4-30-2025

The Unique Experiences of Black Women in Childhood School Discipline

Shakeyau Brionna Jackson
Walden University

Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Health

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Shakeyau Jackson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Brittany Peters, Committee Chairperson, Social Work Faculty
Dr. Debora Rice, Committee Member, Social Work Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2025

Abstract

The Unique Experiences of Black Women in Childhood School Discipline

by

Shakeyau Jackson

MSW, Walden University, 2018

BSW, Longwood University, 2016

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Social Work

Walden University

May 2025

Abstract

Researchers have explored racial disparities in school discipline and revealed consistent gaps in the discipline rate of Black students compared to White students and other students of color. The problem of African American girls being disciplined at higher rates than that faced by girls of all other races/ethnicities was addressed in this essential qualitative study. The aim was to explore the perceptions of African American women regarding their experiences with discipline in school and its impact on their well-being in adulthood. Critical race feminism formed the conceptual framework guiding this study. The research questions focused on the perceptions and experiences of African American women with childhood school discipline to ascertain how it has influenced their current well-being. A basic qualitative design was employed to collect data from 10 African American women who had experienced school discipline at least twice during their K-12 years through audio-recorded interviews. Thematic coding was used to discover emergent themes. The findings revealed the pervasive impact of discriminatory school discipline practices on African American women's well-being and identity development. This study has implications for positive social change by informing interventions that promote resilience, cultural sensitivity, and trauma-informed practices in social work. Additionally, it highlights the need for advocacy efforts to address systemic inequalities in educational institutions and foster inclusive environments that support African American girls' academic and personal growth.

The Unique Experiences of Black Women in Childhood School Discipline

by

Shakeyau Jackson

MSW, Walden University, 2018

BSW, Longwood University, 2016

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Social Work

Walden University

May 2025

Dedication

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to my family, whose unwavering love and support have been my foundation throughout this journey. To my children, who have been my constant motivation and source of strength, your smiles and encouragement have inspired me to persevere through every challenge. I also extend my deepest gratitude to my professors and committee members, whose guidance, wisdom, and belief in my abilities have been invaluable.

Finally, I dedicate this work to the participants who shared their stories and experiences. I hope their courage and voices inspire other African American girls, empowering them to dream boldly and strive for greatness.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I give honor to God, whose calling led me to this profession and whose guidance and strength have been my constant source of support throughout this journey. His presence has sustained me through every challenge and celebrated every success.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my family for their unwavering support, love, and encouragement. A special thanks to my Aunt Amy, whose wisdom, guidance, and example have inspired me to pursue and achieve this milestone. To my mother, Bridget Jackson, and my grandmother, Frances Thomas, thank you for being a constant backbone through the hardships I faced while pursuing this doctorate, and my Aunt Tarsha for being a constant source of support.

I extend my most profound appreciation to my dissertation committee for your guidance, expertise, and dedication to my growth as a scholar. A special thanks to Dr. Peters, whose encouragement and faith in my abilities carried me through moments of doubt. Your mentorship and consistent support reminded me of my purpose and potential, and for that, I am forever grateful.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Shelly-Mays Couch, who has acted in many roles throughout my academic career. No doubt God placed her in my life to guide me through my professional achievements. Her unwavering support, mentorship, and belief in me have been a source of strength at every stage of my journey.

This dissertation is a culmination of collective efforts and support, and I am profoundly thankful to everyone who has played a part in this journey.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: Foundation of the Study and Literature Review

Introduction

Decades of research exploring racial disparities in school discipline has revealed consistent gaps in the discipline rate of Black students compared to White students and other students of color. Most recently, the school-to-prison pipeline epidemic has brought attention to the disproportionate discipline of African American students (Poole, 2019). The challenges faced by African American boys have generated attention; however, little exposure has been given to African American girls. Furthermore, "while black boys are more likely to be suspended than any other student group, recent studies show that Black girls are being suspended at increasing rates throughout the country" (Poole, 2019, p. 383). In this project I used a basic qualitative research design, which has the potential to provide valuable insights for future studies and contribute to the existing body of literature.

Problem Statement

An increasing number of African American girls are being suspended in school systems throughout the country. The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) collected data regarding key education and civil rights issues for the 2017-18 school year from nearly every public school in the country through the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). The data revealed in the 2017-2018 school term that girls of color were overdisciplined compared to other students. According to the CRDC report, Black girls were the only group across all races/ethnicities for girls where a disparity was observed. Black girls accounted for 11.2% of in-school suspensions, and 13.3% of out-of-school suspensions,

which is two times their share of the total student enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). During the 2015-2016 school year, Black girls missed 1.7 million days of classroom instruction due to suspension, which is twice the national average for all students (Losen & Whitaker, 2020). The effects of school discipline can influence several adverse outcomes.

Research shows that dropout because of pushout has serious and long-term consequences for students, schools, and communities. Students who are pushed out face fewer academic opportunities and social alienation (School Discipline Support Initiative, 2020). These students are 10 times more likely to drop out of high school, suffer academic failure and grade retention, develop negative school attitudes, and face incarceration (Meek & Gilliam, 2016). Furthermore, throughout their lives, a high school dropout would receive $400,000 ($ 485,000 for males) less than a high school graduate (Council on School Health, 2013). Therefore, African American girls are at risk for one or more of these adverse outcomes to occur.

Although researchers have investigated this issue, the topic has not been explored qualitatively to include the voices of African American women as it relates to the impact school discipline experiences had on them later in adulthood. To understand what contributes to the adverse outcomes of school discipline, it is important to hear their experiences as they are knowledge holders of their own experiences. The specific social work practice-focused research problem I addressed through this study was the impact school discipline experiences had on the adult well-being of African American women.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions(s)

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the perceptions of African American Women regarding their experiences with discipline while in school and the impact it has had on their well-being in adulthood. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of African American women regarding the impact school discipline has on their current well-being?

RQ2: What are the experiences of African American women in school discipline during their childhood?

Definitions

In-School Suspension: Instances in which a child is temporarily removed from his or her regular classroom(s) but remains in school under the direct supervision of school personnel for at least half a day (School Discipline Support Initiative, 2020).

Out-of-school Suspension: Out-of-school suspension removes the school from school grounds (School Discipline Support Initiative, 2020).

Pushout: Practices that contribute to student dropout. These include hostile and uncaring school environments and an over-reliance on zero-tolerance school policies that drive students out of the classroom (School Discipline Support Initiative, 2020).

Racial disparities: Racial/ethnic disproportionality in school discipline refers to a specific racial/ethnic group having higher or lower rates of a particular school discipline outcome than a comparison racial/ethnic group (Nishioka et al., 2017).

School discipline: School discipline refers to specific codes of behavior within a school environment, including policies that regulate classroom behavior, classroom dress code, and classroom etiquette, as well as the types of punishment imposed if such rules are broken (Ryan, 2021).

School-to-prison pipeline: School discipline policies (e.g., zero tolerance) and practices that remove students from learning opportunities (e.g., out-of-school suspension) and push students out of school (e.g., expulsion, school-based arrest) and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems increasingly for minor offenses and non-violent behavior (School Discipline Support Initiative, 2020).

Suspensions: The temporary exclusion of students from their regular educational setting due to violating school policies or rules (School Discipline Support Initiative, 2020).

Zero tolerance: School discipline policies and practices that mandate predetermined consequences, typically severe, punitive, and exclusionary (e.g., out-of-school suspension and expulsion), in response to specific types of student misbehavior—regardless of the context or rationale for the behavior (School Discipline Support Initiative, 2020).

Nature of the Doctoral Project

I employed a basic/generic qualitative research design to address the research questions in this study. Hammarberg et al. (2016) indicated qualitative research is used to answer questions about a participant's experience, meaning, and perspective from their standpoint. Furthermore, this qualitative design allows for an open-ended interview. For

my research design, I recruited African American women to share their childhood discipline experiences during their time in school in individual interviews as they related to the purpose of the study. Therefore, purposive sampling was used to select participants. Purposive sampling describes population samples used for research deliberately chosen to reflect a specific characteristic (Bullard, 2020).

Data was collected through an online interview, including basic demographic data and specific interview questions. Using an interview in qualitative research can entice participants to produce insightful information to questions based on their opinions and experiences on school discipline aligning with both the problem statement and the purpose of the study.

Significance of the Study

This significant study allowed African American women to share their unique experiences and perceptions of their time in school discipline to contribute to the existing literature on this phenomenon. Furthermore, insight was gained on how those experiences and perceptions impacted them presently. The findings of this study can help school officials become more aware of discipline factors and initiate policy changes to reduce the chances of African American girls who experience school discipline from having future negative outcomes. Furthermore, identifying factors may result in developing restorative discipline practices and strategies that can influence future policies and solutions when disciplining students.

The findings from this study can affect positive social change by increasing the chances of educational attainment for Black girls. The high school graduation rate for

African American girls is lower than the national average for girls overall in almost all states with data, resulting in severe economic consequences for African American women and their families (Legal Defense Fund & National Women's Law Center, 2014). Additionally, "Black women represent 22.3 percent of women in poverty but makeup only 12.8 percent of all women in the U.S. population" (Bleiweis et al., 2020, p.6). Developing restorative discipline practices and strategies can decrease students' chances of facing disciplinary actions contributing to pushout.

This study also supports positive social change as it supports legislation efforts to end *pushout*. Congresswomen Pressley, Watson Coleman, and Omar (MN-05) introduced The P.U.S.H.O.U.T. Act (H.R. 5325) to help end school pushout. In addition to investing in safe and supportive learning environments for all students, particularly girls of color, this bill recognizes the detrimental ways that Brown and Black girls are overpoliced and criminalized in schools (Pressley, 2021, para. 4). Investing in implementing trauma-informed policies, enforcing civil rights laws, and forming a task force to address the crisis will create positive social change across the nation for all black girls.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework that grounds this study was critical race feminism (CRF). CRF is gaining popularity in education research to investigate the educational experiences of women of color in ways that critical race theory or feminism cannot address alone. CRF acknowledges that African American women's experiences are different; thus, their perspectives differ (Hines-Datiri & Carter Andrews, 2017). Prior research data has examined the treatment of Black girls in schools through the lens of

race, class, and gender. CRF is a theoretical framework that combats racial and gender oppression from multiple perspectives (Hines-Datiri & Carter Andrews, 2017).

