

**THE PERCEPTIONS OF BLACK HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS REGARDING  
THEIR EXPERIENCES PRIOR TO AN ASSIGNMENT TO A DISTRICT  
ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT:  
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL SINGLE CASE STUDY**

Dissertation

by

MARGIE FAYE MARTINEZ

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Chair of Committee,  
Committee Members,

Beverly J. Irby  
Dominique T. Chlup  
Dennie Smith  
Gwendolyn Webb-Hasan  
Fred Nafukho

Head of Department,

May 2014

Major Subject: Educational Administration and Human Resource Development

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological single case study was to understand the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to being sent to a district's discipline alternative educational placement (DAEP). The intent of this study was to use the findings to positively inform school principals' practices related to the disproportionate number of Black students' exclusionary consequences in school discipline.

This research was guided by one major question – What are the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to an assignment to a DAEP? Through purposive sampling, seven Black high school students who were assigned to the DAEP participated in the study. There were a total of 13 individual semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants. Each first interview lasted approximately one hour and each second interview was between 30-40 minutes. The semi-structured interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Additionally, the participants' school documents were examined for trends in the data. Inductive analyses of the data were conducted and saturation of common themes occurred through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding of the information.

The most pertinent finding to emerge, with the potential to impact principals' practices, indicated that Black students in this study responded according to their perception of being heard, respected, and understood by the principal or authority figure on campus. When students perceived their input was valued, and that they were received with dignity, discipline consequences were typically accepted without protest.

The opposite occurred when students perceived they were disrespected by the principal and in turn their behaviors became more aggressive and discipline consequences became more exclusionary.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the participants of my study. Thank you for sharing your experiences and perceptions with passion and honesty. Each one of you touched my life, and I hope through this work, the lives of many others will be equally impacted. Most importantly, you taught me that, “The struggle is real!” I can never thank you enough for that lesson.

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## **NOMENCLATURE**

AP	Assistant Principal
DAEP	Discipline Alternative Educational Placement
EOC	End of Course Exam
ISS	In-School Suspension
JDC	Juvenile Detention Center
JJAEP	Juvenile Justice Alternative Educational Placement
OSS	Out-of-School Suspension
TAKS	Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills
UIL	University Interscholastic League

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background of the Study**

Empirical data exist supporting the fact that the educational system's disciplinary settings are overrepresented by Black students (i.e., Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; Nichols, 2004; Ruck & Wortley, 2002; Shirley & Cornell, 2012; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Skiba, Shure, & Williams, 2012). There has been an immense amount of research conducted regarding the educational and behavioral achievement gaps between White and Black students (i.e., Dappen & Isemhagen, 2005; Jencks & Phillips 1998; Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper, 2002; Skiba et al., 2011; Smith & Draper, 2002; Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005). Educators have been attempting to understand these gaps for more than 3 decades (i.e., Butler, 2011; Ogbu, 2003; Welch & Payne, 2012; Pollack, 2013). The first phenomenological study to demonstrate the disproportionate use of school discipline, based on race, was documented by the Children's Defense Fund report in 1975 (Butler, 2011; CDF, 1975). At that time, this phenomenon was referred to as the discipline gap (Butler, 2011; Flores, 2007). The researchers for the 1975 CDF report outlined two important findings. For one, over 1 million students were suspended in the 1972-1973 school year for a total loss of more than 4 million academic days and 22,000 school years (Butler, 2011; CDF, 1975). Secondly, and more astoundingly, they reported Black students received those suspensions at twice the amount of any other racial student group (Butler, 2011; CDF, 1975). Consequently, this report brought awareness to a significant disparity in school

practice and opened the door for further research toward understanding this phenomenon. Almost 4 decades later, it continues to manifest in the form of behavioral and academic disproportionality, and researchers continue to argue a need to not only understand this issue, but to eradicate it (Haycock, 2001; Webb-Johnson, Green, & Beard, 2008). Dehlinger (2008) as well as Skiba et al. (2011) and Codrington and Fairchild (2012) have made a point of reminding educators that the disproportionate number of Black students being disciplined continued to be a top concern for school districts.

Black students are sent to the principal's office more than White students and Black students are more likely to be expelled or suspended than any other race (Butler, 2011; Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2006; Skiba et al., 2012; Wallace, 2008). Educational rules and procedures mandated by public education in the United States have established a structure that impedes Black students, by controlling and punishing them excessively (Fitzgerald, 2006). Much evidence, in the form of research and school records, exists to substantiate school districts' discipline policies result in the disproportionate suspension of Black students (i.e., Dehlinger, 2008; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2012; Utley et al., 2002).

### **It is not Only an American Issue**

Nationally, the educational system is disproportionately disciplining Black students compared to White students (Aud et al., 2010; Butler, 2011). The phenomenon of the overrepresentation of Black students experiencing school discipline is found throughout discipline academic educational placements (DAEPs), in-school-suspensions,

and out-of-school suspensions. Ruck and Wortley (2002) studied the perceptions of 1,870 racially diverse Canadian high school students regarding school discipline practices. The racial categories of the students in the study were categorized as Black, South Asian, Asian, White, and Other. Data was collected in the form of individual questionnaires regarding perceptions of discipline practices as well as a variety of general school practices. When reporting the findings of their study, Ruck and Wortley (2002) revealed that Black students appeared to have perceptions that their race is an indicator of how they would be treated by school administrators. They disclosed in their findings that, “racial/ethnic minority students are much more likely than White students to perceive discrimination with respect to teacher treatment, school suspension, use of police by school authorities, and police treatment at school” (p. 185).

Ruck and Wortley (2002) compared the similarities between their Canadian findings and past American research findings:

In addition, and of primary concern with regard to the present investigation, racial/ethnic minority students are also more likely to be disciplined at school than White students. For example, there is overwhelming American evidence that students of color, especially African American males, are much more likely to be suspended from school than are their mainstream counterparts (Banks and Banks, 1993; Bennett and Harris, 1982; Calabrese and Poe, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1994; England et al., 1982; Felice, 1981; Irvine, 1991; Jones, 1989; Kaeser, 1979; Sheets and Gay, 1996). (pp. 185-186)

Also of interest, in their findings, was that Black students perceived that they were at a disadvantage not only with discipline from school staff but also when interacting with school police. Specifically, Black students were 32 times more likely than White students to believe they were discriminated against by police at school, and 27 times more apt to believe they would be treated worse by school police than would their White peers (p. 192). In their conclusion, regarding their research, these authors argued the importance of legitimizing the views of racially Black students (Ruck & Wortley, 2002, p.194).

### **Importance of Racial and Cultural Awareness**

Black students continue to be affected by school policies of suspension and expulsion despite years of desegregation (Dehlinger, 2008). Dehlinger reminded educators that the disproportionate number of Black students being disciplined continued to be a top concern for school districts. Although researchers have demonstrated that discipline sanctions are disproportionate across racial groups, the discrepancies continue as there have not been sufficient changes made to how Black students are disciplined (Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2012). References to the disparities of disproportionate measure, pertaining to the inequity found in the school discipline setting, are fluid throughout educational literature in regard to race and discipline (i.e., Butler, 2011; Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Gregory, 1997; McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; Mendez, Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002; Morris & Goldring, 1999; Morrison, Anthony, Storine, & Dillon, 2001; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2012; Nichols, Ludwin, & Iadicola,

1999; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Taylor & Foster, 1986; Thornton & Trent, 1988; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982).

