the second DV (survey question 8), there was no statistically significant difference between teachers at home campuses and teachers at DAEPs in their views that

students with discretionary referrals to a DAEP had better behavioral outcomes than students with mandatory referrals to a DAEP, while controlling for the same covariate (survey question 17), F (1, 101) = 1.820, p = .180, partial η^2 = *.02*. A comparison of the estimated marginal means showed that teachers at home campuses (mean=2.842) and teachers at DAEPs (m=3.114) were nearly identical in their beliefs that mandatory and discretionary referrals were equally as effective in reducing antisocial behaviors. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained.

RQ2-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the relationship between treatment intervention type (punitive versus creative) and behavioral outcomes of students at DAEPs?

H_0*2:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

H_a*2:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ beliefs that creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors.

IV: Teacher groups at home campuses, teacher groups at DAEPs.

DVs: Survey question 13 “Students, who receive mostly punitive treatment interventions at a DAEP, exhibit more antisocial behaviors than students, who receive mostly creative interventions” and survey question 14 “Students, who receive mostly creative interventions at a DAEP, have better behavioral outcomes than students, who receive mostly punitive interventions”.

CV: Survey question 16 “On a scale from mostly punitive to mostly creative, how would you characterize the general treatment intervention strategy at your associated DAEP?”.

For survey question 13, there was no statistically significant difference between teachers at the home campuses and teachers at DAEPs in their beliefs that mostly punitive treatment interventions resulted in more antisocial behaviors than mostly creative interventions, while controlling for the most frequently used treatment intervention at their DAEP, F (1, 103) = .106, p = .745, partial η^2 = .00. The comparison of the estimated marginal means showed that teachers at home campuses (m=2.481) and teachers at DAEPs (m==2.409) were nearly identical in their beliefs that creative and punitive intervention strategies were equally as effective in reducing antisocial behaviors. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained.

For survey question 14, there was no statistically significant difference between teachers at the home campuses and the DAEPs in their beliefs that students, who receive mostly creative treatment interventions at a DAEP, have better behavioral outcomes than students, who receive mostly punitive interventions, while controlling for the most frequently used treatment intervention at their DAEP, F (1, 103) = 2.559, p = .113, partial η^2 = .02. The comparison of the estimated marginal means showed that teachers at the home campuses (m=2.532) and teachers at the DAEPs (m=2.197) were nearly identical in their beliefs that creative and punitive intervention strategies were equally as effective in reducing antisocial behaviors. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained.

RQ3-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the

relationship between treatment intervention strategy and recidivism?

$H_0$3: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses believe creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing recidivism.

H_a3: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally effective in reducing recidivism.

IV: Teacher groups at home campuses, teacher groups at DAEPs.

DV: Survey question 18 "On a scale from mostly punitive to mostly creative, which treatment intervention strategies are more effective in reducing recidivism?".

CV: Survey question 16 "On a scale from mostly punitive to mostly creative, how would you characterize the general treatment intervention strategy at your associated DAEP?".

For RQ3, there was no statistically significant difference between teachers at the home campuses and the DAEPs, in their evaluation of which treatment intervention was more effective in reducing recidivism (mostly punitive versus mostly creative), while controlling for the most frequently used treatment intervention at their DAEP, F (1, 104) = 1.076, p = .302, partial η^2 = .01. The comparison of the estimated marginal means showed that teachers at the home campuses (m=3.196) and teachers at the DAEPs (m=2.948) were nearly identical in their beliefs that creative and punitive intervention strategies are equally as effective in reducing recidivism. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained.

RQ4-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the influence of peer pressure on treatment effectiveness?

$H_0$4: Teachers at home campuses and DAEPs do not differ in their beliefs that treatment effectiveness is related to adapting to peer pressure.

H_a4: Teachers at home campuses and DAEPs differ in their belief that treatment effectiveness is related to adapting to peer pressure.

IV: Teacher groups at home campuses, teacher groups at DAEPs.

DV: Survey question 21 "To what extent do you think treatment effectiveness is related to students adapting to peer pressure?"

CV: Survey question 15 "On a scale from extremely effective to not at all effective, how effective are treatment interventions at improving student behavioral outcomes at your DAEP?"

For RQ4, there was no statistically significant difference between teachers at the home campuses and teachers at the DAEPs, in their evaluation of treatment effectiveness and students' adaptation to peer pressure, while controlling for the effectiveness of treatment interventions at their associated DAEPs, F (1, 103) = .060, p = .807, partial η^2 = .00. The comparison of the estimated marginal means showed that teachers at the home campuses (m=2.526) and teachers at the DAEPs (m=2.570) were nearly identical in their beliefs that treatment effectiveness is related to adapting to peer pressure. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained.

An additional ANCOVA was conducted for survey question 23 "To what extent do you think longer years of teaching experience influences positive student behavioral outcomes?". This question was not associated with a research question, however, was used to compare teacher and student responses in this mixed method study.

IV: Teacher groups at home campuses, teacher groups at DAEPs.

DV: Survey question 23.

CV: Survey question 4 “How many years of teaching experience do you have?”.

There was no statistically significant difference between teachers at the home campuses and the DAEPs, in their views that longer years of teaching experience influenced positive student behavioral outcomes, while controlling for the number of years of teaching experience, F (1, 104) = .004, p = .945, partial η^2 = .00. A comparison of the estimated marginal means showed that teachers at the home campuses (m=2.557) and teachers at the DAEPs (m=2.571) were nearly identical in their views that longer years of teaching experiences influenced positive student behavioral outcomes. A summary of the ANCOVA results is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Results of ANCOVAs

Variables			Estimated Marginal Means		*df*	*F* ratio	*p*	η^2
IV	DV	CV	Home Campus	DAEP				
Location RQ1	7	17	2.570	2.734	1, 102	.525	.470	.01
	8	17	2.842	3.114	1, 101	1.820	.180	.02
Location RQ2	13	16	2.481	2.409	1, 103	.106	.745	.00
	14	16	2.532	2.197	1, 103	2.559	.113	.02
Location RQ3	18	16	3.196	2.948	1, 104	1.076	.302	.01
Location RQ4	21	15	2.536	2.570	1, 103	.060	.807	.00
-	23[a]	4[b]	2.557	2.571	1, 104	.004	.945	.00

Note: RQ = research questions. DV and CV = survey questions.

[a] DV = not associated with a RQ. [b] CV = not associated with a RQ.

A series of independent samples *t*-tests was conducted to evaluate the difference in means between teachers at home campuses and their associated DAEPs and the test variables, such as cultural differences between staff and students, longer terms of referrals to a DAEP, shorter terms of referrals to a DAEP, multiple referrals to a DAEP, and a single referral to a DAEP. These test variables addressed RQs 5-7. Additional independent samples *t*-tests were conducted for test variables gender and ethnicity, which were not associated with any hypotheses.

Independent samples *t*-tests have three underlying assumptions: The test variable is normally distributed in each of the two populations; the variances of the normally distributed test variable for the populations are equal; and the cases represent a random sample from the populations, and the scores on the test variable, are independent of each other (Green & Salkind, 2014, p. 157).

The assumptions were not violated in any of the independent samples *t*-tests.

Q5-Quantitative: How do teachers at home campuses and DAEPs view the effects of staff/student cultural differences on student success?

$H_0 5$*:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that staff and student cultural differences influence behavior outcomes.

$H_a 5$*:* Teachers at home campuses and DAEPs differ in their beliefs that staff and student cultural differences influence behavior outcomes.

IV: Teacher groups at home campuses and DAEPs.

DV: Survey question 22 “To what extent do you think cultural differences between staff and students contribute to successful student outcomes?”.

The independent samples *t*-test showed that teachers at the home campuses (M = 2.77, SD = 1.062, n = 79) and teachers at the DAEPs (M = 2.93, SD = .766, n = 28) were nearly identical in their beliefs that cultural differences between staff and students contribute to successful student outcomes. The difference, -.16, 95% CI [-.53, .22], was not statistically significant t (65.694) = -.833, ns, two-tailed, p = .408. The effect size d = -.18 is less than the smallest effect size calculated by Cohen’s d = .2 (Green & Salkind, 2014, p. 158). The critical region for rejecting the null hypothesis at an alpha level of α =

.05 is .025 at each tail of the distribution curve (Frankfort Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008, p. 440). Since p = .408 is above the .025 critical value, the null hypothesis that teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that staff/student cultural differences influence behavior outcomes, is retained.

RQ6-Quantitative: How does the duration of referral type influence student behavioral outcomes?

H_0*6:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that duration at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

H_a*6:* Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that duration at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs, influences behavioral outcomes.

IV: Teacher groups at home campuses, teacher groups at DAEPs.

DVs: Survey question 11 “Students with longer terms of referrals to a DAEP exhibit more antisocial behaviors than students with shorter terms of referrals”.

Survey question 12 “Students with shorter terms of referrals to a DAEP have better behavioral outcomes than students with longer terms of referrals”.