Punitive school discipline policies and the distinctly gendered dynamics of zero-tolerance environments have targeted Black girls (Nolan, 2022). Black girls learn to survive in a racist, patriarchal society where White femineity is normalized (Battjes & Kaplan, 2023). Therefore, this framework is useful for investigating Black girls' discipline schooling experiences. This theoretical framework began in the last decade of the 20th century; CRF is a term initially coined by Delgado (Wing, 2014).

More ever, “Kimberlé Crenshaw, Angela Harris, Lani Guiner, Mari Matusda, Patricia Williams, Cheryl Harris, Dorothy Roberts, Berta Hernandez, Margaret Montoya, Celina Romany, and Adrien Wing are among the legal CRF scholars who have used this theoretical framework in their work” (David & Amey, 2020, p. 319). An education scholar, Pratt-Clarke, discussed the impact of racism and sexism on African American boys and girls in the single-sex school controversy (David & Amey, 2020).

The logical connection between the framework presented and the nature of my study highlights how African American women experience multiple marginalized identities in education. Applying a CRF perspective to this topic acknowledges that their unique experiences benefit the investigation and theory building around educational issues impacting African American students. A CRF lens acknowledges gender interactions with race in addition to Black girls' multiple marginalized identities. Black girl’s experiences are unique from White girls, White boys, and even Black boys. According to David and Amey (2020),

> "Any attempt to claim women speak in one voice privileges the views of middle-class or elite White women and ignores the views of all other women, including women of color. Moreover, arguing that there is one essential Black voice ends up privileging Black male voices and assuming Black women think the same as men." (p. 320)

Historically, Black people have been positioned as inferior simply because of the color of their skin for generations (Curran, 2016). CRF focuses on these facts about race and racism. Furthermore, CRF exposes how seemingly neutral laws, policies, and practices reinforce normative standards of Whiteness. Black girl's behaviors are seen as the problem instead of racism. Black girls are inheriting the historical narrative that they are "bad," and exclusionary discipline is limiting their right to an education. CRF allows for a better understanding of the experiences Black girls face in school discipline that has been socially constructed.

The premises of CRF make it an appropriate framework for this study as it is intended to explore the perceptions and experiences of African American women in childhood school discipline and to see how it has influenced their current well-being. CRF allows for investigating social, educational, and political factors influencing Black girl's reality. Acknowledging the experiences of Black girls allows them to individually provide knowledge on the phenomena that can lead to unique interventions and strategies that will increase their chances of better outcomes in adulthood. More importantly, it contributes to educational reform for this population.

Values and Ethics

Educational opportunities are a right for every child in the United States. However, school systems that are supposed to help the growth and development of all children prioritize punishment that consequently pushes Black girls out of the classrooms and on a path toward adverse outcomes. According to the National Association of Social Workers (2008), one ethical principle of a social worker is to challenge social injustices (NASW, 2008). Social justice entails fairly distributing resources to all students and treating them equitably to feel safe and secure in their learning environment. When schools are examined nationwide, it is evident that equitable treatment does not always happen in school discipline.

Social workers work to create social change, especially with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups (NASW, 2008). Crenshaw et al. (2015) found that Black girls are six times more likely to be suspended than White girls. Furthermore, they showed that there is a disproportionate representation of Black girls in school discipline. When this topic is not explored, a noninclusive learning environment is created for Black girls, thus impacting academic success and future consequences. According to Morris and Perry (2016), 25% of Black women are poor, and the unemployment rate for Black women aged 20 and up was 8.2 % at the end of 2014, compared to 4.4 % of White women and 5 % of all women (Morris & Perry, 2016).

Social work values are evident in the purpose of this project as I explored the perceptions of an oppressed population regarding their experiences with discipline while in school and the impact it has had on their well-being in adulthood. The NASW (2008)

stated that the primary mission of the social work profession is to improve human well-being and assist in meeting the basic human needs of all people, with a special emphasis on the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, or living in poverty. Bringing social justice into the educational system brings awareness to this societal issue and the opportunity to explore and make changes to ensure equitable student outcomes. Furthermore, this project supports the dignity and worth of African American women. This project validates their experiences and shows that their voices are important in addressing and resolving this issue.

Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

A review of the professional and academic literature includes previous relevant research that informs this project, relevant questions, and the rationale for conducting this study. The keywords and databases searched included *school discipline, school disparities, African American girls, Black girls, discipline, school-to-prison pipeline, Black girls and school discipline, Black girls,* and *school disparities* in the following search engines: Walden library, SAGE journals, ProQuest, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. As a result, I found numerous peer reviews and journals about African American girls and disparities in school discipline. The articles chosen were based on two factors: (a) the study subjects were African American girls and (b) the main focus was school discipline.

Current Literature on Black Girls and School Discipline

School discipline literature has investigated how different groups of students experience discipline to determine who is most vulnerable to receiving exclusionary discipline. Hines-Datiri and Carter Andrews (2020) conducted a qualitative study

examining the effects of zero-tolerance policies on Black girls using CRF. They found that zero-tolerance policies (ZTP) promote out-of-school suspension across all races. Therefore, ZTPs can hinder the academic performance and healthy identity development of black girls. Black girls are culturally policed by these policies in school. Annamma et al. (2019) conducted a mixed-method empirical study examining the outcome of Black girls' exclusionary discipline. They found significant racial differences in out-of-school suspensions of black girls. Furthermore, Black girls are being mainly punished for perceptions of threat, noncompliance, and harm. For example, the authors discussed the Spring Valley High virtual video of a White resource officer grabbing a seated Black girl around her neck, flipping her over in her desk, and dragging her across the floor (Annamma et al., 2019). It shows Black girls are targeted through stereotypical narratives that lead to increased disciplinary actions. Furthermore, that discipline is based on the judgment of school personnel that aligns with White femininity. Paul and Araneo (2019) contended there is an increased chance these females will enter the school-to-prison pipeline. In their study, they found that Black girls in New Jersey are overrepresented in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. Paul and Araneo provided impactful data for black girls in the state of New Jersey; however, it shows the impact this issue can have on schools all over the nation and that New Jersey has one of the highest pushout rates in the United States (Paul & Araneo, 2019).

Researchers have provided recommendations to address discipline-related issues such as using restorative justice, professional development on culturally responsive classroom management, and implementing district-wide threat assessment systems to

address the disparities. Morris and Perry (2017) analyzed interactions between Black girls and office referrals. They found Black girls are three times more likely to receive office referrals than white girls. Furthermore, a significantly disproportionate number of referrals were written for disruptive behavior, dress code violations, disobedience, and aggressive behavior. These offenses were magnified when considering the intersection of race and gender. Their findings supported the need for educators to receive professional development to critically evaluate Black girls' behavior.

Another recommendation is hiring more teachers of color and recruiting Black educators as recent data shows a decline in black teachers across the United States. Research shows that students with a teacher of the same race learn more and have fewer discipline encounters (Schaeffer, 2021). Lindsay and Hart (2017) investigated whether same-race teachers influence the rate at which Black students receive exclusionary discipline in North Carolina. They found consistent evidence that suggests exposure to same-race teachers is associated with reduced rates of exclusionary discipline for Black students.

The strength of using these interventions is a decrease in the discipline rate. However, a weakness is some of the school-based interventions are not sustainable. Valdebenito et al. (2018) conducted a systematic review examining interventions' impact on reducing exclusion from school. The review summarizes findings from 37 different reports on nine types of school-based or school-supported interventions to reduce exclusion rates. Interventions such as enhancement of academic skills, counseling, mentoring/monitoring, and skills training for teachers were four intervention types that

significantly affected disciplinary exclusion. However, school-based interventions effectively reduce school exclusion immediately after the intervention and for a few months afterward (6 months on average).

Black Girls' Experiences with Discipline

As previously mentioned, the disproportionality discipline gap is well documented in gender, race, and other factors. Research has just begun exploring the experiences of Black girls as Black boys have overshadowed them. While the literature shows they experience harsh discipline outcomes, Black girls are overrepresented in school discipline when compared to White, Hispanic, and Asian girls (Kemp-Graham 2018). The existing literature on the perceptions of African American women regarding their experiences with discipline while in school and future repercussions is limited and is the rationale for the concept of this study.

When researchers, educators, and administrators fail to recognize the significance of Black girls' disciplinary experiences, they fail to recognize the barriers to achievement (Hardaway et al. 2019). Epstein et al. (2017) conducted a study that showed how adults, in general, see Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like than White girls. They found Black girls are more likely to be disciplined harshly in school due to this perception. Furthermore, the belief that Black girls require less nurturing, protection, and support and are more self-sufficient results in fewer opportunities for leadership and mentorship in schools. As a result, systemic barriers and exclusionary discipline quite often push Black girls out of school, leading to a variety of negative life outcomes.

The school-to-prison pipeline refers to a process where students are pushed out of the classrooms into the criminal justice system, ultimately contributing to disparities in incarceration (American Civil Liberties Union, 2008). Black students are also more likely to experience the cradle-to-prison pipeline because they are transferred to alternative schools at higher rates than other students (Hirschfield 2018). According to Barnes and Motz (2018), receiving a suspension or expulsion increases the chances of being arrested later in life, especially for Black students (Barnes & Motz 2018). For this reason, it is important to understand the experiences of black girls in school discipline as it has a direct impact on their futures.

Summary

In Section 1, I outlined the reasons and rationale for this study. I identified the current research's gaps, weaknesses, limitations, and strengths, thus supporting the need to investigate this clinical social work problem further. In Section 2, I provide an overview of the research design, methodology, and a thorough rationale for using prospective data, participant recruitment, and instrumentation. The ethical procedures and data analysis are reviewed to conclude the section, and the summary is transitioned to the final section.