Marshall and Oliva (2006) argued when little to no attention is given to individual's cultural identities, student achievement is hindered. The consideration for the individual needs of the student along with attention to the importance of the learner's cultural identities and experiences of exclusion and mistreatment enable support for student achievement. Additionally, Marshall and Ward (2004) highlighted concerns for social justice in schools and encouraged administrators to confront inequitable treatment of others:

Marginalization of social justice concerns not only affects those with unequal social, educational, and professional capital because they are poor, immigrant, female, gay, or different in race, abilities, ethnicity, religion, language, or culture but also limits the voices of allies within educational administration that would confront issues of inequality and injustice in our field. (p. 4)

### **Social Justice or Assimilation**

Common causes of inequities revolve around societal, cultural, historical, and economical differences of the White middle class accepted norm (Marshall & Ward, 2004). School principals need to be aware of the negative impact their actions have on Black students when attempting to assimilate Black culture to the needs of White culture (Ford & Malaney, 2012). It is not uncommon to hear statements that Black students need to work harder or apply themselves more. Ladson-Billings (1995) referred to this type of achievement by effort as *meritocracy*.

... the goal of education becomes how to “fit” students constructed as “other” by virtue of their race/ethnicity, language, or social class into a hierarchical structure that is defined as a meritocracy. However, it is unclear how these conceptions do more than reproduce the current inequities. (p. 467)

Marshall and Oliva (2010) contended that a systematic approach to dealing with social and economic inequities was needed. They argued that the traditional way of assigning problems to specialists in isolation have proven to be simply quick fixes. Examples of specialist often include social workers, special education experts, counselors, and multicultural trainers to name a few. These authors argued that much would be accomplished by working together through case study methods to gain perspectives and learn from each other. They claimed that socially justice leaders question, argue, and debate the traditional policies and procedures in education. Additionally, they argued that socially just leaders build communities of trust and inclusion with safety in difference. The tradition of schooling for assimilation, making all students and learners the same, undermines social justice efforts (Marshall & Oliva, 2010, p. 195).

Lopez (2003) argued for movement away from preparing the disenfranchised to assimilate to White middle class America and instead movement toward social justice.

School leaders must be prepared to work with individuals who are culturally different and help create learning environments that foster respect, tolerance, and intercultural understanding. They must also have an awareness of the effect of

racism and how it intersects with other areas of difference such as gender, sexual orientation, disability, and class oppression. (p. 71)

Ogbu (2004) very clearly summarized the findings from his previous 15 years of studying the effects on the Black culture of either attempting to assimilate to White culture or opposing the concept of “acting White.” He shared that Black students experience similar stressors as Black adults when the students attempt to succeed in school and the adults seek to progress socially and financially in the workforce. “Black students face the same burden of ‘acting White’ that Black Americans have faced throughout their history and still face in contemporary United States” (p. 30). Ogbu referred to the struggles endured while coping with the dilemma or burden of assimilating to the White culture, for both student and adult, as well as the need to cope with peer and community expectations of refraining from acting White. One method he discussed was referred to as assimilation without accommodation. He claimed this as a culturally relevant strategy where Black students or adults are able to convince friends and family that they are able to behave and talk like the White culture when needed and still be able to go home and behave and talk like the people in the their Black communities. This type of assimilation is an unfair juggling act that unnecessarily burdens Black people as they attempt to find a meaningful place in their dichotic world, one that has been historically overseen by the White cultural.

I argue the need for socially just educational practices, ones that honor differences and embraces diversity. My research study was planned and executed based on this premise. My hope is to impact understanding, pedagogy, discipline practices,

and relationships through acknowledging and valuing the perceptions of students who are disproportionately represented in school discipline.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Throughout the nation, Black students are disproportionately represented in school discipline (Aud et al., 2010; Butler, 2011; Shirley & Cornell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2012). Additionally, Black students are often overrepresented in other negatively constructed categories such as special education, low achievement on state mandated exams, and high school dropout rates. Often involvement in negatively constructed categories has had a direct correlation to overrepresentation in school suspensions, discipline alternative education placements (DAEPs), and representation in the juvenile legal system (Artiles & Harry, 2005; Ford, 2004; Webb-Johnson, Artiles, Trent, Jackson, & Velox, 1998). When Black students are placed in a DAEP there have usually been many prior negative school experiences for these students. It is not uncommon to find Black students in a DAEP who are angry and who feel unsupported by teachers and administrators in their schools (Kim & Taylor, 2008).

Students and adults thrive for acceptance and understanding from others, and these basic human needs are imperative for healthy growth and development of children (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Feeling uncared for by adults in school is a primary concern derived from student perspective (Conchas, 2006). Researchers have claimed that students who are considered behaviorally challenging respond in a positive manner to school personnel with whom the students perceive to care (i.e., Infantino & Little, 2005; Lewis, Romi, Katz, & Qui, 2008).

## **Efficacy**

Successfully working with historically marginalized student populations such as those of Black students who are considered discipline issues can be demanding for principals. What influences an educator's success with students who are often considered to be discipline issues? What is it that school principals should know from the perspective of the Black student that would impact abilities and skills for the principal toward successful outcomes for Black students? In other words, what self-efficacy might be developed in the principal to combat the overrepresentation of Black students in school discipline? Mabokela and Madsen (2005) referred to efficacy as the belief in the power to achieve a desired outcome or goal. Additionally, self-efficacy is people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce effects (McKenzie & Skrla, 2011).

For example, the belief of the principal that she is capable of positively impacting Black students' proportionate representation in discipline is considered self-efficacy in that principal. Once principals are empowered with the knowledge and skills to do the work, the more apt they are to be successful (Madsen & Mabokela, 2009). Many researchers have devoted their studies to the understanding of self-efficacy (i.e., Choi, Fuqua, & Griffin, 2001; McKenzie & Skrla, 2011; Tschannen-Moren, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Hoy (1998) believed most of the researchers of self-efficacy have focused on building those skills for teachers, and few researchers have conducted studies that would contribute to the self-efficacy or the ability of the principal to understand the perceptions of Black students. Black (2003) found, as articulated by Lunenburg and Irby (2008), "A core task of administrators is decision making, which requires the synthesis

of multiple cognitive processes to incorporate knowledge into creative solutions. Principals pull from personal knowledge and experience to make decisions on a daily basis” (p. 116). I argue an important element of decision making includes the ability, or the self-efficacy, to view choices and consequences through a variety of cultural lenses. As principals begin to consider the personal experiences of others, while simultaneously being aware of the impact their own personal experiences have on their day to day student discipline decisions, a level of self-efficacy might emerge.

### **Students’ Thoughts**

Within the context of the data derived from research conducted concerning children of color, Black children in particular, and the overrepresentation of these children in school discipline, few researchers have focused on the perceptions of the students regarding their experiences in the school discipline system (Caton, 2012). Researchers have studied Black students’ perceptions as related to White teachers (Casteel, 2000), the perceptions of Black students regarding academics (Howard, 2003), and the teachers’ perceptions regarding cultural issues (Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003), to name a few. Ruck and Wortley (2002) conducted research to understand student perceptions that included all groups of students who were considered non-majority not just Black students. My study was conducted with the belief that understanding Black students’ perceptions of their experiences, prior to a DAEP assignment, has the potential to positively influence principals and their decision making processes as they work through discipline issues with Black students. In turn, by empowering the principal with abilities and knowledge, hence self-efficacy, there could

be a positive impact made toward closing the disproportionate discipline gap between Black students and their non-Black peers (Choi et al., 2001). I posit that principals who possess a high level of understanding culturally relevant behaviors or perceptions will aid in the ability to react to Black students in a way they feel valued and heard which is at the heart of building positive relationships. Positive relationships increase the level of positive behaviors (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003; Murray, 2011).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological single case study was to understand the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to being placed in a DAEP, with the intent to positively inform principals' practices related to student discipline. As researchers have shown, high school students who are represented at a disproportionate level at DAEPs overwhelmingly are Black students.