The independent samples t-test showed that teachers at the home campuses (M = 2.56, SD = .930, n = 79) and teachers at the DAEPs (M = 2.50, SD = 1.072, n = 28) were nearly identical in their views that duration of referral type influences student behavioral outcomes. The difference, .06, 95% CI [-.40, .52], was not statistically significant t (42.306) = .250, ns, two-tailed, p = .804. The effect size d = .05 is less than the smallest effect size calculated by Cohen’s d = .2 (Green & Salkind, 2014, p. 158). Since p = .804 is above the critical value of .025 at each tail of the distribution curve for rejecting the

null hypothesis, the null hypothesis that teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that duration, at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs, influences behavioral outcomes, is retained.

The results for a separate independent samples *t*-test showed that teachers at the home campuses (M = 2.80, SD = .897, n = 79) and teachers at the DAEPs (M = 2.50, SD = .923, n = 28) were nearly identical in their views that students with shorter terms of referrals to a DAEP have better behavioral outcomes than students with longer terms of referrals. The difference, .30, 95% CI [-.11, .70], was not statistically significant t (46.307) = 1.476, ns, two-tailed, p = .147. However, it did represent a medium-sized effect, d = .32 (Green & Salkind, 2014, p. 158). Since p = .147 is above the critical value of .025 at each tail of the distribution curve for rejecting the null hypothesis, the null hypothesis that teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that duration, at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs, influences behavioral outcomes, is retained.

RQ7-Quantitative: How does the frequency of referral type influence student behavioral outcomes?

$H_0 7$: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their beliefs that frequency of referral type at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

$H_a 7$: Teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses differ in their beliefs that frequency of referral type at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs influences behavioral outcomes.

IV: Teacher groups at home campuses, teacher groups at DAEPs.

DVs: Survey question 9 “Students with multiple referrals to a DAEP exhibit more antisocial behaviors than students with only one referral”.

Survey question 10 “Students with only one referral to a DAEP have better behavioral outcomes than students with multiple referrals”.

The analysis of the independent samples *t*-test showed that teachers at the home campuses (M = 2.43, SD = .943, n = 79) and teachers at the DAEPs (*M* = 2.36, *SD* = 1.096, *n* = 28) were nearly identical in their views that students with multiple referrals to a DAEPs, exhibited more antisocial behaviors than students with only one referral. The difference, .07, 95% CI [-.40, .54], was not statistically significant *t* (42.029) = .315, ns, two-tailed, *p* = .755. The effect size *d* = .07 is less than the smallest effect size calculated by Cohen’s *d* = .2 (Green & Salkind, 2014, p. 158). Since *p* = .755 is above the critical value of .025 at each tail of the distribution curve for rejecting the null hypothesis, the null hypothesis that teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their belief that frequency of referral type, at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs, influences behavioral outcomes, is retained.

Analysis of a separate independent samples *t*-test showed that teachers at the home campuses (M = 2.41, SD = .899, n = 79) and teachers at the DAEPs (*M* = 2.32, *SD* = .945, *n* = 28) are nearly identical in their views that students with only one referrals to a DAEPs, have better behavioral outcomes than students with multiple referrals. The difference, .09, 95% CI [-.33, .50], was not statistically significant *t* (45.483) = .408, ns, two-tailed, *p* = .686. The effect size was computed at *d* = .09 is less than the smallest

effect size calculated by Cohen's *d* = .2 (Green & Salkind, 2014, p. 158). Since *p* = .686 is above the critical value of .025 at each tail of the distribution curve for rejecting the null hypothesis, the null hypothesis that teachers at both DAEPs and home campuses do not differ in their belief that frequency of referral type, at-risk students are assigned to DAEPs, influences behavioral outcomes, is retained.

Additional independent *t*-test analyses were conducted for survey question 19 "To what extent do you think gender (teacher/student) influences student behavioral outcomes?" and survey question 20 "To what extent do you think ethnicity (teacher/student) influences student behavioral outcomes?" These questions were not specifically associated with a hypothesis.

IV**:** Teacher groups at home campuses, teacher groups at DAEPs.

DVs: Survey questions 19 and 20.

The analysis of an independent samples *t*-test showed that teachers at the home campuses (*M* = 3.25, *SD* = .954, *n* = 79) and teachers at the DAEPs (*M* = 3.29, *SD* = 1.150, *n* = 28) were nearly identical in their views that gender influenced student behavioral outcomes. The difference, -.04, 95% CI [-.52, .46], was not statistically significant *t* (40.921) = -.134, ns, two-tailed, *p* = .894. The effect size *d* = -.03 is less than the smallest effect size calculated by Cohen's *d* = .2 (Green & Salkind, 2014, p. 158). At an alpha level of .05, it can be said with a 95% confidence level that gender does not influence student behavioral outcomes.

The analysis of an independent samples *t*-test showed that teachers at the home campuses (*M* = 3.08, *SD* = 1.059, *n* = 79) and teachers at the DAEPs (*M* = 3.29, *SD* =

1.117, n = 28) were nearly identical in their views that ethnicity (teacher/students) influenced student behavioral outcomes. The difference, -.21, 95% CI [-.70, -.28], was not statistically significant t (45.350) = -.865, ns, two-tailed, p = .392. The effect size d = -.19 is less than the smallest effect size calculated by Cohen's d = .2 (Green & Salkind, 2014, p. 158). At an alpha level of .05, it can be said with a 95% confidence level that ethnicity does not influence student behavioral outcomes. A summary of the results of the t-tests is provided in Table 3.

Table 3

Results of Independent t-Tests

Variables		Home Campus		DAEP		*T*	*p*	*Cohen's d*	95% CI
IV	DV	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		Two-tailed		
Location RQ5	22	2.77	1.062	2.93	.766	-.833	.408	-.18	-.53, .22
Location RQ6	11	2.56	.930	2.50	1.072	.250	.804	.05	-.40, .52
	12	2.80	.897	2.50	.923	1.476	.147	.32	-.11, .70
Location RQ7	9	2.43	.943	2.36	1.096	.315	.755	.07	-.40, .54
	10	2.41	.899	2.32	.945	.408	.686	.09	-.33, .50
-	19[a]	3.25	.954	3.29	1.150	-.134	.894	-.03	-.52, .46
-	20[b]	3.08	3.29	1.059	1.117	-.865	.392	-.19	-.70, .28

Note: Location = teacher groups. RQ = research question. DV = survey questions. Medium effect size *d* in boldface.

[a] Dependent variable = not associated with a RQ. [b] DV = not associated with RQ.

A MANCOVA was performed to evaluate the main effect of teacher group on multiple dependent variables (referral type, referral duration, single referral, multiple referrals, intervention type, effectiveness of intervention type, recidivism, peer pressure, and cultural differences, while controlling for ethnicity, gender, age, and years of teaching experience. A MANCOVA is based on six assumptions: There is not a pattern for the selection of the sample, and the sample is completely random; the independent variables are categorical, and the dependent variables are continuous or scale variables;

covariates can be either continuous, ordinal, or dichotomous; multivariate normality is present in the data; multivariate normality is present in the data; homogeneity of variance; and the relationship between covariates and dependent variables has been assessed (“Statistics Solutions”, 2019).

IVs: Teacher groups (at home campuses vs teacher groups at DAEPs), and ethnicity.

DVs: Survey questions 7 through 24.

CVs: Gender, age, and years of teaching experience.

As shown in Table 4, the results of the MANCOVA analysis revealed no significant differences between the two teacher groups on any dependent variable when controlling for gender, age group, years of teaching experience, and ethnicity.

Table 4

Results of Multivariate Test

Effects of Variables	Pillai's Trace	*F* ratio	*df*	*p*
Location (Teacher Groups)	.124	.597	18, 76	.891
Location*Ethnicity	.524	.981	54, 234	.638
Gender	.329	2.071	18, 76	.015
Age Group	.089	.410	18, 76	.982
Teaching Experience	.211	1.127	18, 76	.344
Ethnicity	.747	1.008	72, 316	.467

Note. Independent variables = Location and location*ethnicity. Dependent variables = survey questions 7 through 24. Covariates = Gender, age group, years of teaching experience, and ethnicity. *$p < 0.05$. Effect of variable removed.

A Summary of teacher survey results is presented in Tables 5 to 10.