Section 2: Research Design and Data Collection

Introduction

Disciplinary practices put in place by school administration often disproportionately affect Black girls, a demographic frequently overlooked. Black girls experience disproportionate measures of discipline as early as preschool (Morris, 2016). According to the most recent Civil Rights Data Collection from the 2020/2021 school year, Black preschool children, constituting 17% of preschool enrollment, accounted for 31% of those receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions and 25% of expulsions (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Similarly, in K-12 settings, although Black girls represented 7% of total enrollment, they comprised 8% of students who received one or more in-school suspensions, 9% of out-of-school suspensions, and 8% of students who were expelled (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). In 2019, at the time, 6-year-old Kaia Rolle was arrested at her school in Florida for throwing a temper tantrum (Flores & Weisfeldt, 2020). These disparities in school discipline are a significant educational policy issue that can have an impact on educational and future outcomes.

In this study, I used a basic qualitative research design to answer the research questions:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of African American women regarding the impact of school discipline on their current well-being?

RQ2: What are the experiences of African American women in school discipline during their childhood?

This section outlines the study's research design, methodology, data collection procedures, data analysis, and ethical procedures.

Research Design

Despite extensive research into differences in discipline based on race, class, and gender, little is known about the disciplinary experiences of Black girls. These disciplinary actions increase the likelihood of black girls having a negative life outcome, such as involvement in the criminal justice system (Riddle & Sinclair 2019). In this basic qualitative doctoral research project, I sought to explore the perceptions of African American Women and their school discipline experiences utilizing a basic qualitative research design. The specific social work problem that was explored in this study is the impact school discipline experiences have on the current lives of African American women.

The purpose of this study aligned with a qualitative research approach as it seeks to explore the experiences and perceptions of its participants. Qualitative research aims to understand the social reality of individuals, groups, and cultures as closely as possible to how its participants feel or live it (McLeod, 2019). The results of the qualitative method provide an in-depth understanding of how the participants perceive school discipline and how it affects them later in life.

Methodology

I used online, audio-recorded interviews to collect my data. Over the last few decades, technological changes and the growth of the Internet have developed opportunities for online interviews in qualitative inquiry and have reduced the problems

related to face-to-face interviews (Hooley et al., 2012). Additionally, it has allowed for real-time and nonreal-time conversations in addition to the capacity to see the person on the other end. Furthermore, it has allowed researchers to connect with geographically diverse individuals and groups. Lastly, this method can be used in similar studies, allowing transferability.

Participants

The study's participants were African American women aged 18 and older who either graduated from or dropped out of high school within the past 5 years. Participants were identified and recruited through various strategies, including posting a recruitment flyer on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, the Walden recruitment pool website, and building post offices and libraries. The bulletin board flyer detailed the study's purpose, research topic, and eligibility requirements and provided informed consent and confidentiality information.

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants for their ability to provide relevant information based on their life experiences, as emphasized by Clark et al. (2021). This strategic sampling method ensured that the participants had the necessary experiences to address the research questions effectively, thus enhancing the study's relevance and depth. The alignment of the participants to the practice-focused question is crucial, as their educational backgrounds—either having completed high school or having dropped out in the past five years—provide direct insight into the study's focus. These women's specific experiences and perceptions are integral to understanding the research question. The sample size of 10 participants was chosen to ensure a range of experiences

and perspectives, contributing to the study's credibility and transferability to similar research contexts. This approach ensures the findings apply to broader studies involving similar demographic groups.

Instrumentation

Audio-recorded interviews were used to collect data. Conducting interviews online increases the participant pool, as noted by James and Busher (2009). Participants were asked 11 open-ended questions to elicit their experiences and perspectives on school discipline (see Appendix). These open-ended questions formed thoughts and opinions based on participants' insights, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon through inductive reasoning. The questions were formulated based on a comprehensive literature review.

The rationale for using audio-recorded interviews lies in their ability to capture detailed responses, which are crucial for understanding complex experiences. The open-ended nature of the questions encourages participants to share more in-depth information, facilitating richer data collection. This method aligns with the study's goal of comprehensively understanding participants' experiences with school discipline.

Data Analysis

The data collected for this study consisted of participants' responses to interview questions. I analyzed the responses using thematic analysis. First, responses were reviewed before coding to become familiar with the data. During this time, initial notes and thoughts were recorded. Then, each question was organized in a Microsoft Word document that included dividing the question and response into groups. During the first

phase, a journal was kept recording hypotheses and ideas (Vanover et al., 2021). Note-taking during data collection and immediately after interviews and observations "promote discoveries, helps keep track of one's thought processes, aids in categorizing codes, and facilitates detailing an account of the coding process (Adu, 2019, pp. 85-86).

The next step involved coding the data. Coding is the heart of data analysis; it refers to systematically identifying topics, issues, similarities, and differences in data that researchers consider relevant (Creswell, 2015). Throughout this process, I highlighted common phrases, words, or sentences in different colors to coordinate with specific codes. After reviewing the responses and coding thoroughly, I collated the data into categories according to the code. This will allow for an overview of the main points to develop common themes. A theme encompasses numerous discernments organized around a central concept or idea. It is an extended phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about/or what it means (Vanover et al., 2021).

Finally, the themes were reviewed to ensure completeness and accuracy. Vanover et al. (021) stated that after double-checking their assumptions, the researcher should take the following steps to make meaning and interpret the themes. The theoretical position taken by the researchers will influence how the data is interpreted. To establish trustworthiness in qualitative research, the researcher must establish credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. The key to building these elements into the study's methodology is transparency.

Credibility is one of the most important aspects of trustworthiness. It involves how well a researcher has established confidence in the findings based on the research

design, participants, and context (Ary et al., 2018). The African American women in this study were knowledgeable about the research concerns, which ensured credibility. Furthermore, triangulation will be used to enhance the research's credibility. Gathering data from multiple sources and by multiple methods yields a fuller and richer picture of the phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018).

Transferability examines how the study's findings can be generalized or applied to other contexts and settings. Thus, purposive sampling was utilized to address it. Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) stated that transferability is adequately addressed regarding setting and time. Therefore, the type of data being collected should be clearly described and justified for the importance and significance of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Transferability, after all, is how research findings continue to be built upon.

Dependability emphasizes whether we would obtain the same results if we could observe the same thing twice: the more significant the similarity in the two results, the more excellent the dependability (Ary et al., 2018). Therefore, "the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work" (Shenton, 2004, p.). In this study, the researcher documented procedures and demonstrated consistency among coding schemes and categories to ensure dependability. This includes keeping a record of memos that explain how data was analyzed and interpreted.

Lastly, confirmability is when the study results can be confirmed or corroborated by another person investigating the same situation (Ary et al., 2018). To ensure confirmability, the study's findings should result from the informants' experiences and

ideas, rather than the researcher's characteristics and preferences (Shenton, 2004). Additionally, the participant's answers were transcribed to describe the individual's experiences, as well as a record of field notes and a journal with ongoing reflection and memos.

Ethical Procedures

The approval of this study by the Walden University Review Board (IRB), following their ethical standards, ensures the ethical protection of the participants. The approval number is 03-06-23-0720598. Furthermore, to ensure the ethical protection of the participants, an individual Zoom link was provided to conduct the interview, allowing comfort and anonymity. A consent form was used to ensure the ethical protection of those participating in the study.

The electronic consent form was signed before starting the interview. The form informed the participants about confidentiality and their anonymity as participants in the study. Furthermore, it explained their right not to participate and to stop at any time. It also has a statement explaining to the participant that there will be no compensation for participation. Lastly, the form discussed participation eligibility requirements and acknowledged their participation.

The data collection procedures were discussed in the form, which stated that the data from the survey would be kept confidential and anonymous. However, this cannot be guaranteed due to the security of the electronic device and the data transfer between the computer and the data collection point. The interview was audio recorded and downloaded to a hard drive. Only the faculty advisor and researcher have access to

participant interviews. The data will be kept at the researcher's residence in a locked box over the next five years as required by Walden University, and then the files will be erased and deleted from the hardware.

Summary

This project aimed to obtain information from Black women regarding their perception and experiences of childhood school discipline and its impact on their current well-being. Data was collected from 10 African American women who experienced discipline during their childhood through an audio-recorded interview. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The information collected from the participants increased the researcher's awareness and understanding of the impact school discipline has on African American women's current well-being. The results from this project create a collective voice and contribute to the existing body of literature regarding African American girls and school discipline. Section 3 discusses an analysis of the data and findings, participants' details, and observed themes.

Section 3: Presentation of the Findings

Introduction

In this qualitative study, I aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of African American women regarding their childhood school discipline and how those experiences have impacted their current well-being. The research questions were as follows:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of African American women regarding the impact of school discipline on their current well-being?

RQ2: What are the experiences of African American women with school discipline during their childhood?

The data was collected through an audio-recorded interview. The participants were asked 10 questions to gather background information and probing questions relating to the study, which can be found in the Appendix. Audio recordings were transcribed, and the data was analyzed using thematic coding. This section comprises three subsections: the review of the data analysis techniques used in this study, the findings of the study, and a summary of the findings, which transitions into the introduction and overview of Section 4.

Data Analysis Techniques

On March 6, 2023, I received IRB approval and recruitment commenced for interviews with ten participants. Recruitment flyers were strategically posted on Facebook, Instagram, and the Walden University recruitment pool. Physical copies of the flyer were also displayed on public bulletin boards at Farmville, Virginia's local post

office and library. The 10-week recruitment and interview period spanned from March 16, 2023, to May 23, 2023. Throughout this period, 14 individuals responded. One respondent wanted compensation; however, compensation was not a part of this study. Two respondents did not meet the study criteria, and one participant did not attend the scheduled interview.

The recruitment flyer featured a QR code directing potential participants to an electronic consent form outlining the study overview, screening qualifications, and participation consent. After these participants provided their consent via email, interviews were scheduled with them through a Zoom link. Before each interview, the participants reviewed the consent form, and eligibility was confirmed. All participants were informed that they were being audio-recorded before the start of the interview.