### **Significance of the Study**

Black students' perceptions and voices are underrepresented in the literature. This underrepresentation is a significant factor leading to the lack of knowledge base for principals regarding disciplining Black students (Ruck & Wortley, 2002). In an effort to add to the current literature of overrepresentation of Black students in schools' disciplinary settings, and to explore the assumptions some researchers claimed that Black children see their race as an indicator of treatment, I adopted the recommendations of Ruck and Wortley (2002), as well as, Trotter (2007) as they urged researchers to investigate student perceptions. Therefore, the intent of this research was to collect

qualitative data of the perceptions of Black high school students' experiences prior to being placed at the district's DAEP. As a way to explore the causes, thus build the efficacy to counter the causes of disproportionate representation in exclusionary discipline practices of Black students, such as DAEP assignments, significance was placed in attempting to understand the perceptions of their experiences prior to an exclusionary assignment versus for example their experiences during a DAEP assignment.

Arming principals with an understanding of the needed awareness of cultural relevance to combat the national occurrence of disproportionately disciplining Black students, I hope to dignify the perceptions and voices of Black high school students' experiences prior to being placed in a DAEP. Empowered with knowledge of racial perceptions, educators and principals will possess a higher competency level of cultural understanding to foster equitable treatment during the disciplining of Black students.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Black* was used to refer to people historically known as African American who have an ancestral background from the native populations of Sub-Saharan Africa and who live in the United States. Much energy and discussion was put into the decision to use the term Black versus the more formal term African American. I specifically discussed with each of the participants in my study their preference between the terms, what the different terms meant to them, and what terminology was used in their homes. Each participant responded that their comfort level was with the term Black and that word more accurately described how they self-identified. Additionally, I am a

practitioner in the public school system, and I have the privilege of being around students from a variety of racial backgrounds on a daily basis. My daily interactions with students has also contributed to my understanding of the prevalence and preference of the term Black as it aligns with how most of my racially Black students choose to self-identify. To trouble the term further, I compared the terms Black/African American to my own racial background of White/European Caucasian. I am aware that not only am I most comfortable with being identified as White; I cannot recall, in the recent past, being referred to as Caucasian or European Caucasian. Therefore, I made the decision to use the term Black and the word is capitalized throughout this paper because the term represents a socially constructed group of people (Omi & Winant, 1993).

*Culturally Proficiency* was used to describe a level of knowledge-based skills and understanding that are required to successfully interact with students from a variety of cultures, races, backgrounds, and experiences by holding all forms of cultural difference in high esteem with a continuing self-assessment of one's values, beliefs, and biases grounded in cultural humility (Banks, 1988; Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003).

*Culturally Relevant* was used to describe practices that utilize the knowledge and experiences of students with diverse cultural, racial, socioeconomic, behavioral, and educational backgrounds to inform educators' practices (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

*DAEP or Discipline Alternative Educational Placement* was used to describe where a student is sent when discipline decisions state the student will be suspended from the home campus and educated at an alternative school district location.

*Disproportionate* was used to refer to the case in which the proportion of a given ethnic group enrolled in a specific category exceeds the proportion of that ethnic group in the total school population (Sample, 2009, p. 22).

*In-school suspension* was used to refer to when a student is disciplined by being removed from the classroom setting and assigned to an alternate location on the school campus.

*Out-of-school suspension* was used to refer to when a student is disciplined by being removed from the school setting and is expected to stay at home for a pre-determined amount of time.

*Overrepresentation* was used to refer to the over-identification of Black students in certain undesirable categories (Sample, 2009, p. 22).

*White* was used to refer to people historically known as European or Caucasian and are not mixed with other races of color. White is capitalized throughout this paper because the term represents a socially constructed group of people (Omi & Winant, 1993).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Cultural difference theory (Gay, 2010; Heath, 1995) and labeling theory (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1951) are the two main theoretical concepts used to frame the conceptual framework for my study.

#### **Cultural Difference Theory**

Cultural difference theory researchers have maintained that many of the problems faced by Black children in school are due to cultural differences between the

home culture and the school culture (i.e., Howard, 2003; Johnson & Bush, 2004). Some examples of perceived home and school cultural differences are language, family structure, gender roles, and educational values (Sample, 2009). Many researchers of cultural difference theory have not claimed that the home culture of Black students is a negative element of the Black students' life experiences; actually, many cultural difference theory researchers claim that the home cultural experiences do not match those constructed for the school culture (i.e., Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001; Murtadha-Watts & Stoughton, 2004). Therefore, cultural difference theorists have called for the school staff to become culturally sensitive and aware of the unnecessary disparities manifested by the differences between the home and school culture and have stressed the need for culturally relevant pedagogy for educators (i.e., Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Thorsen, Dekoven, Pattee, Watson, & Collier, 2011).

Within the study of cultural difference theory, institutional racism and deficit thinking of the established White culture or paradigm of American schools have negatively influenced school experiences for Black students (Collier, 2007; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2003; Johnson & Bush, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Prier, 2007). Furthermore, lack of cultural competence and the presence of racist ideologies which have been found in cultural difference theory research have had an adverse effect on Black students in school discipline (Sample, 2009; Townsend, 2000). Researchers of cultural difference theory have also claimed that popular culture of Black students, as portrayed through the media, have contributed to the overrepresentation of Black

students in discipline (i.e., Blanchett, 2006; Collier, 2007; Donalson, 2007; Jackson & Moore, 2008; Prier, 2007). The portrayal of Blacks in the media as aggressive, feared, and as dangerous has marginalized the cultures of Black students by labeling them negatively and has voided the acknowledgement of cultural or individual strengths and talents (Adams, Robertson, Gray-Ray, & Ray, 2003; Caton, 2012; Johnson, 1985).

### **Labeling Theory**

The effects of labeling Blacks in such categories as deviant and aggressive, based on cultural differences, have been of concern to researchers across disciplines such as education and psychology (i.e., Adams & Evans, 1996; Adams et al., 2003; Cornett-Ruiz & Hendricks, 1993). Research can be found as far back as Tannenbaum's (1938) work when he claimed that communities perpetuate perceived delinquent and aggressive behaviors based on overreaction to minor infractions. Today, those communities include public schools as Black students are overrepresented in discipline; oftentimes, this is due to minor infractions perceived as something much worse by the White hegemonic paradigm of school culture (Allen, 2013; Brown, 2003; Litowitz, 2000; McKenzie, 2009). Hegemony is used to describe oppressive structures in society where a particular social group is considered to be the supreme social group. This social hierarchy can be accomplished through physical force as well as through the submission of the people being dominated, whereby individuals often participate in their own oppression (Butler, 2011; Litowitz, 2000).

Labeling theorists have stressed two types of labeling (i.e., Adams et al, 2003; Lemert, 1951). One is referred to as formal labels. These labels are initiated by

interactions with social control groups such as institutions or agencies. The other is referred to as informal labels. These labels are initiated by interactions with school stakeholders such as teachers and peers. Researchers have warned of the dangers of labeling, regardless of whether the labels are formal or informal. Interestingly, label theorists have differed in which action is the cause of labeling, the labeling due to minor acts of misbehavior (i.e., Becker, 1963; Tannenbaum, 1938) or labeling due to social group association with those who have been previously labeled (i.e., Adams & Evans, 1996; Johnson, 1985).