Table 5

Summary of Teacher Survey Results – Questions 7-14

Teacher Survey Questions 7-14	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Students with mandatory referrals to a DAEP exhibit more antisocial behaviors than students with discretionary referrals	14	13.1	40	37.4	28	26.6	22	20.6	3	2.8
Students with discretionary referrals to a DAEP have better behavioral outcomes than students with mandatory referrals	6	5.7	25	23.6	49	46.2	23	21.7	3	2.8
Students with multiple referrals to a DAEP exhibit more antisocial behaviors than students with only one referral	17	15.9	48	44.9	25	23.4	15	14.0	2	1.9
Students with only one referral to a DAEP have better	16	15.0	48	44.9	30	28.0	12	11.2	1	.9

Teacher Survey Questions 7-14	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
behavioral outcomes than students with multiple referrals										
Students with longer terms of referrals to a DAEP exhibit more antisocial behaviors than students with shorter terms of referrals	18	16.8	29	27.1	46	43.0	12	11.2	2	1.9
Students with shorter terms of referrals to a DAEP have better behavioral outcomes than students with longer terms of referrals	8	7.5	36	33.6	44	41.1	16	15.0	3	2.8
Students, who receive mostly punitive treatment interventions at a DAEP, exhibit more antisocial behaviors than students with, who receive mostly creative interventions	16	15.1	43	40.6	31	29.2	14	13.2	2	1.9

Teacher Survey Questions 7-14	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Students, who receive mostly creative interventions at a DAEP, have better behavioral outcomes than students, who receive mostly punitive interventions	17	16.0	39	36.8	38	35.8	10	9.4	2	1.9

Table 6

Summary of Teacher Survey Results – Question 15

Teacher Survey Question 15	Extremely Effective		Very Effective		Moderately Effective		Slightly Effective		Not at all Effective	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
On a scale from "extremely effective" to "not at all effective", how effective are treatment interventions at improving student behavioral outcomes at your DAEP?	6	5.7	25	23.6	53	50.0	15	14.2	7	6.6

Table 7

Summary of Teacher Survey Results – Questions 16 and 18

Teacher Survey Questions 16 & 18	Mostly Punitive		Somewhat Punitive		Equally Punitive and Creative		Somewhat Creative		Mostly Creative	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
On a scale from “mostly punitive” to “mostly creative", how would you characterize the general treatment intervention strategy at your associated DAEP?	13	12.1	32	29.9	36	33.6	19	17.8	7	6.5
On a scale from “mostly punitive” to “mostly creative”, which treatment intervention strategies are more effective in reducing recidivism?	7	6.5	19	17.8	47	43.9	21	19.6	13	12.1

Table 8

Summary of Teacher Survey Results – Question 17

Teacher Survey Question 17	Mostly Discretionary		Somewhat Discretionary		Equally Discretionary and Mandatory		Somewhat Mandatory		Mostly Mandatory	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
On a scale from "mostly discretionary" to "mostly mandatory", how would you characterize the most common referral type at your associated DAEP?	7	6.6	19	17.9	28	26.4	17	16.0	35	33.0

Table 9

Summary of Teacher Survey Results – Questions 19 and 20

Survey Questions 19 & 20	Not at all		Very Little		Somewhat		Very much so		To a Great Extent	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
To what extent do you think gender (teacher/students) influences student behavioral outcomes?	6	5.6	15	14.0	41	38.3	35	32.7	10	9.3
To what extent do you think ethnicity (teacher/students) influences student behavioral outcomes?	7	6.5	21	19.6	43	40.2	23	21.5	13	12.1

Table 10

Summary of Teacher Survey Results – Questions 21 - 24

Teacher Survey Questions 21 - 24	To a Great Extent		Very Much So		Somewhat		Very Little		Not at All	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
To what extent do you think treatment effectiveness is related to students adapting to peer pressure?	7	6.5	47	43.9	44	41.1	7	6.5	2	1.9
To what extent do you think cultural differences between staff and students contribute to successful student outcomes?	11	10.3	26	24.3	47	43.9	18	16.8	5	4.7
To what extent do you think longer years of teaching experience influences positive student behavioral outcomes?	12	11.2	42	39.3	37	34.6	13	12.1	3	2.8
To what extent do you think teacher type (home campus vs. DAEP) influences student behavioral outcomes?	13	12.1	40	37.4	41	38.3	11	10.3	2	1.9

Qualitative Results

The last question of the quantitative teacher survey was an open-ended question to allow teacher participants to add valuable insights, gained from classroom experiences, to improving student behaviors: “What other strategies do you use in your classroom to manage at-risk student behaviors that could add valuable new insights to existing school

policies?" Ninety-four teachers (87.8%) responded to the open-ended question. Seventy teachers (88.6%) were from the home campuses, and 24 teachers (85.7%) were from the DAEPs. Qualitative coding of survey question 25 revealed four major themes that captured the essence of the teachers' responses (Saldaña, 2016): Consistency in classroom rules and consequences; compassion, respect, and trusting relationships; listen and talk to students, showing that you care; and use restorative justice.

Consistency in Classroom Rules and Consequences

One respondent at a DAEP in a school district stated that, "I'm no longer in the classroom but have observed teachers, that are consistent with adhering to classroom rules are more effective." Another respondent at the DAEP in a school district said, "Consistency, compassion, respect (offer and expect)." Teachers at the home campuses in the school districts mentioned, "I just have a lot of classroom procedures in place, so students know what to expect when. My consequences don't always work." Teachers at the home campuses in the internet surveys stated, "I set clear rules and my students know my expectations in my classroom. The consequences are also clear and consistent."

Compassion, Respect, and Trusting Relationships

One respondent from a DAEP in a school district wrote, "Mutual respect, consistency, rules and enforcement, and students know they have a safe zone here," while a respondent at the home campus in a school district said, "Compassion and listening, rather than quick, rash reactions." One teacher at the home campus in the internet survey responded with, "As much as possible, try to adapt/respect/modify within the classroom."

The importance of building trusting and positive relationships was a frequent

response by teachers at DAEPs and home campuses in both school districts and the internet surveys. The responses included comments, such as building positive relationships is crucial to student behavior performance, and try hard to build trust and relationships with each is key, or I try to build positive relationships with my students…even the ones that are reluctant to do so.

Listen and Talk to Students, Showing that You Care

Many teachers at DAEPS and home campuses, in both school districts and internet survey responses thought that listening and talking to students made a difference in positive behavior modification. A teacher at a DAEP in one of the school districts said that listening to students, not yelling at students, and treating them with respect regardless of their mindset, behavior, and attitude, usually makes a difference. Comments at the home campuses from the internet surveys included talk to them, just have a talk with them, talking privately with the students and parents, and talk to them about their issues and their goals and then try to show them that certain behaviors will negatively affect those goals.

Restorative Justice

Several teachers commented that using the tenets of restorative justice is helpful. One of the DAEP teachers in one of the school districts focused on survey question 21, regarding the effects of peer pressure on treatment effectiveness. The teacher stated that:

> Students that are at DAEP for longer periods are more influenced by the students that are already on campus. Students pick-up on other students' behaviors and I

> feel that early reviews should be a major part of the decision for them to go back…If they stay at DAEP too long they are negatively impacted.

Peer influence was viewed as particularly detrimental, when consequences are not consistently applied, as one teacher at one of the home campuses in the internet survey commented:

> Peers don't see the restorative practices and so sometimes (I think) certain behavior spreads because it appears that there are no consequences for the behavior. I have really good students that have made really bad choices, because they think everyone is not only doing 'it'…but getting away with it. It is especially bad when those students receive punitive discipline and then they see the students that have chronic behavior problems seemingly 'get away with' the same behavior.

Many of the internet survey responses were unique and did not fit into any major theme or category. However, they were helpful suggestions of proven strategies that have worked for teachers. Examples are the use of student led counseling, collaborative problem solving, restorative justice, incentives, and rewards. It is noteworthy to mention that teachers at DAEPs almost exclusively suggested creative interventions, while some teachers at the home campuses, particularly in the internet survey responses, recommended both punitive and creative interventions. Examples of more punitive measures were detention, or call home, and in school suspension. Many survey respondents at the home campuses, who completed the internet surveys, did not know what to do about at-risk students' behavior problems. Frequent comments included I

don't know, not sure, tell them to stop, give them medicine, I do not have a strategy, or discipline. A summary of the results from teachers' responses to the open-ended question in the quantitative part of this study is provided in Table 11.

Table 11

Teacher Responses to Open-Ended Survey Question 25: Other Strategies

Major Themes	Recommendations	Frequency *n* (%)
Consistency in classroom rules and consequences	DAEP teachers suggested that consistency in classroom procedures and consequences were effective behavior management tools.	3 (12.5)
	Some High School teachers agreed.	6 (8.6)
Compassion, respect, and trusting relationships	DAEP teachers stressed the importance of compassion, respect, and the building of trusting relationships in reaching at-risk students.	7 (29.2)
	High School teachers agreed that trust and positive relationships with students helped them manage behaviors in positive ways.	16 (22.9)
Listen and talk to students	DAEP teachers most frequently suggested that talking and listening to students were effective tools in reaching at-risk students.	9 (37.5)
	An equal number of High School teachers agreed with this assessment.	9 (12.9)
Restorative justice	A few DAEP teachers emphasized the use of restorative justice as	3 (12.5)

Major Themes	Recommendations	Frequency *n* (%)
	helpful in changing behaviors.	
	Many High School teachers suggested Restorative Justice practices without referring to the term.	15 (21.4)

Note. Ninety-four teachers (*n* = 94) answered question 25. Home campuses *n* = 70 of 79 teachers (88.6%). DAEP *n* = 24 of 28 teachers (85.7%).