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Each participant was assigned a number to ensure protection of their identity. Using Microsoft Word, I created a table presenting each question and the corresponding participant responses. The coding process involved reading through and noting observations, categorization, and theme creation.

According to Saldana (2021), the initial coding phase requires a thorough reading of the data to gain a comprehensive understanding and note significant observations. This step is crucial as it sets the foundation for more detailed analysis (Saldana, 2021). Following this, I categorized the data to identify patterns and themes essential for meaningfully organizing the data (Saldana, 2021). The themes identified were (a) identity formation, (b) growth and resiliency, (c) positive school experiences, and (d) negative

school experiences. Saldana (2021) emphasized the importance of categorizing and theming as it allows for a deeper interpretation of the data and helps draw meaningful conclusions. This process of coding and theming not only organizes the data but also highlights the key issues and experiences of the participants, making the findings more robust and credible.

Member checking was used for the validation process. The decision to use member checking in qualitative research is supported by its role in enhancing the credibility, transparency, and validity of study findings through active participant involvement in interpreting their experiences (McKim, 2023). By engaging the participants in the review and validating researcher interpretations, member checking strengthens the researcher-participant relationship and ensures that study findings accurately reflect the participants' perspectives (McKim, 2023). Therefore, a follow-up email was sent to each participant. In the email, participants were asked open-ended questions to ensure the identified themes accurately reflect their experiences and perspectives during childhood school discipline. Specifically, they were asked if they felt any aspects had been misrepresented or misunderstood and if there were additional insights or nuances that should be considered. The email also included their interview transcripts and a summary of the findings as described in the previous process. Only one participant responded to the email with the following response:

> Hey, the only thing I feel may have impacted the study that may not have been addressed was the possibility of adversity at home and/or outside of school. That often leads to behaviors that require disciplinary action at school. Adversity also

contributes to the response to discipline. Families, as well as educators, need to be educated and informed on the effects of trauma and adversity on the lives of children, especially those in disadvantaged and impoverished communities. Other than that, I believe your study was constructed well and represents an often overlooked demographic well. Great job!!

Several limitations were encountered during this study. Initially, the recruitment of the participants took longer than anticipated despite the use of social media. Additionally, some participants were deemed ineligible to participate. On the screening form, one participant stated they did not have multiple experiences with school discipline. The other ineligible participant indicated not having received any disciplining for the infractions listed in the screening questions. Another participant inquired about compensation, which was not a part of this study. Lastly, one participant missed a scheduled interview, necessitating additional time and an effort to recruit a replacement.

Another limitation arose from the online nature of the interviews, conducted through various electronic devices. This approach led to instances of participants multitasking and a technical issue with the reception of one participant's device. Lastly, the data was collected exclusively through interviews, and the findings are inherently limited to the information provided by the participants. These identified limitations warrant careful consideration when interpreting the study's outcomes.

Findings

I delved into the impact of childhood school discipline on the well-being of African American women, aiming to illuminate how early educational experiences shape

their lives. By examining participants' perceptions and experiences, I sought to uncover the multifaceted effects of disciplinary actions within school settings, particularly those influenced by systemic biases. CRF provided a vital lens for understanding these dynamics, emphasizing how the intersection of race and gender uniquely positions Black girls within educational systems. CRF highlights how Black girls are often perceived through stereotypes that depict them as more defiant or aggressive, which results in harsher disciplinary practices compared to their white peers (Evans-Winters, 2020; Morris, 2016).

CRF asserts that these institutional biases are rooted in broader societal expectations that pathologize the behavior of Black girls, interpreting their assertiveness as deviant rather than understanding it in its cultural and individual context (Hines-Datiri & Carter Andrews, 2017). By applying this framework, the study aimed to explore the personal impact of these disciplinary measures and how they reflect and reinforce societal structures of inequality (Crenshaw et al., 2015). CRF thus calls for a re-examination of disciplinary policies and practices in schools, advocating for more equitable and culturally responsive approaches that validate rather than criminalize Black girls' behavior (Morris, 2016).

This section presents the study's demographic information and participant characteristics, detailed comprehensively in Tables 1 and 2. To protect participants' identities and maintain confidentiality, participants were given numbers such as Participant #1-10. All participants were African American women. The ages of the

participants ranged from 19-23 years old, and the graduation years ranged from 2018-2021. One participant did not graduate.

While the participants' ages and graduation years varied, their shared experiences with school discipline emphasize the systemic nature of biases faced by Black girls in educational settings. Regardless of their demographic differences, all participants described navigating disciplinary practices rooted in stereotypes that shaped their identities and societal traits into adulthood. Applying CRF highlights how these shared experiences, stemming from intersecting racial and gender oppressions, fostered resilience, adaptability, and professional caution in the participants. By framing these participants' experiences within CRF, the study seeks to highlight their unique, intersectional challenges and propose systemic reforms that promote justice and equity in school disciplinary practices.

Table 1

Age Demographics

Age	Number of Participants
19	1
20	2
21	4
22	2
23	1

Table 2

Graduation Year

Graduation Year	Number of Participants
2018	3
2019	1
2020	3
2021	2
Did Not Graduate	1

Theme 1: Identity Formation

The concept of identity formation emerged as a significant theme in this study, revealing how disciplinary practices in school settings influenced how African American women perceived themselves and navigated societal expectations. Many participants shared how school discipline forced them to suppress aspects of their identity, particularly expressions of Black culture, to avoid being labeled as disruptive or unprofessional. This struggle aligns with broader research on how African American girls are subject to 'cultural policing' in educational environments, where their behaviors and appearance are judged against white, middle-class norms (Hines-Datiri & Carter Andrews, 2017). The pressure to conform has profound implications for identity formation during adolescence, a critical period of personal development. Participant 9 recalled feeling pressured to suppress her true self:

> When I was in school, I felt as if I can't be myself… if I be myself, I'm going to be too ghetto or if I do a job application, I'm afraid that I may not get the job because of my name.

This experience is reflective of findings by Poole (2019), who discussed how African American girls are disproportionately disciplined for behaviors that deviate from mainstream cultural norms. This pressure to conform affected not just the participants' behavior but their sense of self-worth and belonging, a significant factor in adolescent identity formation. By forcing these young women to change aspects of their appearance or demeanor, schools effectively marginalized their identities, reinforcing feelings of alienation and exclusion. This pressure extended to choices like hairstyles and clothing, as noted by Participant 2, who said, "I am very cautious when choosing what to wear. I don't want my clothing to impact how others view me or my professionalism," and Participant 4, who added, "I am more cautious about the hairstyle I choose today"

Participant 2's narrative about being cautious in choosing her clothing to avoid disciplinary action further emphasizes the gendered and racialized expectations placed on African American girls. As documented in research by Butler-Barnes and Inniss-Thompson (2020), Black girls are often disciplined for behaviors that are perceived as "loud" or "defiant," characteristics that their White peers tolerate. These experiences demonstrate how school discipline serves as a mechanism of control that impacts academic performance and profoundly influences self-perception. For these girls, navigating school discipline meant navigating a broader societal structure that devalues their racial and cultural identity, as highlighted in CRF.

The long-term effects of this identity suppression can be seen in the participants' reflections on adulthood. Many noted that these early experiences of being policed for their appearance and behavior have made them more cautious in professional and social settings. Participant 4 expressed that she remains mindful of how her hairstyle might be perceived in professional spaces, a continuation of the cultural policing she faced as a student. This aligns with the work of Morris (2016), who argues that exclusionary school discipline practices perpetuate a historical narrative that Black girls are “unruly” and in need of correction. The perpetuation of these stereotypes can have lasting impacts on self-esteem and identity development, extending into adulthood and affecting professional opportunities and personal relationships.

Ultimately, the theme of identity formation highlights the complex ways in which school discipline intersects with race, gender, and culture to shape how African American girls see themselves and are seen by others. The findings of this study suggest that school disciplinary practices are not merely about behavior correction but are deeply tied to societal expectations about race and femininity. These expectations force Black girls into a continuous process of self-regulation and conformity, which stifles their true identity.

Theme 2: Growth & Resiliency

Despite the challenges of navigating disciplinary practices that were often biased or unfair, the theme of resilience emerged strongly among the participants. African American women in this study demonstrated remarkable personal growth and resilience in response to their school adversities. This aligns with the broader literature on the topic, which suggests that marginalized groups often develop resilience as a survival

mechanism in response to systemic oppression (Losen & Whitaker, 2020). Participant 3 shared:

> I grew up learning that sometimes we may be targeted more as a black female and to just do the best I can and be the best person I can be as far as education or anything that I do in my future endeavors because I'm always going to be judged. People are always going to think that I'm not going to do as well because of my color. So, I feel like being targeted in school helped me grow as a person.

Participant 3 shared how being unfairly disciplined motivated her to excel in her education and future endeavors. She noted that the experience of being singled out in school because of her race made her more determined to succeed, illustrating a key aspect of resilience that is often developed in response to adversity. This aligns with research by Morris (2016), which shows that African American girls often use their experiences of exclusion and discrimination as fuel for personal growth. Rather than succumbing to the negative labels placed on them, many Black girls use these experiences to develop a strong sense of self-worth and resilience, which they carry into adulthood.

The idea of resilience is further supported by Participant 1's reflection on how her school experiences fostered greater self-advocacy. Despite the unfair treatment she endured, she learned to stand up for herself and not let others define her worth. For Participant 4, the disciplinary experiences were helpful, leading to professional success and personal fulfillment.

These narratives illustrate the multifaceted ways in which childhood disciplinary encounters shaped their paths. They exemplify how adversity can cultivate resilience and

determination, countering stereotypes and building a strong sense of identity and purpose. The participants' experiences of being unfairly disciplined reflect a broader societal problem where Black girls are disproportionately punished out of school. However, their ability to turn these negative experiences into sources of strength and self-advocacy demonstrates the remarkable resilience of African American women. This resilience, though commendable, should not be viewed as a justification for the continued marginalization of Black girls in schools. Instead, it highlights the need for systemic change to create environments that support, rather than undermine, the development of African American girls.