Either way, (Becker, 1963; Ferguson, 2000) have argued that labels such as deviance is socially constructed by a group (educators) and then when what has been defined as deviant is perceived in an actor (student), the actor becomes labeled as such. Furthermore, as misbehaviors are socially constructed by groups, there are different understandings of misbehaviors based on the cultural group. Different groups are likely to make different inferences based on cultural norms (Johnson, 1985). Johnson's (1985) findings were explained by Sample (2009), "Labeling is a process by which the members of a group, community, or society (a) interpret a behavior deviant; (b) define persons who so behave as a certain kind of deviant; and (c) accord them the treatment considered appropriate to such deviants" (p. 40).

It was important to use labeling theory to assist in the conceptual framework of the perceptions of Black high school students' experiences prior to being assigned to a DAEP, as labeling is a socially constructed reaction to deviance from what is expected as normal behavior or reactions to situations. Johnson (1985) claimed it important to

consider how labels come to be in schools and who are the groups constructing the labels. Sample (2009) claimed, “What are seen as negative labels are those that identify students who have not measured up to mainstream norms academically, behaviorally, or socially, resulting in discipline referrals, suspensions, expulsions,...and special education placements” (p. 41).

### **Research Question**

My research was guided by one major question - What are the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to an assignment to a district alternative educational placement?

### **Limitations**

My phenomenological single case study research did have limitations. The population of participants for which I studied, Black high school students who were placed in a DAEP, did not allow for the perceptions of a younger population of DAEP students to be heard. As educators attempt to understand the lived experiences and perceptions of *others*, consideration could be given to all of these students not only the older ones. In this study, the *others* were Black high school students who were referred to as discipline problems. As was expected, based on district trends, the high school students who were referred to the DAEP during my study were Black students. Marshall and Oliva (2010) claimed that the proper use of culturally sensitive case studies bring to light the lack of attention being placed on the importance of the learner’s cultural identities and experiences of exclusion and mistreatment.

Since I depended on the participants' self-reflection and perceptions of treatment during discipline, there could have been a tendency to share information in a way that pushed blame away from any of their own actions. In other words, participants might have attempted to gain sympathy and tout victimization. Babbie (2006) claimed that this response is a common concern with self-reported data.

An additional limitation might have been that the subject pool consisted of students who were in trouble and who were also in the most restrictive discipline setting. This was an appropriate pool from which to choose for this study; however, it is important to note that students who were also removed from the mainstream school setting through punishments such as in-school suspension or out-of school suspension were not considered. Basically, even though much can be learned from their perspectives, the students who were in the discipline continuum and who happened to not yet be placed in the DAEP did not have their voices heard.

Though there might have been limitations in this study, I argue that the perspectives that were achieved from this study have contributed to the literature and have the possibility of impacting principals' culturally relevant practices in this community and in similar types of communities.

### **Delimitations**

The delimitations that were accepted in this study were guided by a desire to understand the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to being sent to the district's DAEP. In order to gain the perspectives from high school students, I only recruited participants for the study who were from the school

district's high school level DAEP. Therefore, this study does not include perceptions of younger students who are also involved in the DAEP. This delimitation was deemed an appropriate launching point for this study, by this district's research review committee, as it was believed that the older students could provide a basis from which to begin to understand the experiences of students who get in trouble. This belief was center around the probability of high school students having more experiences and possibly more developed communication skills to share their experiences than the younger students.

The unique dynamics involved when a principal is working through discipline consequences with a student led me to analyze the perceptions of the student regarding those interactions. Since there is a nationwide phenomenon to explore regarding the overrepresentation of Black students in school discipline, I am especially interested in those interactions of principals and Black students.

### **Assumptions**

It is important for researchers to consider their assumptions regarding studies prior to conducting their research. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) argued it important to consider assumptions from three different viewpoints – *nature*, *analysis*, and *interpretation*. My study did include the following assumptions: (a) the selected participants responded to the individual interviews honestly – *nature* – this required deliberate attention as to not allow this to become a limitation; (b) the data collected accurately delineates the perceptions of Black high school students' experiences prior to being placed in the DAEP - *analysis*; and (c) the interpretation of the data accurately reflect the perceptions of the participants – *interpretation* (p. 135).

## **Organization of the Dissertation**

My study is comprised of five chapters. In Chapter I, I discuss the background of the problem, the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, definition of terms, the conceptual framework of the study, the research question that was explored, limitations, delimitations, and assumptions. In Chapter II, I share an extensive review of the literature. This review includes historical perspective, inequitable discipline practices, inequitable achievement gaps, inequitable representation in the justice system, student perceptions of inequity, teacher perspectives on race and discipline, principals' responsibilities for change, as well as national, state, and local data regarding disproportionate discipline practices. In Chapter III, I explain the details of the methodology used in the study. This includes the rationale for a qualitative research design, researcher perspective, context of the study, instrumentation, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability of the study, trustworthiness and credibility of the study, and ethical considerations. In Chapter IV, I share the findings of my research and narratives from the perspectives of Black high school students' experiences prior to being placed in a DAEP. Finally, in Chapter V, I summarize the study, share the implications for principals' practices, and make recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

The educational system is disproportionately disciplining Black students compared to White students (Aud et al., 2010; Butler, 2011; Skiba et al., 2012; Townsend, 2000, 2012). The overrepresentation of Black students is found throughout the discipline alternative education placement settings (DAEPs), is apparent within in-school-suspensions, and is evident in out-of-school suspensions (Butler, 2011; Randle, 2008; TEA, 2010). References to the disparities of disproportionate measure, as pertaining to the inequity found in school settings, are evident throughout educational literature in regards to race and discipline (i.e., Costenbader & Markson, 1997; Gregory, 1997; McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; Mendez et al., 2002; Morris & Goldring, 1999; Morrison et al., 2001; Nichols et al., 1999; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 1997; Thornton & Trent, 1988; Skiba et al., 2012; Wu et al., 1982). Over the last 30 almost 40 years, the overrepresentation of Black students in disciplinary programs has been documented and studied (Butler, 2011; Caton, 2012; CDF, 1975; Gregory, 1997; Fitzgerald, 2006; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2012). Unfortunately, exclusion from school is the primary recourse used by principals when teachers write discipline referrals or when a teacher removes a student from the classroom (Casteel, 2000; Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2007; Duncan & Murnane, 2011; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Shirley & Cornell, 2012). Interestingly, exclusion is used even more often when the student is

Black (Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Rosborough, 2011; Taylor & Foster, 1986; Vincent, Tobin, Hawken, & Frank, 2012).

### **Historical Perspective**

Even with the immense amount of research conducted as far back as the early 1970s regarding the educational and behavioral achievement gaps between White and Black students (i.e., CDF, 1975; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Williams, 2011), there has been little to no apparent positive change. Nationally, in 2001, Black students accounted for approximately 17% of the total school population; and yet, they constituted 32% of all school suspensions (Brooks, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 2000; United States Department of Education, 2001). Nationally, in 2012, Black students accounted for approximately 18% of the total school population; and yet, they constituted 35% of all school suspensions (CRDC, 2012). Ogbu (2003) indicated that educators had been trying to understand such gaps for years, and there had been no great avail for change. A careful look at the past decade of educational data continues to render no significant change in closing the educational achievement gaps between Black and White students (Aud et al., 2010; Butler, 2011; Haycock, 2001; Skiba et al., 2012; Townsend, 2000, 2012). More recent researchers have continued to claim that disproportionate discipline practices based on race is apparent in schools (i.e., Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; Butler, 2013; Kaufman, 2010; Skiba et al., 2011; Vincent et al., 2012). Undoubtedly, this is an historical problem for education, and one that has not been rectified with the past three decades of research.