Student Interviews

Student interviews were conducted over a period of nine months. The students were recruited from two of the three school districts and included four students, who were currently enrolled at a DAEP, and five students, who were former students at a DAEP. The students were asked 12 questions about their experiences of having been referred to a DAEP, their stay at the DAEPs, and the interventions they received at both home campuses and the DAEPs. Students and parents signed assent and consent forms respectively and were assured of the confidential and voluntary nature of the interviews repeatedly. Students were encouraged to speak freely and truthfully. Demographics of student participants (see Table 12) showed that 44% (*n* = 4) were currently enrolled at a DAEP, while 56% (*n* = 5) were former DAEP students. Thirty-three percent (*n* = 3) of the students were male, while 67% (*n* = 6) were female. There were 45% (*n* = 4) Hispanic students, 33% (*n* = 3) White Caucasian students, and 22% (*n* = 2) African American students.

Table 12

Demographic Data of Student Participants

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Student Location
S01	Female	Hispanic	DAEP
S02	Male	Hispanic	DAEP
S03	Male	White Caucasian	DAEP
S04	Female	White Caucasian	DAEP
S05	Female	Hispanic	Former DAEP
S06	Female	African American	Former DAEP
S07	Female	African American	Former DAEP
S08	Male	White Caucasian	Former DAEP
S09	Female	Hispanic	Former DAEP

Major themes that emerged from the student interviews were: neither punitive nor creative treatment interventions were motivators for behavior change; creative interventions were not commonly recognized in terms of restorative justice, PBIS, behavioral RTI, or SEL; hopelessness created by duration of referrals; and lack of fairness in both mandatory and discretionary referrals.

Results

In response to question 1 (How many times have you been suspended? What did this feel like, and why did the suspension (s) not help you change your behaviors to avoid a referral to a DAEP?) 89% of students (n = 8) reported that they were suspended more than twice between their middle school and high school years, while one student (n = 1) or 11% reported having been suspended only once. Seventy-eight percent of students (n = 8) said that the suspensions made no difference to them, and 44% of students (n = 4) reported feeling angry. One Hispanic student said: “Maybe once or not at all. I do not

remember. Suspensions are fun because you get to go home. They do not help at all in changing behavior." A White Caucasian student expressed his experience in this manner:

> I have been suspended one time in 8th Grade here and one time in 8th Grade in Alabama. Then again here in 9th Grade. I did not much care about the suspensions. It did not help me change my behaviors. I feel they could have sent me right away, instead of waiting for the next school year. I was suspended for a week and had to go to the DAEP in 10th Grade. I had to take my finals in the cafeteria and was not allowed to speak with anyone.

An African American student said: "I have been suspended 5-10 times. I felt that I was not doing anything wrong to get suspended. The suspensions did not make me want to change, because I was angry."

In response to question 2 (Have you ever been expelled from school, before coming to the DAEP?) 11% of students (n = 1) reported having been expelled once, while 89% of students (n = 8) reported that they have never been expelled. The student, who said he had been expelled once, did not remember the details of it, because it was in Elementary School.

In response to question 3 (Creative interventions include restorative justice, positive behavioral interventions, and support (PBIS), behavioral response to interventions (RTI), and social emotional learning (SEL). Are you familiar with these interventions?) 11% of students (n = 1) reported that they were familiar with all of them, 22% of students (n = 2) reported that they knew what RTI was, while 67% of students (n = 6) reported that they never heard of any of these interventions. A Hispanic student said:

"I am familiar with Restorative Justice, PBIS, SEL but not RTI. The interventions have no effect on me. They change nothing because I do not really listen to it. I just want to get going."

In response to question 4 (Is this your first time at a DAEP, or have you been here before?) 89% of students (*n* = 8) reported that they have been at a DAEP more than two times, while 11% of students (*n* = 1) said that this was their first time attending a DAEP.

In response to question 5 (If you have been referred to a DAEP more than once, describe how that affected your behavior. Did that make it better or worse?) 66.7% of students (*n* = 6) reported that their stay at the DAEP helped them change for the better, while 33.3% (*n* = 3) stated that it did not change anything for them. An African American student said: "It made my behavior better. The teachers were better." A Hispanic student commented:

> The first time, it did not change anything. I was in another school district, in Dallas, and they were more lenient. We talked in class. My second time is here and we have to be quiet in the hallway with our hands behind our backs. I do not want to come back, because they are stricter.

In response to question 6 (How long is your current term of referral, and, if you have been here before, has each referral term been the same length, shorter, or longer?") 100% of the students (*n* = 9) reported that they served between 30 and 90 days, with 89% of students (*n* = 8) receiving increasingly longer terms for the second and third referrals. Eleven percent of students (*n* = 1) mentioned that the second referral decreased from 30 days to 10 days.

When asked to discuss how they felt about question 7 (How does a longer term of referral make you feel, compared to a shorter term? Please describe) 89% of the students (*n* = 8) reported that the longer terms at a DAEP made them feel upset, worse, restless, hopeless, angry, and stuck. Eleven percent (*n* = 1) said that it did not make any difference. A Hispanic student said: "The longer term of referral is upsetting, because of the restrictions at the DAEP." An African American student stated that: "It made me feel hopeless." A White Caucasian student expressed his feelings this way:

> If I was there for a longer term, it made me more restless, but also more comfortable, because I got away with more, the longer I stayed. You need to find a middle ground for how long students stay. 90 days is too long, 60 days may be a middle ground, because your life is disrupted enough, so you do not want to stay to be bad. You want to get back to your friends. Each person has a different level. I often take time to examine how a person would act. Then make your own plan. Strategy games would be perfect for that.

In response to question 8 (Without telling me the reason for your referral, was your referral mandatory or discretionary? Do you feel the referral was justified and fair? Why or why not?) 89% of students (*n* = 8) said that they were referred for both reasons, mandatory and discretionary. Eleven percent of students (*n* = 1) could not remember. Thirty-three-point-three percent of students (*n* = 3) reported that the referrals were fair, while 66.7% of students (*n* = 6) said the referrals were unfair.

When asked about question 9 (Are the interventions at the DAEP different from your home campus? If so, in what way?) 33% of students (*n* = 3) reported that the

programs in a DAEP were worse, while 67% of students (*n* = 6) said that they were better. A Hispanic student said that: “There is no program, just a counselor checking up on us and asking if we wanted to change decisions”. A White Caucasian student reported that: “Everything was worse, especially the learning part. We had packages. At first, I was on the computer, but it was taken away because I made loud noises. I turned up the volume.” Another African American student said that: “Small classes made it easier to interact with staff. Bad apples are easily spotted from good ones. You know who wants to get their days done and get it over with.”

In response to question 10 (Do staff characteristics at the DAEP influence your willingness to change behaviors in a more positive or in a more negative way?) 44% of students (*n* = 4) reported that teachers at a DAEP influenced them in better ways; 11% of students (*n* = 1) said that it made no difference to them; 11% of students (*n* = 1) said that teachers at the home campus were better, and 22% of students (*n* = 2) stated that it all depends on the individual teacher. One of the White Caucasian students said that: “Yes, the teachers at the DAEP give me more chances help me understand. The teachers at the home campus do not care,” while a Hispanic student said that: “Most of them are positive. It can be very uplifting, understanding, someone to talk to, mainly at the DAEP. Teachers know how to work with these types of kids.” An African American student stated that: “The teachers at the DAEP were more positive.” However, another Hispanic student mentioned that: “No, I did not see any difference between teachers.”

Question 11 asked students about the influence of peers on their willingness to change behaviors. Forty-four percent of students (*n* = 4) reported that they did not allow

peers to influence their behaviors, while 56% of students (n = 5) stated that peers influenced much of their behavior. A Hispanic student said that: “Yes, I am very much influenced by my peers. I rather get into trouble with other people than by myself.” An African American student confirmed that: “My peers had a great influence on me (laughing). When they were good, I wanted to be good. When they were bad, I wanted to be bad,” and a White Caucasian student said: “No, I usually go along if my peers do something good. But, if not, I do not follow.”

Finally, when asked about suggestions for improvement in question 12, students asked for more fairness, listening and understanding, empathy and trust, more effort in viewing from students’ perspectives, and treating each one of them as an individual, instead of a group of students, who made bad decisions. A White Caucasian student said:

> What works for me may not work for someone else. For example, target shooting, if you like it, a sound feedback may help a target shooter be more motivated. So, work out a general reward system that helps out everybody. Make rewards fit the individual.