Theme 3: Negative School Experiences

The participants in this study frequently described negative school experiences in relation to the ways they were disciplined, particularly instances of discrimination and perceived bias, which were recurrent themes among the women. These codes were identified several times in the women's transcripts. Specifically, 5 out of 10 participants indicated they felt they were disciplined more often than girls of other races. These statements align with existing research on racial disparities in school discipline, which shows that African American girls are disproportionately punished for behaviors that are often tolerated by other students (Poole, 2019). This theme of negative school experiences highlights the direct consequences of these actions and reflects the systemic biases that permeate educational institutions.

Two women expressed specifically feeling targeted in school. Participant 3 stated in her interview, "I feel like sometimes targeted by teachers because of my race," and

Participant 1 said, "I think because of my race sometimes I was probably picked on a little bit more; they would target me and automatically assume that I was the one doing certain things…". Unfortunately, racial discrimination experiences within the school context are common occurrences for Black adolescents in the United States (Mims et al., 2021).

Participant 3 recalled feeling targeted by teachers because of her race, a sentiment shared by Participant 1, who felt unfairly singled out due to racial assumptions. These experiences confirm national data from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2021), which shows that Black girls are more likely than their white peers to be suspended for subjective offenses such as 'disrespect' or 'defiance.' Such categories are often interpreted through a racialized lens, where behaviors that are seen as assertive in white students are perceived as aggressive in Black students. This bias leads to disproportionate rates of exclusionary discipline, which can have devastating effects. Such biases affect disciplinary outcomes and influence broader perceptions of femininity and cultural expression, further complicating the educational experience for these young women (Butler-Barnes & Inniss-Thompson, 2020).

In addition, Participant 7 recounted a particularly impactful incident from elementary school where she received a severe suspension for what she perceived as a minor infraction. She stated, “I was suspended for five days for cursing. I was singing a song with my friends and cursed, the principal sent me home for five days and my father disciplined me every day that I was there”. She went on to talk about how that incident stuck with her during her entire academic career.

The concept of pushout is particularly relevant to the experiences shared by Participant 7. Her elementary school experience sheds light on the lasting impact of excessive discipline measures. The incident, involving a five-day suspension for cursing while singing a song with friends, reveals a disproportionate response to a common childhood behavior. Moreover, the punitive action, coupled with her father's discipline during the suspension, shows the severity of the consequences. Also, the participant's remark about the incident sticking with her throughout her academic career suggests a lasting emotional and psychological impact.

Furthermore, Participant 9 shared a heartbreaking experience of failing to graduate due to disciplinary issues, recounting an incident where a teacher even resorted to physical discipline. She indicated the teacher hit her when she was not adhering to acceptable behavior during the pledge of allegiance in class. This firsthand narrative provides important qualitative data about the severity of the consequences and negative school discipline.

CRF highlights how the intersection of race and gender in school discipline policies positions Black girls at a disadvantage, contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline and broader social inequities. Studies have shown that Black girls are four times more likely to be suspended and more likely to be subjected to physical punishment than their peers, largely due to biases and discrimination (González & Epstein, 2022).

Participants shared their negative experiences about the profound emotional and psychological impacts that discriminatory school discipline practices have on Black girls.

These practices, often caused by racial and gender biases, result in harsher punishments and leave Black girls feeling alienated, stigmatized, and less engaged in education.

Theme 4: Positive School Experiences

Besides the challenges of discriminatory school discipline, participants shared some of their positive school experiences that contributed significantly to their personal development and resilience. Two participants noted that their disciplinary experiences were less severe during elementary school. At the same time, some of the other women indicated they got very few disciplinary measures, such as in-school suspension or being talked to by the teacher. Research confirms that disciplinary actions in elementary schools tend to be less severe compared to middle and high schools, as younger children often receive more behavioral guidance rather than harsh punitive measures (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). This aligns with participants who reported minimal disciplinary actions, such as in-school suspensions or being spoken to by a teacher. These positive experiences show that an environment fostering personal growth is more important than punitive interactions. Also, recent studies confirm that when students perceive a supportive school climate, they experience fewer emotional and behavioral problems, enhancing their overall school engagement (Smith et al., 2020).

Participant 3 appreciated opportunities to stay engaged academically despite disciplinary sanctions, pointing out the importance of a supportive learning environment for all students, regardless of disciplinary issues. Hence, a nurturing school environment is vital for creating a sense of safety and trust among students, especially those who may feel marginalized. Recent studies emphasize that positive school climates are associated

with better mental health and academic performance. For instance, a 2022 study by Smith and Johnson found that students who perceive their school as supportive exhibit higher engagement and lower anxiety levels, meaning an inclusive atmosphere stimulates resilience and well-being among marginalized groups (Smith & Johnson, 2022).

Drawing from CRF, these positive experiences counter the biases Black girls often face in educational settings. CRF explains that it is necessary to address the intersectional experiences of race and gender to understand how disciplinary actions impact Black girls. In the participants' stories, supportive teachers and equitable discipline helped disrupt the cycle of marginalization, offering them a way to resilience rather than pushing them out of the education system (González & Epstein, 2022). Such supportive practices are aligned with restorative justice approaches, which aim to create inclusive learning environments that empower rather than punish students.

Furthermore, Participant 5 discussed how observing her teachers discipline other students influenced the way she understands acceptable behavior. Watching these interactions helped her internalize what was considered appropriate conduct in the classroom. This highlights the importance of fair, transparent, and equitable discipline practices that are not influenced by racial or gender biases. Social learning, or learning by observing others, is particularly critical for students of color, who are often disciplined more harshly. When Black girls witness discipline being applied equitably, it creates a sense of belonging and fairness. Ensuring that all students are treated equally, regardless of race or gender, helps combat feelings of exclusion and promotes a more inclusive learning environment (Morris, 2016).

For Black girls, who frequently face harsher disciplinary actions than their peers, seeing discipline handled fairly and without bias can reinforce positive behavioral norms and develop their sense of safety and justice within the school environment. That is one of the reasons why social learning through equitable discipline influences the way how students understand behavioral expectations. This further confirms the need for systemic changes to address Black girl's intersectional biases in schools, as emphasized by Critical Race Feminism (Crenshaw, 2020).

Conclusion

Regarding RQ1, the findings indicate that African American women think that school discipline has significantly impacted their current well-being. Themes such as identity formation and growth/resiliency emerged from the interviews, highlighting how experiences of discrimination and perceived discrimination during school discipline incidents have impacted their sense of identity and professionalism. These findings are consistent with CRF, which argues that race and gender affect Black girls in school environments disproportionately. These experiences with discipline influenced participants' self-expression, from choices in clothing and hairstyles to broader social interactions, reflecting how Black girls learn to deal with societal expectations that often label them as defiant or aggressive (González & Epstein, 2022; Morris & Perry, 2016). CRF helps explain how these racialized and gendered perceptions force Black girls to develop resilience and self-awareness as coping mechanisms against systemic oppression (Crenshaw, 2020).

Concerning RQ2, the findings reveal both positive and negative experiences of African American women with school discipline during their childhood. Negative experiences, such as racial targeting and disproportionate punishment for minor infractions, underscore the harmful consequences of exclusionary discipline on academic outcomes and mental well-being. These negative encounters often led to feelings of alienation and long-term impacts on academic engagement and self-esteem. However, participants also shared positive experiences, such as supportive teachers who provided guidance and opportunities to learn from disciplinary actions. These positive interactions contributed to how they understand acceptable behavior and academic success, which means there is a potential for fair, transparent disciplinary practices to build resilience rather than exclusion (Lindsay & Hart, 2022). CRF emphasizes the importance of these supportive experiences, advocating for educational systems that reject punitive, exclusionary discipline and instead promote restorative practices that account for the intersectional identities of Black girls (González & Epstein, 2022).

The study findings show that there is a need for systemic change in how discipline is administered in schools. While Black girls develop resilience and adaptive strategies in response to the discrimination they face, these experiences should not be the norm. Educational institutions must adopt culturally responsive and restorative justice approaches that prioritize support over punishment. These approaches, grounded in CRF, should address the root causes of behavioral issues and empower marginalized students by recognizing and respecting their unique experiences (Crenshaw, 2020). Only with supportive environments can schools promote the growth and well-being of African

American girls in order to ensure that discipline contributes to their academic and personal development.

Participant's Advice and Recommendations

The women recommended that teachers and school administrators support African American girls in education and discipline. They emphasized being patient, understanding, and non-judgmental. Participant 7 specified the need for patience, noting that African American girls often lack it outside school. Participant 3 advised against harsh judgment and that educators should listen to and support these students instead. Participant 2 stressed equal treatment, stating that factors like body type or clothing should not lead to unfair treatment.

Additionally, two participants emphasized the importance of educating staff on trauma and cultural competence. Participant 8 advocated for a trauma-informed approach to address adverse childhood experiences. At the same time, Participant 4 urged educators to appreciate the beauty and creativity of African American girls and suggested research on African American hair and culture. These recommendations highlight the need for education and cultural awareness in a supportive school environment.

The women also offered advice to African American girls, encouraging them to speak up respectfully and find a trusting adult. This aligns with Burnett et al. (2022), who noted that black girls begin to recognize the ways their lives are fully gendered and racialized. They often seek the guidance of additional socialization agents, such as their parents, to process these experiences and seek adaptive ways to cope in school settings (Burnett et al., 2022). Participant 6 recommended learning effective communication to

mitigate disciplinary repercussions. All participants shared words of encouragement, emphasizing resilience and determination. Participant 3 urged the girls to use discipline as a learning lesson, while Participant 2 encouraged them to pursue education confidently. Together, these responses combine practical guidance with motivational support in order to empower African American girls to overcome obstacles and pursue their educational aspirations.

Unexpected Findings

There were two unexpected findings in this project. First, all the women who pursued higher education reported positive experiences and did not encounter the same disciplinary challenges they faced during K-12 education. Participant 10, for example, shared that attending a historically Black college and university (HBCU) provided her with a distinctly different disciplinary experience. She stated,

> I go to an HBCU, so it's very different here. You have people like you, so they are actually working with you, and some days, they are like trying to be against you because it is like my professors here, they're all doctors, and they're like, okay, we need to get our act right. So, it's basically they're just trying to groom us and make us better. But I would say the discipline, um, experience is very different.