## **National Examples of Educational Discrimination from the Early to the Current Years**

Examining this currently common and historically prevalent problem in education, Walker's (1996) historical account of a Black community's experiences between 1866 and 1938 in a segregated southern North Carolina town provided a credible look at the contextualization of racial inequalities as it pertained to the right to attend school. Walker shared that a man named John Stephens, a White Republican in this southern community post-Civil War, was elected to the county state senate in 1868. He was killed by the Ku Klux Klan on May 21, 1870 for his association with Black people (Proctor, 2009; Brisson, 2011). Thirty years after the death of Stephens, his home was sold to some prominent Black community members and was made into a school for Black students. The school was named the Yanceyville School. The development of formal education for Black students became possible in this segregated southern community due in part to the contributions of the Black people themselves (Jacobs, 1998; Walker, 1996). Teachers also helped provide for the very limited school materials available to educate Black children. By 1919, the Yanceyville School was overcrowded. The Black community members used their own money, coupled with the Rosenwald funds (Julius Rosenwald was a philanthropist who had contributed to the building of Black schools - the first being in North Carolina) to build a larger school (Reed, 2011). It was necessary for the Black community and the church to raise funds if they wanted a larger school. In 1925, with the help of Rosenwald, their school was ready (Grimm, 2002).

Walker (1996) also explained her findings of the often accepted way of life for many Black people in North Carolina's segregated south. During this Jim Crow era of separate but equal racial segregation, most Black people worked, raised money, and contributed financially to have the right to go to school (Jackson & Weidman, 2005). Walker (1996) agreed with Jackson and Weidman and related that the need to be self-sufficient to receive an education was not an expectation for the White people. She found that the school boards often gave more money, more resources, better amenities, better everything to the White children. There was evidence that the Black schools received the White schools' hand-me-downs. When a White school was being renovated many times the Black people were expected to dismantle the building and recycle the materials to build their schools. Walker emphasized that it was as if the Civil War had not ended. Most Blacks were poor and uneducated, and many Whites were bitter that some of their taxes were paying to educate Black children. Though the Civil War had ended, there continued to be inequities; there continued to be a need for a fight or a need for persistence from the Black community to get what it required educationally, and there continued to be immense levels of inequities.

Racial inequalities are prevalent throughout history. Blaustein and Zangrando (1968) shared that Margaret Douglas, a European Countess, received a jail sentence in 1853 for teaching children of freed slaves to read and write. In 1896, the American educational system experienced *Plessy v Ferguson* legislation which mandated *separate but equal* opportunities for the education of Blacks and Whites (Medley, 2003). However, the educational experiences were anything but equal. That period in time is

often referred to as the Jim Crow period (Irons, 2002; Jackson & Weidman, 2005; Siminoff & Siminoff, 2008). Attacks on Black communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often resulted in the burning of Black schools (Harmer, 2001). It was common for White people to believe that the northern European people were of superior intelligence when compared to any other racial group and that this superior race had to be segregated from the *feeble-minded* (Terman, 1916).

**Jim Crow era and *Brown* legislation.** Simply, the Jim Crow terminology began in 1830 when an actor named Thomas Rice began his playact that included painting his white skin black, wearing a matted black wig and clothes commonly found on poor Black men, and exaggerating dance moves that imitated limping and shuffling while singing a distorted version of a song he heard slaves in Ohio sing (Siminoff & Siminoff, 2008).

O, Jim Crow's come to town, as you all must know,

An' he wheel about, he turn about, he do jis' so,

An' ebery time he wheel about he jump Jim Crow. (p. 1)

“By the mid-1830s, Rice's Jump Jim Crow routine became America's first international hit” (p. 1). During the Jim Crow era with the perpetuation of inaccurate and disrespectful representations of Black people, through the media of the time - plays, as gimp and simple the stereotype became the perception of the White community regarding the Black community.

After the Civil War, there were several amendments to the United States Constitution in an effort to reconstruct the South. Hence, the amendments are often

referred to as the Reconstruction Amendments. Specifically of interest for this study are the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. The Thirteen Amendment was ratified in 1865 and found slavery to be illegal. The Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in 1868 and provided for equal protection under the law and due process regardless of race or ethnicity. The Fifteenth Amendment gave all adult males the right to vote regardless of race, color, or previous servitude. Regardless of the law of the Fifteenth Amendment, many states found ways to hinder Black men from voting. This was primarily achieved through requiring poll taxes and literacy tests. Most recently freed slaves were poor and illiterate (Irons, 2002).

Consequently, between the late 1870s and the 1960s every single state in the South as well as several outside the South passed laws that prevented the co-mingling of Black and White people. It was common to find separation by race at places to eat, swim, walk, work, play, learn, be hospitalized and be buried (p. 2). This separation by race was sometimes taken even farther by beliefs that touching or mixing material items that belonged to Black people with those belonging to White people had reason to be feared. For example, in some court rooms separate Bibles could be found so that White people did not touch a Bible that had been touched by a Black person. Other examples included keeping records regarding marriage, birth, and death separated by race. One such example is the 1938 legislative order in Florida to shelf student textbooks separately by race (Siminoff & Siminoff, 2008).

The 1950s continued with familiar beliefs that Blacks needed to be educated to work in the lower ranking positions of the community. Blacks continued to be

undereducated compared to Whites (Rury, 2002). Even with the groundbreaking legislative mandates for equal educational access brought on by *Brown v Board of Education* in 1954, discrepancies did not and have not become equal (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Losen & Welner, 2001). I argue that the educational system continues to harbor similar racist overtones as Black students are still segregated from classroom instruction as they are disproportionately being suspended, expelled, and sent to alternative discipline schools.

**National examples of the discipline gap.** After review of national data available for the 2009-2010 school year, researchers explicitly argued the findings that the discipline gap continued. For example, Losen and Gillespie's (2012) UCLA Civil Rights Project, which was shared in the National School Boards Association (2013) policy guide addressing the national out-of-school suspension crisis, reported that 3.3 million students were suspended from school in the 2009-2010 school year. Of those 3.3 million students, Black students were 3 times more likely to be suspended from school than their non-Black peers. The writers of the NSBA (2013) report also shared that nationally, during the 2009-2010 school year, 17%, which was 1 in every 6 Black school aged student, K-12, were suspended at least once. Compare this to 1 in 13, or 8 %, for Native Americans; 1 in 13, or 7%, for Hispanics; 1 in 20, or 5%, for Whites; and the 1 in 50, or 2%, for Asian Americans. More than 13% of students identified as special needs were also suspended nationally in the 2009-2010 school year, which was 2 times the national rate for non-special need students. Astoundingly, 25% of Black special needs students, grades K-12, were suspended at least once in the 2009-2010 school year. In

some of the larger districts in the nation, Black male students in special education were found to have suspension rates over 33%. The NSBA (2013) researchers shared a few State specifics as well. They reported that 839 out of 6,779 school districts suspended over 10% of the district's student population at least once during the 2009-2010 academic year. Comparisons of Black and White student suspensions yielded Illinois the state with the largest racial discipline gap in the nation at 21.3%. Illinois also suspended nearly 42% of all Black students receiving special education services. Furthermore, it was reported that large districts in Memphis, Tennessee; Columbus, Ohio; Henrico, Virginia; and Chicago, Illinois; suspended 18% or more of the student population in the 2009-2010 school year. It is also worth noting that the schools with higher suspension rates experienced lower state accountability scores than schools with lower suspension rates and this finding was adjusted for demographic differences (p. 2). Logically, it becomes clear that the connection between these lower test scores and higher suspension rates disproportionately impacted Black students as they experienced the majority of the school suspensions.