A Hispanic student stated that: “Instead of using suspensions, ISS, DAEP, expulsions, and detention, use counseling and restorative discipline. Allow more participation from students in decisions,” while an African American student said: “Every student is different. Connection and distance with students matter. If students don’t trust you, they will not interact with you. Get to know students, what makes them mad and know them.” A comparison of quantitative and qualitative results is presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Integrated Results Matrix for Teacher Survey and Student Interview Responses

Quantitative Results	Qualitative Results	Example Quotes
When comparing the relationship between mandatory and discretionary referrals, teachers at both the Home Campuses and the DAEPs thought they were equally as effective in reducing antisocial behaviors. Both teacher groups agreed that students with mandatory referrals were more antisocial (50.5%), while only 29.2% agreed that students with discretionary referrals had better behavioral outcomes	Students neither agreed nor disagreed with this assertion. They expressed that referral types had nothing to do with behaviors. Six students, *n* = 6 (66.7%) felt that the processes of either of the referral types were mainly unfair, because consequences differed from one student to the other	Participant S06: "Both referral types were sometimes fair and sometimes not. Other students were not sent to the DAEP for the same infraction and that made me angry." Participant S01: "I came here for both, mandatory and discretionary reasons. The discretionary referrals are worse because the school could have given me a break." Participant S04: "My referrals were all mandatory. They were not fair. Here in Texas the laws are stricter than in Alabama."
When comparing treatment intervention strategies, teachers at the home campuses and teachers at the DAEPs thought punitive and creative interventions were equally as effective. Both teacher groups said that students, who received punitive interventions were more antisocial (55.7%), while 52.8%	Seventy-eight percent of students (*n* = 7) were unfamiliar with the terms of creative interventions, but when receiving a description, said that creative interventions made them more willing to change behaviors in a positive way. Twenty-two percent of students (*n* = 2) agreed with the teachers.	Participant S06: "I know RTI. We were conferencing with parents and teachers, and it showed me that they cared." Participant S01: "I know Restorative Justice, PBIS, and SEL, but not RTI. They do not affect me, it changes nothing. I don't really listen to it

Quantitative Results	Qualitative Results	Example Quotes
said that students with creative interventions had better behavioral outcomes.		and just want to get going."
When comparing the effectiveness of treatment interventions and peer pressure, 50.5% of teachers at the home campuses and the DAEPs believed that peer pressure influenced the success of treatment interventions to a great extent.	Students confirmed this assertion with 56% (*n* = 5) stating that they let their peers influence good and bad behavior, while *n* = 4 (44%) said that they were their own person.	Participant S02: "Yes, I am very much influenced by my peers. I rather get in trouble with other people than myself." Participant S09: "…me personally, I am my own person. A lot of kids are affected by it, but I do what I need to do and what's right."
When comparing teacher characteristics, 49.5% of teachers at the home campuses and teachers at DAEPs agreed that teacher characteristics influenced positive student behavioral outcomes.	Students agreed with this assertion, n = 6 (66.7%), stating that teacher characteristics made a difference in their willingness to change behaviors. Three students *n* = 3 (33.3%) responded that they either saw no difference, were not influenced by teachers, or stated that all teachers were unfair.	Participant S04: "Yes, the teachers at the DAEP give me more chances. They help me understand. The teachers at the home campus do not care." Participant S05: "The HS teachers have too many students to worry about. The DAEP teachers can focus on the individual students. I can change behaviors here in a more positive way." Participant S03: "Teachers at the home campus are better, nicer and more familiar with the students. The experience at the DAEP was more negative. We had counselors, who showed

Quantitative Results	Qualitative Results	Example Quotes
		us videos about behaviors but did not address individual issues."
When comparing the duration of referrals to a DAEP, teachers at the home campuses and teachers at the DAEPs neither agreed nor disagreed that longer terms of referrals resulted in more antisocial behaviors. Nearly half of the teachers (41.1%) said that students with longer terms of referrals exhibited more antisocial behaviors, while 41.1% said that students with shorter terms of referrals had better behavioral outcomes.	All students, *n* = 8 (89%) disagreed with this assertion, stating that longer terms of referrals made them feel hopeless and trapped. The longer time they spend at a DAEP, the more comfortable they became with their environment and were willing to adapt to the environment. If it was negative and antisocial, so were they. If it was positive and compliant, so were they.	Participant S05: "A longer term of referral makes me feel worse, like I should not have done what I did." Participant S07: "A longer term of referral makes me feel like I'm stuck." Participant S08: "If I was there for a longer term, it makes me more restless, but also more comfortable, because I get away with more, the longer I'm there."
When comparing the frequency of referrals to a DAEP, teachers at home campuses and at DAEPs (60.7 %) agreed that multiple referrals resulted in more antisocial behaviors than single referrals (59.8%).	Students did not agree with this assertion, *n* = 6 (66.7%). They said that multiple referrals motivated them to change behaviors, because they did not want to return to a DAEP.	Participant S04: "I still do what I want, but I avoid going back to the DAEP." Participant S06: "It made my behavior better. The teachers were better." Participant S09: "It did not really change anything. I was really angry. I accepted it and just did my time."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility for the quantitative phase was established by calculating the 95% confidence interval for all Likert scored items as 3.0 +/- 1.96 X (√ 1.0/118). There is a 95% likelihood that the population mean Likert scores for comparable teachers will fall within 2.82 and 3.18. The qualitative part of the study had an adequate sample size (*n* = 9) and allowed for triangulation, due to different ethnic perspectives provided by the student interviews. The interviews were manually recorded verbatim and verified for accuracy by member checking at the end of the interviews and by identifying meaningful statements.

Transferability

Transferability was achieved by allowing students to give thick and rich descriptions of their experiences of the referral process, the interventions they received, and the influence of peer and teacher characteristics while at a DAEP. Student participants were encouraged to talk freely and in detail about their experiences. No changes were made to transferability.

Dependability

Dependability was established with a detailed description of the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, the selection of participants, and the methods of data collection. A list of teacher survey questions and student interview questions are provided in appendices A and B, respectively. Changes were made to participant selection in both

phases to increase the number of participants and achieve the required sample sizes. Audit trails explained in detail how data was collected and kept, to ensure dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability was ensured through objective analyses and recording of the quantitative results, obtained from the ANCOVAs, independent *t*-tests, and the MANCOVA through SPSS 24. For the qualitative phase, confirmability was achieved through structured reflexivity and review of all student interview data by an external auditor.

Summary

In Chapter 4, the results of this mixed methods study were provided, comparing the differences in attitudes of students and teachers (home campuses versus DAEPs), regarding referral types (mandatory versus discretionary), frequency and duration of referrals at DAEPs, and intervention types (punitive versus creative) in relation to positive student behavior change.

The quantitative phase included seven separate ANCOVAs with the teacher groups (home campus versus DAEP) as IVs, and survey questions 7, 8, 13, 14, 18, 21 and 23 as DVs, while controlling for the influence of survey questions 4, 15, 16 and 17 (CVs). Additionally, seven independent *t*-tests were conducted, with teacher groups (home campus versus DAEP) as the IV and survey questions 9 through 12 and 22 as DVs. Finally, a MANCOVA was conducted with teacher groups and ethnicity as independent variables, survey questions 7 through 24 as dependent variables, while controlling for the influence of gender, age, and years of teaching experience. No

significant differences were found between the teacher groups in the ANCOVAs and the independent *t*-tests, nor were there significant differences when controlling for most common referral type, source (internet versus school districts), general treatment intervention strategies at DAEPs, and effectiveness of intervention strategies. Chapter 5 includes a more detailed discussion of the findings from Chapter 4.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to examine attitudes of DAEP students and teachers from home campuses, and their associated DAEPs regarding the extent to which they thought mandatory and discretionary referrals, frequency and duration of referrals, and punitive and creative interventions were related to positive student behavioral outcomes. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used to integrate quantitative information obtained from teachers via online surveys with content analysis of qualitative data from interviews conducted with DAEP students. The online teacher survey and student interview questions were constructed by the researcher. A pilot study was used to establish face and content validity of the instruments.

Together, both portions of the study provided information about the process of mandatory and discretionary referrals of at-risk students to DAEPs and the use of punitive and creative intervention strategies in Texas. Student contributions particularly added new information which school administrators and teachers can use to modify existing school policies to effect positive behavioral changes in at-risk students.

Interpretation of Findings

The quantitative part of the study showed that there were no significant differences between home campuses and DAEP teachers regarding their attitudes about the impact of referral type, treatment intervention type, recidivism, peer pressure, and longer years of teaching experience on student behavioral outcomes. The results of five

separate ANCOVAs revealed that, generally, teachers believed that mandatory and discretionary referrals were equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors in students. Notably, 50.5% of both teacher groups believed that students with mandatory referrals exhibited more antisocial behaviors than students with discretionary referrals, while 29.2% of both teacher groups believed that students with discretionary referrals had better behavioral outcomes. These beliefs may be attributed on one hand to teachers' knowledge that mandatory referrals include more serious offenses and are prescribed by federal and state laws, while discretionary referrals include less serious offenses, such as breaking of school rules, and are determined by individual school districts. On the other hand, teachers at both home campuses and DAEPs may have observed that students with discretionary referrals are adapting to their new environment at the DAEPs and succumb to peer contagion and deviancy training as noted in the literature (Texas Appleseed, 2007; Bembenutty & Herndon, 2017). However, as can be seen in Table 13, 66.7% of students said that both referral types were processed and applied in an unfair manner. One student admitted that he broke the law and said that the mandatory referral was fair. Students' responses indicate that there is a need for education regarding differences between mandatory and discretionary referrals. There is also a need to examine whether all students who break federal and state laws receive mandatory referrals.