This aligns with CRF, which emphasizes that when Black students are in environments that affirm their racial and cultural identities—such as HBCUs—they are less likely to experience the systemic biases that lead to harsher disciplinary measures in predominantly white K-12 institutions (González & Epstein, 2022). Additionally, CRF points out that educational institutions that center the lived experiences of Black women

create more supportive environments where discipline is more focused on development rather than punishment since it stimulates academic and personal growth (Lodi et al., 2022). At HBCUs, Black women experience affirmation and guidance, which contrasts with the racialized and gendered discipline they often faced in earlier schooling.

The second unexpected finding was that although each woman had different disciplinary consequences, they all said the consequences positively impacted their current well-being. One particularly striking account was the participant who recalled being physically assaulted by a teacher for refusing to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. This incident reflects the extreme nature of some disciplines the participants faced. Moreover, it shows the harsh, racially biased punishments that many Black girls encounter in school.

These participants often turned adversity into opportunities for personal growth. CRF explores this resilience as a survival strategy and a form of resistance against the oppressive structures that disproportionately target Black girls (Losen & Whitaker, 2020). However, CRF also argues that resilience should not be required of Black women as a response to inequities. Instead, the focus should be on transforming these inequitable systems so that Black girls no longer have to deal with such harmful experiences (González & Epstein, 2022).

Summary

This section details the recruitment process, data collection, validation procedures, and participant demographics. It presents the findings from the interviews

with African American women, revealing four significant themes: identity formation, growth and resiliency, positive school experiences, and negative school experiences. The participants shared both negative and positive school discipline experiences, emphasizing their unexpected positive impact on their current life and well-being.

The recommended solutions derived from the women's experiences highlight the need for an inclusive and supportive educational environment. Key recommendations include urging teachers to exercise patience, understanding, and non-judgmental attitudes toward African American girls, with equal treatment irrespective of physical appearance. Additionally, the participants suggested educating school staff on trauma and cultural competence to create a more empathetic atmosphere.

Encouraging African American girls to speak up for themselves, seek support from trusted adults, and develop effective communication skills reflects a commitment to empowering them in school discipline and education. The unexpected findings further represent the impact of higher education and the resilience of these women, showcasing positive experiences and personal growth despite challenging disciplinary situations. Together, these recommendations and findings mirror the need for better understanding, empathy, and empowerment in educational settings to support African American girls in their academic journeys.

In the next section, the purpose of the study and its findings will be reviewed. The NASW's ethical application, recommendations, and implications for social change will also be discussed.

Section 4: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Social Change

Introduction

In this essential qualitative study, I investigated African American women's perceptions and experiences with childhood school discipline and its current impact. The findings strengthen data on discriminatory, punitive, and exclusionary disciplinary practices toward African American girls, revealing the participants' accounts of discriminatory practices and judgmental bias by the school administration. The study exemplifies how positive and negative school discipline experiences shape African American women's self-awareness, resilience, and identity development. CRF suggests that while Black women often develop resilience in response to systemic inequalities, it is essential to dismantle these biased structures rather than relying on resilience as a coping mechanism for injustice (Crenshaw, 2020).

These findings inform the social work practice by emphasizing the need to address racial and gender disparities in school discipline, advocate for culturally responsive practices, provide support to those facing discrimination, and promote resilience and empowerment through education and advocacy initiatives, ultimately ensuring equitable and empowering educational experiences for all students.

This study extended knowledge by allowing African American women to share their experiences and perceptions. It offers educators and social workers practical insights into identifying implicit bias, implementing restorative justice approaches, and prioritizing positive reinforcement over punitive discipline. Through this CRF lens, I

emphasized the importance of shifting away from exclusionary practices and towards creating empowering educational environments that affirm the identities of Black girls.

Application to Professional Ethics in Social Work Practice

On October 13, 1960, the NASW Delegate Assembly adopted the first version of the NASW Code of Ethics to guide the social work profession (NASW, 1960). Since then, it has been continuously updated and identifies six values: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (NASW, 2017). Although my study exemplifies all the NASW values in some form, social justice and the dignity and worth of a person were the driving ethical values in pursuing this project.

These two values are relevant to my study as Black girls represent an invisible population whose lived experiences are historically devalued and silenced (Hood, 2023). The NASW ethical value of social justice is particularly poignant when applied to Black girls and women, emphasizing the imperative to address systemic inequalities, discrimination, and barriers that affect this demographic disproportionately. School discipline is one of the areas where disproportionality in disciplining has been shown toward Black girls. Social workers committed to social justice for Black girls and women strive to dismantle racial and gender-based disparities, advocating for policies and practices that promote equality and inclusivity (Paul & Araneo, 2019). This ethical principle calls for an intersectional approach, acknowledging and challenging the compounded effects of racism and sexism on Black girls.

The NASW ethical value of dignity and worth of the person assumes heightened significance when applied to Black girls and women, recognizing and addressing the unique challenges they may face within intersecting systems of oppression. Social workers committed to this ethical principle for Black girls and women strive to affirm their inherent value and agency, counteracting stereotypes and biases that may undermine their dignity (Nolan, 2022). By acknowledging the historical and systemic factors contributing to disparities, social workers work toward creating environments that foster empowerment, inclusivity, and respect for the diverse identities and experiences of Black girls and women. This commitment involves actively challenging discriminatory practices, advocating for equitable opportunities, and amplifying the voices of Black girls and women to ensure their dignity is upheld in all aspects of their lives.

The findings from this study may significantly impact social work practice, particularly in terms of professional ethics, by emphasizing the NASW ethical value of social justice as it applies to Black girls and women. This research exemplifies the urgent need for social workers to address systemic inequalities, discrimination, and barriers that disproportionately affect this demographic. For instance, disparities in school discipline practices highlight the urgency of advocating for fair and equitable treatment of Black girls within educational systems. Social workers committed to social justice for Black girls and women will be compelled to advocate for policy changes, implement culturally responsive interventions, and challenge biased practices that perpetuate inequities. By centering social justice in their practice, these professionals can contribute to systemic change, promoting fairness, inclusivity, and equal opportunities for Black girls and

women in all aspects of their lives. This ethical commitment ensures that social work practice is responsive to individual needs and actively addresses broader systemic issues of injustice and inequality.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice

In the school setting, school social workers play a crucial role in addressing discipline disparities to employ ethical principles (Annamma et al., 2019). School social workers can influence the academic environment by promoting a more inclusive and supportive school environment. Additionally, they can advocate for restorative justice practices, offer culture competence training, and collaborate with educators to implement fair and consistent disciplinary measures. Further, school social workers can provide targeted support to students facing challenges and address underlying issues that may contribute to behavioral problems, in turn helping to create a more equitable disciplinary system. Lastly, school social workers can use evidence-based research. By incorporating evidence-based approaches, school social workers can enhance the quality and effectiveness of their services, leading to better outcomes for students and the school community as a whole.

The findings of this study hold significant implications for my advanced social work practice. The participants expressed positivity despite adversities faced during childhood school discipline experiences. Understanding how these women perceive the impact of school discipline on their current lives and well-being provided valuable insights that will help inform my advanced social work practice.

Firstly, recognizing that the participants experienced both positive and negative school discipline experiences shows the importance of adopting a holistic and trauma-informed approach in practice. As an advanced practitioner, this suggests to me the need to explore and address the complex interplay of factors that contribute to resilience and positive outcomes despite challenges. It emphasizes acknowledging individuals' strengths and coping mechanisms developed through positive and negative experiences. Adopting a holistic approach is essential while addressing trauma. Trauma-informed care is a compassionate and empowering framework that acknowledges the trauma's effects on an individual's well-being. It guides them toward healing, resilience, and personal growth (Roots Through Recovery, 2023).

Moreover, these findings highlight the importance of cultural competence in advanced social work practice. Understanding the participants' perceptions in the context of their unique cultural backgrounds is crucial. This cultural awareness informs the development and implementation of interventions sensitive to diverse experiences and contributes to positive outcomes for clients. According to the NASW (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022),

> Cultural competence requires social workers to examine their own cultural backgrounds and identities while seeking out the necessary knowledge, skills, and values that can enhance the delivery of services to people with varying cultural experiences associated with their race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability [or other cultural factors]. (p. 65)

In a broader sense, the positivity expressed by these women despite adversity suggests the potential for resilience and growth. As an advanced practitioner, I can leverage this understanding to design interventions that build on individuals' strengths, fostering empowerment and promoting positive change. These findings also emphasize the need for ongoing research and policy advocacy in the field to address systemic issues contributing to both positive and negative school experiences.

In summary, the findings can influence my future advanced social work practice by emphasizing the importance of a holistic, trauma-informed, and culturally competent approach. Additionally, the findings highlight the need to explore resilience factors, acknowledge strengths, and leverage positive experiences to inform interventions that support individuals in their current well-being and life trajectories.

Key Elements of Transferability

The transferability of these findings to the field of social work is noteworthy. My focus on understanding women's perceptions of the impact of school discipline on their current life and well-being provides valuable insights relevant to social work practice in various contexts. The key elements of transferability include (a) resilience and positivity, (b) a holistic approach, (c) cultural sensitivity, (d) trauma-informed practices, and (e) policy implications.

The participants' expressions of current positivity despite facing adversities and discrimination in school suggested that resilience can be a significant factor in individuals' responses to challenging experiences. Social workers can leverage these findings to inform interventions that emphasize strengths, resilience building, and

positive coping mechanisms. Acknowledging that the participants experienced both positive and negative childhood school experiences underscores the need for a holistic approach in social work practice. Recognizing the complexity of individuals' histories and the interplay of positive and negative factors is crucial for designing comprehensive interventions that address the multifaceted nature of clients' experiences.