Moreover, Losen and Martinez (2013) shared findings from their exploration of the national data concerning secondary level students and exclusionary practices. They compared national data from the 1972-1973 school year through the 2009-2010 school year regarding secondary school suspension rates by race. During the 1972-1973 school year, 11.8% of Black students experienced some level of suspension from school, compared to 6.1 % for Hispanic American students, 6% for White students, 5.6% for American Indian students, and 2.4% for Asian American students. Comparatively,

during the 2009-2010 school year, 24.3% of Black students experienced some level of suspension from school, compared to 12% for Hispanic American Students, 7.1% for White students, 8.4% for American Indian students, and 2.3% for Asian American students. They summarized these findings:

Specifically, the recent 24.3% suspension rates for Blacks represents an increase of 12.5 percentage points since the 1970s; in the same period, the rate increased only 1.1 points for White students, from 6% to 7.1% - an increase more than 11 times as high for Blacks as for Whites. In short, the Black/White gap that once stood at 5.7 points has grown to a difference of more than 17 points at the secondary level. (pp. 1-2)

There are additional States worth mentioning from Losen and Martinez' (2013) work regarding the national secondary level Black/White discipline gap for the 2009-2010 school year. They claimed that in Los Angeles, California Unified School District – Black students had a 24% risk of being suspended compared to a 5% risk for White students. In Atlanta City, Georgia - Black students had a 21% risk of being suspended compared to a 4% risk for White students. In the City of Chicago School District - Black students had a 42% risk of being suspended compared to an 11% risk for White students. In Columbus City, Ohio - Black students had a 44% risk of being suspended compared to a 27% risk for White students. In Cumberland County Schools, North Carolina - Black students had a 23% risk of being suspended compared to a 10% risk for White students. In Fairfax County Public Schools, Virginia - Black students had a 12% risk of being suspended compared to a 3% risk for White students. In Fulton County,

Georgia - Black students had a 42% risk of being suspended compared to a 6% risk for White students. The list continues across the nation to reflect school districts' removal from school practices disproportionately claimed Black students over White students. There was not one school district listed in the nation where the reverse was true. Next, a review of school discipline data from the State of Texas, as well as from the district where my research was conducted, is called for as my study was conducted in a school district in Texas.

### **Examples of Educational Discrimination Data for the State of Texas and for the District**

The most recent PEIMS discipline data published by Texas Education Agency is for the 2011-2012 school year. Analysis of the 2011-2012 PEIMS discipline data for the State of Texas revealed the end of year enrollment were 5,127,376. Of those 5,127,376 students, 109,638 placements were made to a DAEP; 1,500,775 in-school suspensions took place; and, 528,897 out-of-school suspensions occurred. Of the 109,638 DAEP placements, 26,381 were Black; 57,890 were Hispanic; 22,407 were White; and, 1,699 identified as being more than one race. Of the 1,500,775 in-school suspensions, 361,896 were Black; 767,169 were Hispanic; 327,443 were White; and, 24,727 identified as being more than one race. Of the 528,897 out-of-school suspensions, 174,559 were Black; 265,383 were Hispanic; 75,728 were White; and 7,457 identified as being more than one race.

Comparatively, the 2011-2012 district's end of year enrollment were 11,344. Of those 11,344 students, 143 placements were made to the DAEP; 2,365 in-school

suspensions took place; and, 736 out-of-school suspensions occurred. Of the 143 DAEP placements, 83 were Black; and, 60 were White. Of the 2,365 in-school suspensions, 999 were Black; 563 were Hispanic; 726 were White; and, 54 identified as being more than one race. Of the 736 out-of-school suspensions, 317 were Black; 185 were Hispanic; 218 were White; and, 16 identified as being more than one race.

A critical analysis of these data, as related to racial disciplinary gaps, provides an opportunity to critique the data through a lens of cultural relevance. For example, Black students made up 13% of the State's school population and 24% of the DAEP placements, 24% of the in-school suspensions, and 33% of the out-of-school suspensions. Hispanic students made up 51% of the State's school population and 53% of the DAEP placements, 51% of the in-school suspensions, and 50% of the out-of-school suspensions. White students made up 31% of the State's school population, 20% of the DAEP placements, 22% of the in-school suspensions, and 14% of the out-of-school suspensions (PEIMS, 2011-2012).

Comparatively, in 2011-2012, Black students made up 13% of the district's total population and 58% of all DAEP placements, 42% of all in-school suspensions, and 43% of all out-of-school suspensions. Hispanic students comprised 20% of the total district enrollment and 0% of DAEP placements, 24% of in-school suspensions, and 25% of out-of-school suspensions. White students held 56% of the total population and 42% of all DAEP placements, 31% of in-school suspensions, and 30% of out-of-school suspensions (PEIMS, 2011-2012).

Refer to Table 1 for a side by side comparison of District and State assigned discipline consequences for 2011-2012 school year.

Table 1

*District and State Student Racial Comparison of Discipline Consequences for School Year*

*2011-2012*

District Data	State Data
2011-2012 PEIMS Data	2011-2012 PEIMS Data
DAEP 58% Black	DAEP 24% Black
ISS 42% Black	ISS 24% Black
OSS 43% Black	OSS 33% Black
Total Black Population 13%	Total Black Population 13%
DAEP 42% White	DAEP 20% White
ISS 31% White	ISS 22% White
OSS 30% White	OSS 14% White
Total White Population 56%	Total White Population 31%

There are historically disproportionate discipline rates based on race in this district. In 2010-2011, Black students made up 13% of the district’s total population and 62% of all DAEP placements, 42% of all in-school suspensions, and 48% of all out-of-school suspensions. Hispanic students comprised 19% of the total district enrollment and 38% of DAEP placements, 24% of in-school suspensions, and 27% of out-of-school suspensions. White students held 57% of the total population and 0% of all DAEP placements, 32% of in-school suspensions, and 25% of out-of-school suspensions (PEIMS, 2010-2011).

Comparatively, in 2009-2010, Black students made up 14% of the district’s total

population and 48% of all DAEP placements, 45% of all in-school suspensions, and 52% of all out-of-school suspensions. Hispanic students comprised 18% of the total district enrollment and 0% of DAEP placements, 19% of in-school suspensions, and 16% of out-of-school suspensions. White students held 59% of the total population and 52% of all DAEP placements, 34% of in-school suspensions, and 32% of out-of-school suspensions (PEIMS, 2009-2010). Refer to Table 2 for a side by side comparison of district discipline consequences by race for school years 2010-2011 and 2009-2010.