Both groups of teachers believed that creative and punitive intervention strategies were equally effective in reducing antisocial behaviors. Of both groups, 55.7% of teachers believed that students who received mostly punitive interventions exhibited more antisocial behaviors than students who received mostly creative interventions, and

52.8% of teachers believed that students who received mostly creative interventions had better behavioral outcomes. Current literature suggested that punitive interventions have failed to make schools and communities any safer (Skiba, 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2016), while creative interventions have produced only moderate effect sizes, due to various factors cited by Gavine et al. (2016). As can be seen in Table 13, the students' responses added new insights to the current findings, with 78% of students indicating that they were unfamiliar with creative intervention strategies. Students who did not recognize the therapeutic effect of treatment interventions experienced the entire stay at the DAEP as punitive.

Concerning the impact of punitive and creative treatment interventions on recidivism, 43.9% of both teacher groups believed that punitive and creative intervention strategies were equally effective in reducing recidivism. The responses support the findings in the existing literature that repeated referrals do not demonstrate a deterrent effect of future placements (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Skiba, 2014; Skiba et al., 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2016).

Concerning treatment effectiveness in relation to peer pressure, 55.5% of both teacher groups believed that treatment effectiveness was related to students adapting to peer pressure. The responses confirm findings in the current literature that peer pressure increases engagement in negative behaviors at DAEPs while reducing positive responses to interventions due to the concentration of antisocial youths at these schools (Herndon & Bembenutty, 2017). As can be seen in Table 13, 56% of students agreed with this assessment. Bandura's construct of self-regulation can help explain why students'

cognitive schema may break down in DAEP environments where antisocial groups of students are concentrated. At-risk students' inability to self-regulate may lead them to join groups that engage in unacceptable behaviors. One of the students said: "I will be much nicer with a room full of nice people. A room full of bad or negative people, will definitely influence your behavior."

Regarding longer years of teaching experience, 50.5% of both teacher groups believed that longer years of teaching experience influenced positive student behavioral outcomes. Students were not specifically asked to evaluate years of teaching experience. Instead, they were asked how teacher characteristics influenced their behaviors. As can be seen in Table 13, 66.7% of students mentioned that teachers made a big difference in their response to treatments. One of the students said that some teachers can have 30 to 40 students in their classes which leads to total chaos, while others with the same number of students are able to control the classroom environment and teach. This insight does not establish a relationship with years of teaching experience. Instead, it supports one of the major themes that evolved from the qualitative question in the teacher survey that compassion, respect, and trusting relationships are essential in improving student behavioral outcomes.

The results of seven separately conducted *t*-tests revealed no significant differences between teacher groups in their beliefs regarding the influence of cultural differences between staff and students, the duration and frequency of referrals, gender, and ethnicity on student behavioral outcomes. Regarding cultural differences between staff and students, 43.9% of both teacher groups responded with somewhat in their

beliefs that cultural differences between staff and students influenced successful student outcomes. This does not support the findings in the existing literature, suggesting that African American and Hispanic students, as well as Special Education students were more likely to be suspended, expelled, or received discretionary placements to DAEPs compared to White students for similar infractions (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Fowler, 2011; Fenning et al., 2012; Mizel et al., 2016; Schick, 2012; Tajalli & Garba, 2014; Texas Appleseed, 2007). Students did not make any comments regarding cultural impacts on behavioral outcomes.

Teacher groups were nearly equally divided between strongly agreeing, agreeing, and neither agreeing nor disagreeing, regarding the impact of longer terms of referrals versus shorter terms of referrals on students' antisocial behaviors and positive behavioral outcomes. Regarding the proposition that longer terms of referrals resulted in more antisocial behaviors, 43.9% of teachers strongly agreed, versus 43% of teachers, who neither agreed nor disagreed. Regarding shorter terms of referrals resulting in better behavioral outcomes, 41.1% of teachers either strongly agreed, or agreed versus 41.1% of teachers who neither agreed nor disagreed. In the current literature, longer terms of referrals were considered more detrimental to positive behavior change, due to a concentration of negative peer influence (Herndon & Bembenutty, 2017) and feelings of frustration and hopelessness (Armstrong & Ricard, 2016). As can be seen in Table 13, 100% of students confirmed the literature and disagreed with the teachers.

Of both teacher groups, 61.7% agreed that multiple referrals increased antisocial behaviors in students, while 59.8% of teachers said that only one referral to a DAEP

resulted in better student behavioral outcomes. Previous research indicates that time of first placement was crucial. The studies revealed that referral rates for elementary students to the juvenile justice system were 52.9% within 4 years of first placement at a DAEP, versus 43.3% for middle school students, and 24.6% for high school students (Vanderhaar et al., 2014). As can be seen in Table 13, 66.7% of students disagreed with the teachers' assessments, stating that multiple referrals motivated them to change their behaviors, so that they would not have to return to a DAEP. The fact that they recidivated again, however, demonstrates that motivation alone is not enough to effect change. Possibly, when students return from the DAEPs to their home campuses, intervention strategies should take advantage of students' motivation not to return to the DAEPs. Returning students should be welcomed back and receive reintegration assistance.

Regarding gender influence, 57.9% of both teacher groups believed that gender had little influence on student behavioral outcomes, while 66.4% considered the impact of ethnicity equally as small. The students did not comment on either one of these variables. In the MANCOVA, the main effect of teacher groups was evaluated on multiple dependent variables (referral type, treatment type, multiple referrals versus one referral, treatment effectiveness, most common referral type, the effects of treatment type on recidivism, and teacher type, controlling for ethnicity, gender, age and years of teaching experience. The results showed that there were no major differences between teacher groups, nor in the interaction of ethnicity between teacher groups.

The qualitative findings extend the current knowledge in forensic psychology by providing information on the challenges that may impact the ability of at-risk students to

change behaviors. While most students said they understood the difference between mandatory and discretionary referrals and knew that breaking federal rules automatically resulted in a referral to DAEPs, 66.7% of students said that both processes were unfair. Regarding mandatory referrals, these students said others were not sent for the same offense. Findings in the current literature stated that mandatory referrals must be administered for any behavior in violation of the federal government's zero tolerance policies of 1994 (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). These behaviors include felonies, terroristic threats, assault, and murder (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). The perception that some students can circumvent the consequences of breaking federal policies, indicates that communication between school administrators, parents and students may need improvement.

Regarding discretionary referrals, 100% of students expressed that they were unfair and worse than mandatory referrals. They said that the school could have given them a break. Another student said that an in-school suspension would have been better. Students of all ethnic backgrounds equally expressed sentiments of injustice. This is in agreement with the findings of the quantitative portion of this study and contrary to previous research, in which African American, Hispanic and Special Education students were found to be suspended, expelled, or to receive discretionary placements to DAEPs more than White students for similar infractions (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Fowler, 2011; Fenning et al., 2012; Mizel et al., 2016; Schick, 2012; Tajalli & Garba, 2014; Texas Appleseed, 2007). The conclusion that can be drawn from the results is that

improvement of student behavior is not a function of mandatory or discretionary placements, but more likely a function of fairness and justice in the referral process.

Regarding punitive and creative interventions, all students had been suspended at least once, and only one thought that he had been expelled once but could not remember. Only two students (22%) were familiar with behavioral RTI, which they received during their time at a DAEP in middle school. One student was familiar with all creative intervention strategies but said that none of these strategies were helping in changing behavior in positive ways. The remaining students were unfamiliar with creative intervention strategies. Given that teachers said that punitive and creative interventions were equally as effective in changing student behaviors, one could conclude that these strategies are not purposefully, correctly, and uniformly employed across campuses. In the current literature, findings were that creative intervention programs often compete with one another, lack funding, and are discontinued in the next school year (Payton et al., 2000; Teasley, 2014; Vancel et al., 2016). However, students' responses indicated more of a lack of buy-in from teachers to effectively incorporate the tools of creative intervention strategies into the classrooms, as was suggested by Vancel et al. (2016).

Comparing the effects of multiple versus a single referral to a DAEP, 66.7% of students said that multiple referrals changed their behaviors in a positive way for different reasons. Some indicated that they did not like the restrictions at the DAEPs and being unable to interact with their friends at the home campuses. Others mentioned the smaller classes and the teachers as reasons for improvement in their behaviors. This is different from teachers' assessments, who believed that students with multiple referrals

were more antisocial than students with a single referral, and that students, who recidivated more than once, grew more comfortable with each term at a DAEP.