Given that adversities included experiences of discrimination, the findings highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity in social work practice. Social workers should be attuned to the cultural context of their clients, recognizing how discrimination and other factors may impact individuals from diverse backgrounds. Understanding the participants' perceptions of school discipline experiences implies the potential presence of trauma. This emphasizes the importance of adopting a trauma-informed approach in social work practice. By recognizing and addressing the potential trauma associated with school experiences, social workers can provide more effective and sensitive support. The findings also have implications for advocating for policy changes in educational institutions to address school discipline and discrimination issues. Social workers can use this information to contribute to systemic changes that promote more inclusive and equitable educational environments.

In summary, the transferability of these findings to the field of social work lies in their relevance to shaping interventions that are strength-based, culturally sensitive, and responsive to the complex interplay of positive and negative experiences individuals may have faced during their school years.

Usefulness of Findings

Black girls' positive and negative experiences concerning school discipline contribute to the broader field of social work practice, research, and policy considerations. Regarding practice, these experiences help social workers tailor interventions to address the specific needs and challenges Black girls face. This may involve implementing culturally competent and trauma-informed approaches to support their emotional well-being and academic success. By acknowledging positive and negative experiences, practitioners can develop more effective strategies that empower Black girls rather than perpetuate biases.

In research, these experiences provide essential data for studying the impact of school discipline policies on African American girls and women. Examining positive experiences helps identify resilience factors and strengths in the systems, while negative experiences highlight areas requiring urgent attention. Research of such experiences can inform evidence-based interventions and contribute to developing more equitable school systems. According to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Elementary & Secondary Education (2020), the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA),* as amended by *the* Every *Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*, gives states and districts flexibility in choosing EBPs. This enables them to prioritize the practices that are most likely to yield positive outcomes while also supporting the use of promising evidence that may be most suitable for local needs (U.S. Department of Education United States of America, Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2020).

Regarding policy, Black women's experiences can advocate for disciplinary reform to eliminate racial and gender disparities. For instance, school social workers can promote restorative justice, culturally responsive practices, and overall equity in educational institutions. Such advocacy helps create a policy framework that stimulates a supportive and inclusive environment for Black girls and, by extension, other marginalized groups. Black girls' experiences with school discipline provide a rich source of information that, when integrated into social work practice, research, and policy, can create a more just and equitable education system.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. Firstly, potential sampling bias could hinder transferability if the participants lack diversity in backgrounds and perspectives. Secondly, reliance on self-reporting introduces participant bias, potentially influencing response accuracy. Additionally, memory recall biases might affect the accuracy of the participants' responses. The study might also lack an exploration of contextual factors that could influence the participants' experiences. The findings do not comprehensively analyze the complexity of the relationship between school discipline and individuals' well-being without thoroughly examining broader contextual elements. Another consideration is that the qualitative method may provide rich insights but lacks statistical data and cannot be generalized. Lastly, the findings' contextual specificity may restrict applicability to different settings or populations.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Considering both the strengths and limitations of the study, several recommendations for further research can be outlined to enhance the applicability of the findings. Firstly, future research should prioritize a more diverse participant sample, focusing on factors such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location. This approach can clarify how school discipline experiences impact individuals across various backgrounds.

Longitudinal studies can cover a more detailed perspective on the long-term effects of school discipline on individuals' well-being. This approach could track changes and analyze societal attitudes, educational policies, and personal experiences. Additionally, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods is suggested to strengthen the research design. Moreover, complementing interview data with quantitative measures can help explore the prevalence and statistical significance of the identified themes.

Future research should also evaluate the contextual factors that influence individuals' perceptions of school discipline. Examining the influence of school policies, cultural norms, and community dynamics would help explain the study's subject. Also, comparative studies across different educational systems or regions can reveal variations in school discipline practices and their impact and explain some of the cultural and contextual factors contributing to diverse experiences.

Finally, cross-cultural studies would enable a comparison of how school discipline experiences vary across different cultural contexts. Such approach can provide insights into the cultural difference that influence perceptions and outcomes. Future

research can build upon the strengths of the current study while mitigating its limitations, ultimately contributing to a more applicable knowledge base in the field of social work.

Two prominent methods are envisaged to effectively disseminate the information produced in this project, including creating a concise 1–2-page summary and its distribution through the participants' email addresses. Firstly, crafting a well-structured summary can condense key findings, methodologies, and conclusions to ensure accessibility and clarity (Naeem et al., 2023). Secondly, distributing this summary digitally through the participants' email addresses provides a direct and efficient channel for communication. Email enables personalized messages, attachments, and the inclusion of hyperlinks to supplementary materials. This method facilitates the participants' easy access and reference to research findings.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this study have the potential to drive positive social change across various levels of practice, research, and policy in social work. Social work practitioners can use its results to tailor interventions at the micro level of practice, focusing on individual strengths and resilience factors identified in the study. Recognizing both positive and negative school experiences, practitioners can implement client-centered approaches to encourage empowerment, mental well-being, and personal growth. This approach is anticipated to result in positive changes in individuals' lives, improving coping mechanisms and overall functioning.

The study findings provide an opportunity to shape further research agendas on the mezzo level. Researchers can further evaluate specific mechanisms, which could

bring positive outcomes despite adverse school discipline experiences. Exploring the connection between resilience, cultural factors, and community support can contribute to evidence-based practices relevant to diverse populations.

At the macro level, the study has implications for informing policies related to school discipline. The positive and negative experiences highlight the need for holistic disciplinary approaches in educational institutions. Policymakers can use this information to advocate for reforms prioritizing restorative justice practices, cultural competence training for educators, and inclusive policies addressing systemic inequalities. These changes aim to contribute to a more equitable educational system and foster positive social change on a larger scale.

The potential for positive social change at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels involves empowering individuals through tailored interventions, creating future research agendas to inform evidence-based practices, and influencing policies promoting inclusivity and equity in educational systems. The study's insights contribute to a clarification of how positive change can be affected across different levels of social work engagement.

Summary

In sum, this study, amplifying the voices of African American women sharing their school discipline experiences, illuminates pathways for positive social change. As it evaluates the impact of these experiences on present life, it can result in transformative actions. The findings implore school officials to reconsider discipline policies, forming a proactive stance against negative outcomes. Crucially, the development of restorative

practices offers hope for increased educational attainment, countering the disproportionate challenges, which Black girls face. Recent literature, such as the study by Annamma et al. (2022), supports the implementation of restorative practices to address the overrepresentation of Black girls in disciplinary actions, highlighting the necessity for culturally responsive policies in schools. Moreover, this study resonates with legislative efforts, such as the P.U.S.H.O.U.T. Act, emphasizing the urgency of creating safe and nurturing environments for all students. Based on this, we create the way for equitable education, breaking cycles of pushout and contributing to positive social change for Black girls nationwide.

References

Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Irvine, C. K., & Walker, D. (2018). *Introduction to research in education.* Cengage Learning.

Adu, P. (2019). *A step-by-step guide to qualitative data coding.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351044516

American Civil Liberties Union. (2008, June 6). *What is the school-to-prison pipeline?* https://www.aclu.org/documents/what-school-prison-pipeline

Annamma, S. A., Anyon, Y., Joseph, N. M., Farrar, J., Greer, E., Downing, B., & Simmons, J. (2019). Black girls and school discipline: The complexities of being overrepresented and understudied. *Urban Education, 54*(2), 211–242. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916646610

Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Irvine, C. K., & Walker, D. (2018). *Introduction to research in education.* Cengage Learning.

Barnes, J. C., & Motz, R. T. (2018). Reducing inequalities in adulthood arrest by reducing inequalities in school discipline: Evidence from the school-to-prison pipeline. *Developmental Psychology, 54*(12), 2328–2340. https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000613

Barnes, J. C., and Ryan T. Motz, R. T. 2018. “Reducing inequalities in adulthood arrest by reducing inequalities in school discipline: Evidence from the school-to-prison pipeline.” *Developmental Psychology, 54*(12), 2328-2340. https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000613

Battjes, K., & Kaplan, L. Z. (2023). Zero tolerance vs restorative justice in the United States. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal, 14*(1), 1-25. https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.1414

Bleiweis, R., Cawthorne Gaines, A., & Boesch, D. (2020, August 3). *The basic facts about women in poverty*. Center for American Progress. https://www.americanprogress.org/article/basic-facts-women-poverty/

Bleiweis, R., Cawthorne Gaines, A., & Boesch, D. (2020, August 3). *The basic facts about women in poverty*. Center for American Progress. https://www.americanprogress.org/article/basic-facts-women-poverty/

Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2018). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road map from beginning to end.* SAGE Publications.

Bullard, E. (2020). Purposive sampling. In *Salem Press Encyclopedia*. https://research-ebscocom.libezp2.utar.edu.my/linkprocessor/plink?id=93e5d55e-e60b-3b1c-a57d11d186b083be

Burnett, M., McBride, M., Green, M. N., & Cooper, S. M. (2022). "When I think of Black girls, I think of opportunities": Black girls' identity development and the protective role of parental socialization in educational settings. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.933476

Butler-Barnes, S. T., & Inniss-Thompson, M. N. (2020, February 19). *"*My teacher doesn't like me": Perceptions of teacher discrimination and school discipline among African-American and Caribbean Black adolescent girls. MDPI.*Education Sciences, 10*(2), 44. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10020044

Carter Andrews, D. J., & Gutwein, M. (2020). Middle school students' experiences with inequitable discipline practices in school: The elusive quest for cultural responsiveness. *Middle School Journal*, *51*(1), 29-38. https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2019.1689778

Clark, T., Foster, L., Bryman, A., & Sloan, L. (2021). *Social research methods 6E*. Oxford University Press.

Council on School Health. (2013). The crucial role of recess in school. *Pediatrics, 131*(1), 183–188. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2012-2993

Crenshaw, K. (2020). *Intersectionality as critical social Theory Theory*. Duke University Press.

Crenshaw, K. W., Ocen, P., & Nanda, J. (2015). *Black girls matter: Pushed out, overpoliced, and underprotected.* Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies, Columbia Law School. https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/3227

Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (5th ed.). Pearson.