Table 2

*District Student Racial Comparison of Discipline Consequences for School Years*

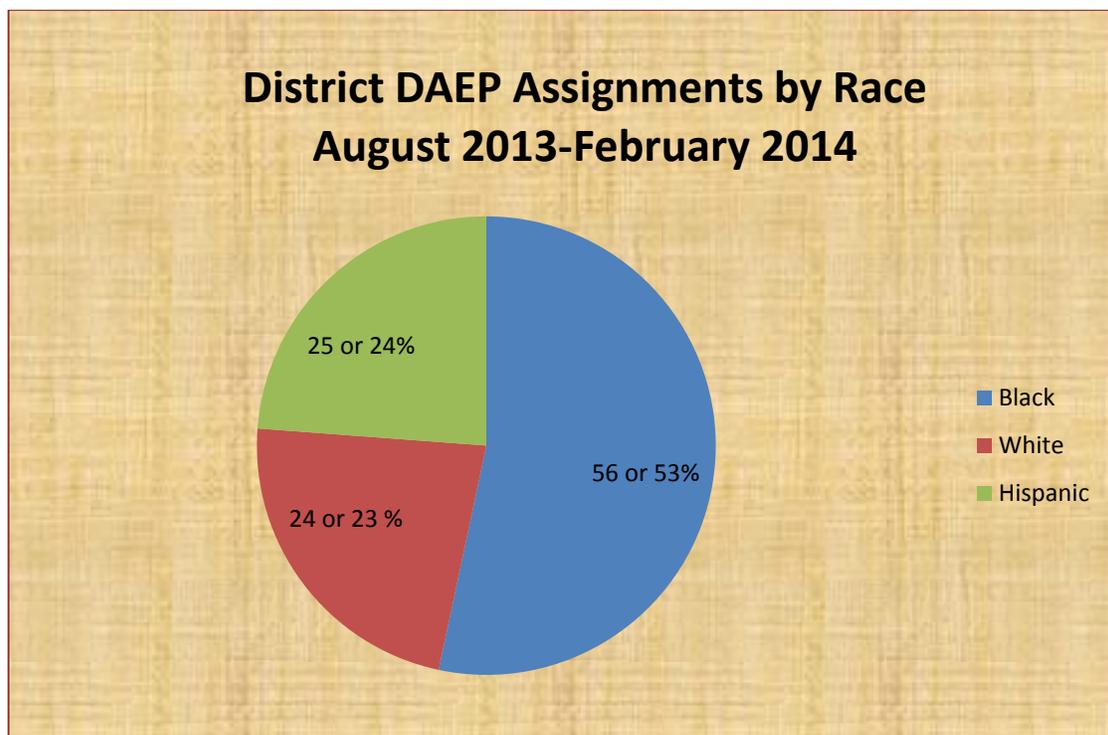
*2010-2011 and 2009-2010*

District Data	
2010-2011 PEIMS Data	2009-2010 PEIMS Data
DAEP 62% Black	DAEP 48% Black
ISS 42% Black	ISS 45% Black
OSS 48% Black	OSS 52% Black
Total Black Population 13%	Total Black Population 14%
DAEP 0% White	DAEP 52% White
ISS 32% White	ISS 34% White
OSS 25% White	OSS 32% White
Total White Population 57%	Total White Population 59%

Comparatively, Losen and Martinez’ (2013) research revealed no significant change for Texas as they shared in their finding that in the Houston ISD, Texas school district Black students had a 30% chance of being suspended from school compared to a

5% for White students. In Dallas ISD, Texas school district 42% of Black students compared to 10% of White students were at risk of being suspended.

Though the information was not publicly reported at the time of this research, I found it important to compile the most recent district data regarding DAEP placements myself. I found a continuance of the phenomenon of disproportionate DAEP placements based on race as indicated in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* District DAEP Assignments by Race August 2013 through February 2014

For the 2013-2014 school year, Black students represented 13% of the district's total student population. However, from August 2013 through February 2014, the district's Black students represented 53% of the DAEP assignments. During this same

time, the district's White students represented 54% of the student population and 23% of the DAEP assignments. Additionally, Hispanic students represented 21% of the student population and 24% of the DAEP assignments.

### **Importance of Accurately Representing Racial Historical Events to Achieve Understanding**

Nelson (2010) explored perceptions of racism based on historical knowledge, and shared that White people report more often than Black people that few racial disparities exist between the two groups. She posited that the differences in perceived racism between the two groups are related to the differences in understanding the historical framework of racism. She agreed with Loewen (1995) who argued that the content in history books have been less than factual when it comes to race relations. A modern example of this claim is the efforts being made by the Texas State Board of Education to change the *Atlantic Slave Trade* to the *Atlantic Triangular Trade* (Nelson, 2010).

Loewen (1995) provided yet another historical reading that maintained this same genre of discrimination of the Black community by the White community members in charge and elaborated on faults with current American history books as it pertains to racial inequalities. Loewen posited that teachers of American history and authors of American history books leave out many factual historical details about the racism of prominent White Americans. Loewen made it his point to shed light on the ambiguousness of our forefathers. He made it his goal to discredit their outward life-style of claiming to not be racists by giving examples of their deliberate racist actions. Some of the people he mentioned as racists who are hidden as such by historians were Davy Crockett,

James Bowie, Stephen Douglas, Christopher Columbus, Woodrow Wilson, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln. Today's educational system might not practice racism in the overt form of historical slavery; however, in curriculum materials, racial inequalities still exist (Cain, 2012; Heilig, Brown, & Brown 2012).

### **Historical Slave Mentality Affects Current Thought**

Discrimination in the form of inequitable punishment of Black students is not far removed from the strategies used to control the Black population in the form of slavery (Labuda, 2011). Many other researchers have found evidence of this pervasive continuance of slavery mentality (i.e., Barr, 2010; Green, 2010; Scott, 2009). Fitzgerald (2006) shared that Black children are often not seen as children at all but as mini adults who must be controlled. He added that during slavery, Black children were thought of as dirty and savage. He contended those images and repressions continued as Black children's behaviors are often seen as intentional where their White classmates' same behaviors might be seen as childlike innocence.

McCarther, Caruthers, and Davis (2009) explored how race and class intersected in two, Kansas City, Missouri schools. They specifically looked at two schools from 1954-1974 to explore race and class in an historical and sociocultural context after the famous *Brown* litigation. They used Adams' (1988) definition of ideology as a set of values and beliefs that intertwine to give a group of people a sense of belonging to a collective culture and a place in history. Using this definition to guide their understanding, McCarther et al. (2009) argued that core values such as freedom, justice,

and equality were used differently throughout history depending on the race and class of someone.

For example, the race and class of Black people during 1954-1974 determined the quality of life and education they would receive. Furthermore, Darder and Torres (2004) argued similarly that school experience was dependent upon race and class. Black students experienced a system that reinforced and sustained a hegemonic influence of control and regulation. Butler (2013) agreed with Litowitz' (2000) explanation of hegemony as a concept used to describe a condition where the supremacy of a social group exists. Sometimes this is achieved by physical force or domination; however, sometimes it is achieved through submission of the people who are being dominated. Additionally, as seen through the Jim Crow era, sometimes these forms of domination become legal through laws such as *separate but equal*. This class and race dependent educational experience reinforced oppression and racial exclusion and by 1970 the Kansas City schools had managed to re-segregate (Moran, 2005). Today's educational system continues this cycle of discrimination and segregation as Black students are disproportionately punished and removed from the regular classroom instruction as a result of discipline referrals (Langhout, 2005; Sheffield-Coley, 2009; Shirley & Cornell, 2012; Vincent et al., 2012).