Regarding longer terms of referrals versus shorter terms of referrals, students confirmed the current literature and teachers' assessments that longer terms were more detrimental to behavior change than shorter terms of referrals. The results of the Texas Appleseed study (2007) indicated that the concentration of antisocial student groups in DAEPs promoted deviancy training and peer contagion. Students confirmed that, despite feelings of hopelessness and increased anger over being stuck, the longer they stayed, the more comfortable they became in their environment. However, students also offered some new insights that should be considered by administrators, when determining the length of stay. The longer students were away from their home campuses, the harder it was for them to go back. One student mentioned that transitional help is needed to reintegrate at the home campus. This statement may explain why some students recidivate. They no longer feel wanted or comfortable at their home campuses and may commit another offense, so they can return to a familiar environment at the DAEP. Bandura called this the alienation effect, and thus, recidivism becomes a revolving door for all the wrong reasons. The average stay at a DAEP was cited in the literature to be anywhere from 20 to 36 days (Cortez & Cortez, 2009). However, student interviews revealed that they received sentences ranging from 30 to 90 days, and in one student's case it was four months in school year 2019-20.

Three students found their stay at the DAEPs beneficial, because smaller classes and uniforms allowed them to focus on their academics and to interact with teachers to

build trusting relationships. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that reduction in class sizes, teacher-student ratios, and the removal of distractions, such as fashion in clothing, may need to be considered to improve student behavioral outcomes at the home campuses. Regarding peer pressure, 56% of students said that peers had a great influence on their willingness to engage in good or bad behaviors, while 44% stated that they were not affected by peers and made their own decisions. The responses to this question must be viewed in relation to duration of stay at DAEPs and lends support to results of current literature regarding deviancy training and peer contagion (Texas Appleseed, 2007). Bandura's concept of outcome expectancy explains why at-risk students may model the behavior of antisocial peer groups at DAEPs rather than responding to treatment interventions. They may expect to gain greater status, power, and admiration by joining their peers. This is particularly true the greater their similarity to the characteristics of the models, such as age, gender, status, competence, and power.

Finally, teacher characteristics were considered important by 66.7% of the students. Three students, $n = 3$ (33.3%), said that they either did not notice any difference between teacher groups, were not influenced by teachers, or that all teachers were unfair. When compared to the major theme, resulting from the open-ended question of the teacher surveys, in which teachers stressed the importance of building relationships, trust, compassion, listening understanding, students' responses indicated that there is still work to be done.

Limitations of the Study

This study had several limitations that, if not present, may have led to different results. For example, in the quantitative part of the study, only 42 teachers responded to the survey from the three nonrandomly selected school districts. Consequently, additional teachers had to be recruited via the internet to achieve the required sample size. A total of 507 responses were collected from the internet; however, 442 responses were eliminated during the rigid data cleaning process, due to incomplete responses, rushing through the survey questions, and due to providing nonsensical responses. Another limitation was that the remaining internet responses, although valid, were survey responses from individual teachers across the state of Texas, instead of teacher groups from different school districts. However, the greater stratification in responses from teachers across the entire state of Texas versus teacher responses from three local school districts in Central Texas, may have increased the reliability of the results, since no significant differences were found in teacher responses between internet groups and school district groups.

During the qualitative part of the study, one limitation was the small sample size of student interviews (n = 9), so that the findings are not generalizable to all at-risk student groups at DAEPs. Additionally, the experiences of former DAEP students may no longer be as intense as the experiences of students, who were currently enrolled at the DAEPs. As time passes, memories fade and levels of maturity increase, which may have led to different perspectives in those students of their past experiences at DAEPs. Consequently, some of the former students' experiences may have been described in a

more positive way than they were felt at the time of their stay at DAEPs, while others may have been left with a more negative remembrance.

Recommendations

Future studies should include teacher responses from selected school districts across the entire state of Texas, and perhaps also expand across the nation to obtain a bigger picture of how school referral policies and intervention strategies for at-risk students can be modified to affect more positive outcomes for at-risk students. Future studies should also include interviews with at-risk middle school students, who have been referred to DAEPs repeatedly since elementary school. Specifically, future studies need to examine schools' referral policies for both mandatory and discretionary referrals, the implementation of intervention strategies and duration of referrals at DAEPs that are appropriate for the offense. Furthermore, future studies should focus on students' understanding of the referral process, the purpose of creative treatment interventions and students' role in it. Finally, when students return to their home campuses, it is crucial that they receive transitional assistance to build on their motivation to stay at the home campuses. Often, students are not welcomed back and eventually commit another offense or break school rules, so they can return to the DAEP, which they perceive as the lesser evil.

Implications

The results of this study have the potential to lead to positive social change at the individual, organizational, and societal level. Data obtained from the qualitative part of the study can help at-risk students better understand why they received a referral to the

DAEP versus others, who may have committed the same offense and were not referred. Clarity in understanding why students received a referral, particularly for discretionary reasons, can reduce the level of students' anger, which may negatively impact behavioral change during treatment interventions and lead to less successful behavioral outcomes.

At the organizational level, school administrators and teachers need to understand how perceptions of unfairness in the referral process, the lack of buy-in from teachers into different treatment interventions strategies, the lack of awareness of at-risk students that they are receiving treatment interventions, and lack of understanding of the goals of different treatment strategies, can negatively impact successful student outcomes. Positive behavior changes to reduce repeated violations of federal rules and school policies and to break the cycle of recidivism to DAEPs, should be the goal of school referral and treatment intervention strategies. Administrators' and teachers' awareness of students' need to understand why they received a mandatory or discretionary referral, teacher buy-in into appropriate treatment intervention strategies, and students' knowledge of treatment strategies and goals, combined with an appropriate length of stay at DAEPs, could make schools' programs more successful.

At the societal level, understanding the challenges administrators, teachers, and at-risk students face involving DAEPs, can help community leaders create positive social change by assisting school districts with the implementation of programs that focus on consistency of support and mentorship, thus keeping at-risk students at their home campuses and decreasing their recidivism rates to DAEPs.

Conclusion

Successful behavior changes in at-risk students are impacted by many different factors. While mandatory referrals are prescribed by federal rules, discretionary referrals are mainly decided by individual school districts. Different treatment intervention strategies administered to at-risk students, while serving time at DAEPs and away from their peers at their home campuses, are also at the discretion of individual school districts. In this explanatory sequential mixed methods study, a survey was administered to teacher groups at three different school districts in Central Texas, as well as to teachers across the entire state of Texas via the internet. The results showed that teachers agreed widely about the impact of mandatory and discretionary referrals, punitive and creative treatment interventions, recidivism, peer pressure, staff/student cultural differences, frequency and duration of referrals on students' behavioral outcomes. Generally, both teacher groups assessed that referral type, intervention type, and teacher type were equally as effective.

Students provided some new insights into the factors that could produce more positive behavioral changes, reduce recidivism at DAEPs and lead to more successful behavioral outcomes at the home campuses. Factors, such as fairness of the referral process, whether mandatory or discretionary, buy-in to treatment intervention programs of both teachers and students, and time allocated at DAEPs that is appropriate to the federal offense or discretionary infraction, can all contribute to the reduction of students' anger and resistance to positive behavioral changes. By working together to create a referral program that is perceived as fair, and treatment interventions that meet individual students' needs, combined with reasonable lengths of stay at DAEPs, school

administrators, teachers and society can effect positive social change. When at-risk students understand the need for change and take control of it, everyone will benefit.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions (Teachers)

1. What is your gender?

    - Male
    - Female

2. Which Ethnic Group do you belong to?

    - White/Caucasian
    - African American
    - Hispanic
    - Asian
    - Other

3. Which Age Group do you belong to?

    - 20 - 30 years of age
    - 31 - 40 years of age
    - 41 – 50 years of age
    - 51 – 60 years of age
    - 60+ years of age

4. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

    - Less than 5 years
    - Between 5 and 10 years
    - Between 11 and 20 years
    - Between 21 and 30 years
    - More than 30 years

5. What campus do you teach at?

    - High School
    - Disciplinary Alternative Education School

6. Punitive interventions include suspension (in-school, or out of school), and expulsion, while proactive/creative interventions consist of restorative justice, positive behavioral interventions and support (PBIS), behavioral response to interventions (RTI), and social and emotional learning (SEL). Which are the most common forms of interventions at your school? (Please mark all that apply)

    - Suspension

- Expulsion
- Restorative Justice
- PBIS
- Behavioral RTI
- SEL
- Other_____

7. Students with mandatory referrals to a DAEP exhibit more antisocial behaviors than students with discretionary referrals.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

8. Students with discretionary referrals to a DAEP have better behavioral outcomes than students with mandatory referrals.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

9. Students with multiple referrals to a DAEP exhibit more antisocial behaviors than students with only one referral.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

10. Students with only one referral to a DAEP have better behavioral outcomes than students with multiple referrals.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

11. Students with longer terms of referrals to a DAEP exhibit more antisocial behaviors than students with shorter terms of referrals.