Curran, F. C. (2016). Racial disproportionalities in discipline: The role of zero tolerance policies. In G. Crews (Ed.), *Critical examinations of school violence and disturbance in K-12 education* (pp. 149-164). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-9935-9.ch010

David, M., & Amey, M. (2020). Critical Race Feminism. In *The SAGE encyclopedia of higher education* (pp. 319-321). SAGE Publications.

Epstein, R., Blake, J. J., & González, T. (2017). *Girlhood interrupted: The erasure of Black girls' childhood*—Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality

Evans-Winters, V. E. (2020). *Black Feminism in Education: Black Women Speak Back, Up, and Out*. Peter Lang.

Flores, R., & Weisfeldt, S. (2020, February 26). *Body camera videos show 6-year-old sobbing and pleading with officers during arrest*. CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2020/02/26/us/body-camera-video-6-year-old-arrested/index.html

González, T., & Epstein, R. (2022). Critical race feminism, health, and restorative practices in schools: Centering the experiences of Black and Latina girls. *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law*, (*29*.(2), 409. doi:https://doi.org/10.36641/mjgl.29.2.critical

Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M., & de Lacey, S. (2016). Qualitative research methods: When to use them and how to judge them. *Human Reproduction, 31*(3), 498–501. https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/dev334

Hines-Datiri, D., & Carter Andrews, D. J. (2020). The effects of zero tolerance policies on Black girls: Using critical race feminism and figured worlds to examine school discipline. *Urban Education, 55*(10), 1419–1440. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085917690204

Hood, A. N. (2023). Dual status and Adultification: Black girls' lives in context. *Journal of Family Strengths*, *23*(1). https://doi.org/10.58464/2168-670x.1472

Hooley, T., Wellens, J., & Marriott, J. (2012). *What is online research? Using the internet for social science research.* Bloomsbury Academic.

James, N., & Busher, H. (2009). *Online interviewing.* SAGE Publications.

Kemp-Graham, K. Y. (2018). #BlackGirlsMatter: A case study examining the intersectionality of race, gender, and school discipline. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, *21*(3), 21–35. https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458917741171

LDF, Legal Defense Fund & NWLCNational Women's Law Center. (2014, September). *Unlocking Opportunity for African American Girls: A Call to Action for Educational Equity*. NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/Unlocking-Opportunity-for-African-American_Girls_0_Education.pdf

Lindsay, C. A., & Hart, C. M. D. (2017). Exposure to same-race teachers and student disciplinary outcomes for Black Students students in North Carolina. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *39*(3), 485–510. https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373717693109

Lodi, E., Perrella, L., Lepri, G. L., Scarpa, M. L., & Patrizi, P. (2022). Use of restorative justice and restorative practices at school: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19*(1), 96. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19010096

Losen, D. J., & Whitaker, A. (2020). *11 million days lost: Race, discipline, and safety at U.S. public schools.* American Civil Liberties Union. https://www.aclu.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/final_11-million-days_ucla_aclu.pdf

Losen, D. J., & Whitaker, A. (2020). *Lost instruction: The disparate impact of the school discipline gap in California.* The Civil Rights Project at UCLA.

McKkim, C. (2023). Meaningful member-checking: A structured approach to member-Checking checking. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, *7*(2), 41-52. https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/12973 https://www.ajqr.org/download/meaningful-member-checking-a-structured-approach-to-member-checking-12973.pdf

Mcleod, S. A. (2019, July 30). *Qualitative vs quantitative research*. Study Guides for Psychology Students - Simply Psychology. https://www.simplypsychology.org/qualitative-quantitative.html

Meek, S. E., & Gilliam, W. S. (2016). Expulsion and suspension in early education are social justice and health equity matters. *National Academy of Medicine.* Retrieved from https://nam.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Expulsion-and-Suspension-in-Early-Education-as-Matters-of-Social-Justice-and-Health-Equity.pdf

Mims, L., Burnett, M., Martin, R., Leath, S., & Harris-Thomas, B. (2023). "Black Girl Magic is everything": Recommendations for cultivating supportive spaces for Black girls. *Theory Into Practice*, *63*(1), 68–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2023.2287721

Morris, E. W., & Perry, B. L. (2016). The punishment gap: School suspension and racial disparities in achievement. *Social Problems, 63*(1), 68–86. https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spv026

Morris, E. W., & Perry, B. L. (2016). The punishment gap: School suspension and racial disparities in achievement. *Social Problems*, *63*(1), 68-86. https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spv026

Morris, M. W. (2016). *Push Out: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*. New York, NY. The New Press.

Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S. (2023). A step-by-step process of thematic analysis to develop a conceptual model in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *22*. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789

National Association of Social Workers. (1960). *Code of ethics.* National Association of Social Workers. Retrieved from https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/g/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=lPpjxmAsCTs%3d&portalid=0

National Association of Social Workers. (2008). *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers.* NASW Press. Retrieved from https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English

National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Serious Disciplinary Actions Taken by Public Schools. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute

of Education Sciences. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/a18.

Nishioka, V., Shigeoka, S., & Lolich, E. (2017). *School discipline data indicators: A guide for districts and schools* (REL 2017–240). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs.

Nolan, K. (2022). Urban students' critical race–class narratives: An examination of the relationship between race and class within the context of punitive school discipline. *Teachers College Record, 123*(14), 21-40. https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681211063965 (Original work published 2021)

Paul, D. G., & Araneo, J. (2019). "Orange is the new black" comes to New Jersey's public schools: Black girls and disproportionate rates of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. *Urban Review, 51*, 326–343. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-018-0483-8

Poole, B. A. (2019). The school of hard knocks: Examining how Pennsylvania school disciplinary policies push Black girls into the criminal justice system. *Duq. L. Rev.*, *57*, 382.

Pressley, A. (2021, March 26). *Reps. Pressley, Watson Coleman, Omar Re-Introduce Bold Legislation to End School Pushout of Girls of Color*. U.S. Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley. https://pressley.house.gov/media/press-releases/reps-pressley-watson-coleman-omar-re-introduce-bold-legislation-end-school

Riddle, T., & Sinclair, S. (2019). Racial disparities in school-based disciplinary actions are associated with county-level rates of racial bias. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States*, *116*(17), 8255. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1073/pnas.1808307116

Roots Through Recovery. (2023, September 15). *Trauma-informed care: A holistic approach.* Roots Through Recovery. Retrieved from https://roots-recovery.com/trauma-informed-care-a-holistic-approach-to-healing-and-recovery/

Ryan, E. K. K. A. (2021). School Discipline. *Salem Press Encyclopedia.*

Saldana, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Schaeffer, K. (2021, December 10). *America's public school teachers are far less racially and ethnically diverse than their students.* Pew Research Center. Retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/12/10/americas-public-school-teachers-are-far-less-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-than-their-students/

School Discipline Support Initiative. (2020, December 17). *Pipeline to Prison*. https://supportiveschooldiscipline.org/school-to-prison-pipeline

School Discipline Support Initiative. (2020, December 17). *Pushout*. https://supportiveschooldiscipline.org/push-out

School Discipline Support Initiative. (2020, December 17). *Zero Tolerance*. https://supportiveschooldiscipline.org/zero-tolerance-policy

School Discipline Support Initiative. (2020a). *Pipeline to Prison*. https://supportiveschooldiscipline.org/school-to-prison-pipeline

School Discipline Support Initiative. (2020b). *Pushout*. https://supportiveschooldiscipline.org/push-out

School Discipline Support Initiative. (2020c). *Suspension*. https://supportiveschooldiscipline.org/suspension

School Discipline Support Initiative. (2020d). *Zero Tolerance*. https://supportiveschooldiscipline.org/zero-tolerance-policy

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information* 22(2), 63-75. https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201

Smith, J., & Johnson, R. (2022). The importance of a nurturing school environment: Connections to student engagement and mental health. *Journal of School Psychology, 60*(1), 30-45. https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.13375

U.S. Department of Education United States of America, Office of Elementary & Secondary Education. (2020, November 24). *Leveraging evidence-based practices for local school improvement*. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. https://oese.ed.gov/resources/oese-technical-assistance-centers/state-support-network/resources/leveraging-evidence-based-practices-local-school-improvement/

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (2023). *Student discipline and school climate in U.S. public schools.* U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/

U.S. Department of Education. (2014, March). *Data Snapshot: Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved October 6, 2021, from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-early-learning-snapshot.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2021, June). *An Overview of Exclusionary Discipline Practices in Public Schools for the 2017-18 School.* https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-exclusionary-school-discipline.pdf

Valdebenito, S., Eisner, M., Farrington, D. P., Ttofi, M. M., Sutherland, A., & Campbell Collaboration. (2018). School-Based Interventions for Reducing Disciplinary School Exclusion: A Systematic Review. Campbell Systematic Reviews 2018:1. *Campbell Collaboration*.

Vanover, C., Mihas, P., & Saldana, J. (2021). *Analyzing and interpreting qualitative research: After the interview*. SAGE Publications.

Wing, A. (2014). Critical race feminism. In K. Murji & J. Solomos (Eds.), *Theories of Race and Ethnicity: Contemporary Debates and Perspectives* (pp. 162-179). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. dhttps://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139015431.014

Appendix: Discipline Interview Questions

Discipline Interview Questions

1. What is your age?
2. Did you graduate high school? If yes, what year?
3. Did you have to pursue an alternate education program or method because of school discipline issues?
4. Did you experience grade retention, low achievement, or dislike in school as a result of school discipline? If yes, explain:
5. Describe your overall experience in school discipline from grades K-12:
6. Overall, do you feel you were disciplined less often, just as much, or more often than girls of other races during your K-12 years?
7. Did you pursue a higher education? If yes, were your discipline experiences similar or different? Please explain:
8. Explain how school discipline in your childhood has impacted your current life/well-being:
9. If you could provide advice or a recommendation to teachers and school administration as it relates to African American girls, school discipline, and education, what would you say?
10. If you could provide advice or a recommendation to African American girls as it relates to school discipline and education, what would you say?