1	2	3	4	5

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

12. Students with shorter terms of referrals to a DAEP have better behavioral outcomes than students with longer terms of referrals.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

13. Students, who receive mostly punitive treatment interventions at a DAEP, exhibit more antisocial behaviors than students, who receive mostly creative interventions.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

14. Students, who receive mostly creative interventions at a DAEP, have better behavioral outcomes than students, who receive mostly punitive interventions.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

15. On a scale from 'extremely effective' to 'not at all effective', how effective are treatment interventions at improving student behavioral outcomes at your associated DAEP?

1	2	3	4	5
Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective

16. On a scale from 'mostly punitive' to 'mostly creative', how would you characterize the general treatment intervention strategy at your associated DAEP?

1	2	3	4	5
Mostly Punitive	Somewhat Punitive	Equally Punitive and Creative	Somewhat Creative	Mostly Creative

17. On a scale from 'mostly discretionary' to 'mostly mandatory', how would you characterize the most common referral type at your associated DAEP?

1	2	3	4	5
Mostly Discretionary	Somewhat Discretionary	Equally Discretionary and Mandatory	Somewhat Mandatory	Mostly Mandatory

18. On a scale from 'mostly punitive' to 'mostly creative', which treatment intervention strategies are more effective in reducing recidivism?

1	2	3	4	5
Mostly punitive	Somewhat Punitive	Equally Punitive and Creative	Somewhat Creative	Mostly Creative

19. To what extent do you think gender (teacher/students) influences student behavioral outcomes?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Very much so	To a Great Extent

20. To what extent do you think ethnicity (teacher/students) influences student behavioral outcomes?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Very much so	To a Great Extent

21. To what extent do you think treatment effectiveness is related to students adapting to peer pressure?

1	2	3	4	5
To a Great Extent	Very Much So	Somewhat	Very Little	Not at All

22. To what extent do you think cultural differences between staff and students contribute to successful student outcomes?

1	2	3	4	5
To a Great Extent	Very Much So	Somewhat	Very Little	Not at All

23. To what extent do you think longer years of teaching experience influences positive student behavioral outcomes?

1	2	3	4	5
To a Great Extent	Very Much So	Somewhat	Very Little	Not at All

24. To what extent do you think teacher type (home campus vs. DAEP) influences student behavioral outcomes?

1	2	3	4	5
To a Great Extent	Very Much So	Somewhat	Very Little	Not at All

25. What other strategies do you use in your classroom to manage at-risk student behaviors that could add valuable new insights to existing school policies?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B: Student Interview Questions

1. Punitive interventions include suspension (in-school, or out of school), and expulsion. Before coming here to the DAEP, how many times have you been suspended? What did this feel like, and why did the suspension (s) not help you change your behaviors to avoid a referral to the DAEP?

2. Have you ever been expelled from school, before coming to the DAEP? How many times have you been expelled, and why did this not help you change your behaviors to avoid a referral to the DAEP?

3. Creative treatment interventions include restorative justice, positive behavioral interventions and support (PBIS), behavioral response to interventions (RTI), and social and emotional learning (SEL). Are you familiar with these interventions? If so, describe your experience of receiving these interventions at your home campus. What worked well for you, and what did not work so well for you, and why?

4. Is this your first time at a DAEP, or have you been here before? If so, how many times have you been here, during which school years (elementary, middle school, high school)?

5. If you have been referred to a DAEP more than once, describe how that affected your behavior. Did that make it better or worse?

6. How long is your current term of referral, and, if you have been here before, has each referral term been the same length, shorter, or longer?

7. How does a longer term of referral make you feel, compared to a shorter term? Please describe.

8. Without telling me why you were referred to a DAEP, was your referral mandatory, or discretionary? Do you feel that the referral was justified and fair? Why or why not?

9. Are the interventions at the DAEP different from your home campus? If so, in what way?

10. Do staff characteristics at the DAEP influence your willingness to change behaviors in a more positive or in a more negative way? Please describe your experience.

11. Do peer characteristics at the DAEP influence your willingness to change behaviors in a positive or negative way? Please describe your experience.

12. What suggestions do you have for administrators, teachers, and staff to help you change behaviors in a positive way, and allow you to complete high school successfully?

Appendix C: Execution Plan

- I have nonrandomly selected at least three school districts of similar size (between 40,000 and 50,000 enrolled students) that are within driving distance from my residence. This will enable me to meet with the superintendents, or their designated representative, in person, to present the proposal for my study, should this be preferred. Research applications from six different school districts are awaiting an IRB approval number from Walden University, before they can be sent back to the school districts.

- The next step will be to coordinate a face-to-face visit, phone or video conference with each district's superintendent, or designated representative, to present the purpose of my study, and its potential for positive social change. The goal of that meeting is to obtain authorization for conducting my study.

- This study will involve the participation of each district's High School teachers to complete an online survey, and the participation of up to four students from one Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) in each district.

- Superintendents, who have given authorization for this study, will receive the letter of cooperation, a copy of the child, parent, and adult consent forms, and a copy of the survey and interview questions.

- The next step will be to coordinate the distribution of the online survey to the teachers with the superintendents/principals. Ideally, superintendents/principals will provide an email cover letter, inviting teachers to participate in the online survey by accessing a link, and by following the instructions to complete the survey.

- The next step will involve a meeting with the DAEPs' principals to recruit student participants, to obtain the child assent and parent consent forms, and to arrange for the actual interview dates. This process will be the most time consuming, as it involves responsiveness of students, parents, and working around students' academic schedules. I will let the principals guide me to the best approach for this task.

Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation

From Community Partner

Dear Doctoral Student,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled "The Efficacy of Preventions and Interventions for At-Risk Students in Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs)" within the … School District. As part of this study, I authorize you to recruit participants, via email, from the district's high school teachers, including those teaching at the district's associated DAEP, to participate in your online survey. The online survey shall include the questions you presented to me during your visit.

Furthermore, I authorize you to meet with the principal of our DAEP, to arrange recruitment of students for a face-to-face interview. Students, willing to participate in the interviews, will sign an assent form, and must have their parent's written consent. You may present students with a $5 gift card for participating in your study.

Responses from teachers will remain anonymous and confidential. Responses from students will ensure the confidentiality of personal information. Our organization will not be mentioned by name in the doctoral project report published in ProQuest, though an individualized summary report will be made available to each participating district, providing the sample size exceeds eight. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibility consists solely of distributing your invitation letter to all high school teachers. This letter will include an introduction of yourself as a Walden University doctoral student, an explanation of the purpose of your study, and a link to the upcoming survey via SurveyMonkey, a popular online survey administration application. Teachers, willing to participate, will be asked to complete the survey within two weeks of receiving it and will sign a letter of consent that emphasizes the anonymous, confidential, and strictly voluntary nature of their participation. Please advise teachers to print a copy of the consent form for their records. The DAEP principals must consent to your recruitment of interested students. You must obtain a child assent and parent consent form for each student, who volunteers to participate in the student interviews. The parent consent forms, and the student assent forms will emphasize the confidential and voluntary nature of their participation in the interviews. You may coordinate the interview dates and location with the DAEP principals to ensure every student's privacy during the interview. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the researcher will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in ProQuest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

Sincerely,
Dr. …
Superintendent …

Appendix E: Assent Form for Research

Hello, my name is... I am a researcher from Walden University, and I'm interested in learning about factors related to prosocial behavior in students, like yourself. You have been identified by the principal as someone whose attitudes and opinions would best characterize your peer group, and that you could express yourself openly and honestly. That is why I am inviting you to participate in a private, 30-60-minute discussion with me regarding your views and concerns about the drivers of prosocial behavior. I am only interviewing four people from your school.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE:
You do not have to be in this project if you do not want to. If you decide now that you want to join the project, you can still change your mind later. If you want to stop the interview at any time, you can. According to Texas state law, if you are under the age of 18, I will require a parent consent form, which I am including along with this assent form.

We are hoping this project might help others by reducing or eliminating the need for students to be referred to DAEPs, and by adapting intervention strategies that help students respond with more prosocial behaviors, not only in the school environment, but also in their communities.

Student participants will receive a $5 gift card at the end of the interview.

PRIVACY:
Everything you tell me during this project will be kept private. That means that no one else will know your name or what answers you gave. The only time I must tell someone is if I learn about something that could harm you or someone else.

ASKING QUESTIONS:
You can ask me any questions you want now. If you think of a question later, you or your parents can contact me at helga.venus@waldenu.edu. If you or your parents would like to ask my university a question, you can call 612-312-1210.

I will give you a copy of this form to keep.

If you want to join the project, please sign your name below and return the form along with the parent consent form to the principal's office.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Researcher Signature _____