### **Post *Brown* Segregation**

The educational system continues to perpetuate a post *Brown* segregation when educators continue to exclude Black children from classroom instruction as a discipline consequence. Research indicates that Chicago, district-wide, holds one of the largest

racial suspension gaps in the nation. The State averages a secondary suspension rate of 27%. This data is delineated to represent a 41.6% rate for Black students, and a 10.6% for White students (Losen & Martinez, 2013). Additionally, Hayes (2010) responded to this argument of segregation post *Brown*, and after working with Chicago Public Schools, he revealed similar findings of continued racism. In 1958, Chicago schools were found to be segregated and overcrowded as evidenced by 91% of Chicago's elementary schools averaging 90% enrollment of students who were either White or Black. Danns (2010) supported these findings by sharing that between 1971 and 1979 public schools, in the City of Chicago, remained segregated some twenty years after legislation mandated desegregation. The City of Chicago struggled with desegregation initiatives in part due to resistances such as White flight and reluctance to bus students across town (Renzulli & Evans, 2005; Saporito, 2003). Racial segregation continues today as disproportionate numbers of Black students are removed from the school setting as a result of teacher discipline referrals (Langhout, 2005; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Sheffield-Coley, 2009; Skiba et al., 2012; Vincent et al., 2012). As was discussed previously in Losen and Gillespie's (2012) and Losen and Martinez' (2013) work, this pattern of post *Brown* discrimination was seen across the nation in the form of disproportionate discipline practices based on race.

Black students are sent to the principal's office more than White students and Black students are more likely to be expelled or suspended than any other race (Rocque, 2010; Shirley & Cornell, 2012; Wallace, Goodkin, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). Wallace et al.'s research methodology included the racial perceptions and biases of the

White teachers and White administrators of their Black students. In addition to Wallace et al.'s research pertaining to the perceptions of White educators, my research was conducted to ascertain the perceptions of the Black students regarding their experiences with school discipline.

In a study of 999 students from four different DAEPs, in a large urban school district, Randle (2008) reported that 92% were Black or Hispanic students, 7% were White students, and 1% were Asian-Pacific Islander students. Randle's (2008) study was yet another example of the overrepresentation of Black students in trouble at school. More recently, Caton (2012) conducted a study where she obtained the perceptions regarding school experiences of 10 Black males, from an urban area, who had dropped out of high school. Though in her findings, participants did discuss discipline practices, along with other factors, no empirical research has been conducted that focuses strictly on the perceptions of students deeply immersed in the school discipline experience, such as that of being assigned to a DAEP, and the experiences leading up to that placement. The exploration of the perceptions Black students have regarding their race as their race may relate to inequitable discipline practices would enhance current educational research findings. Thus, the purpose of my study was to understand the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to being placed in a DAEP, with the intent to positively inform principals' practices related to student discipline. This research, to understand perceptions of Black students regarding their experiences prior to being assigned to a DAEP has the potential to significantly contribute to school personnel practices and policy, and to begin a critical conversation for change.

Black students continue to be overcome by school policies of suspension and expulsion despite years of desegregation (Dehlinger, 2008). Additionally, Dehlinger reminded educators that the disproportionate amount of Black students being disciplined continued to be a top concern for school districts. Even though research has been conducted in the frame of disproportionately distributed discipline sanctions across racial groups, there has been insignificant effort to make changes (Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2012). Other scholars agreed that over the years, educational institutions have supplied adequate information regarding the indicators that prove there continues to be disparities in achievement between racial groups and that more is required if change in this inequity is to occur (i.e., Haycock, 2001; Smith, 2004; Sturgess, 2011). Leaders of reform efforts continued to address this issue with little significance in narrowing the discipline gap between the races (Ogbu, 2003).

### **Discretionary or Mandatory DAEP Assignments**

Booker and Mitchell (2011) worked with three DAEPs, covering both urban and suburban school districts in the southwest, and investigated the probability of a student being placed there for mandatory versus discretionary placements and the probability of returning to the DAEP within the same school year based on the race of the student. These scholars found that Black students were more likely to be placed in a DAEP for discretionary reasons and they were more likely to return to the DAEP within the same school year than were their White classmates. Interestingly, Kleiner, Porch, and Farris (2002) claimed that 54% of current DAEPs surpassed the enrollment capacity in 1999, 2000, and 2001.

The increasing discretionary placements of Black students at DAEPs require attention be provided to uncover biases that surface when a subjective discipline system is so heavily applied (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). Black students are sent to the office more often than White students for discretionary infractions (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Common reasons for subjective office referrals for Black students are behaviors such as disrespect, threat, and excessive noise (Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Skiba et al., 2002). Skiba et al. (2002) shared in his findings that suspension from school is the most used consequence for a variety of misbehaviors. Students receive suspensions from school for a variety of reasons from minor infractions such as tardy to class and disrespect to more serious offenses such as fighting. He concluded that suspensions from school for the most troubled students have not shown any changes in behaviors. He added that it actually leads to more suspensions and more expulsions and more drop outs. Unfortunately, Skiba et al. (2002) did not discover any significant change in this phenomenon.

White students receive more specific rule violations such as vandalism, smoking, and leaving class without permission (Skiba et al., 2002). Additionally, Mendez and Knoff (2003) found that compared to White students, Black students were disproportionately removed from classroom instruction for fighting, disobedience, disruptive behavior, and inappropriate behavior. Mendez and Knoff (2003) found compared to Black students, White students were disproportionately removed from school for weapons, alcohol possession, tobacco, and narcotics. It is clear that Black students are more likely to be sent to a DAEP than White students and Black students

are more likely than White students to be sent there for discretionary reasons (Booker & Mitchell, 2011).

It is important to understand the reasons for and differences between mandatory and discretionary discipline placements to a DAEP as well as the beliefs resulting in a variety of DAEP assignments. Initially, mandatory DAEP placements were a result of Zero Tolerance policies enacted by the federal government's response to countering violence in American schools (Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Cortez & Montecel, 1999; Foley & Pange, 2006; Hosley, 2003; Katsiyannis & Williams, 1998). This response to violence and gun control measures in public schools, through the Zero Tolerance policies, opened avenues for principals to establish the "implementation of punitive and judicial forms of discipline" (Casella, 2003, p. 874). Some examples of forms of discipline considered punitive and/or judicial are in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, assignment to a DAEP, expulsion, and assignment to a juvenile justice alternative education placement, (JJAEP) (Booker & Mitchell, 2011). Offenses considered mandatory and subject to Zero Tolerance include felonies, terroristic threats, and assault or murder (Booker & Mitchell, 2011, p. 194; Cortez & Montecel, 1999). Though the purpose of Zero Tolerance policies were to support a safe school environment, free of guns and violence, it also allowed for the emersion of discretionary DAEP assignments for behaviors that are considered by school personnel as inappropriate. This philosophy is most reflected by students' placement in DAEPs becoming increasingly discretionary and being extended to less serious violations of school codes of conduct and various other rule breaking/disruptive behaviors (Booker &

Mitchell, 2011, p. 194; Keleher, 2000; McCreight, 1999). Such an example was reported for the 2005-2006 academic year for the State of Texas as 70% of the placements, that school year, were discretionary (Hogg Foundation, 2006). Mandatory placements were intended to give principals clear reasons to require a DAEP assignment. Conversely, discretionary placements allow principals to interpret what behaviors should result in a DAEP assignment. Booker and Mitchell (2011) effectively summed Texas Education Code rules regarding mandatory DAEP placements:

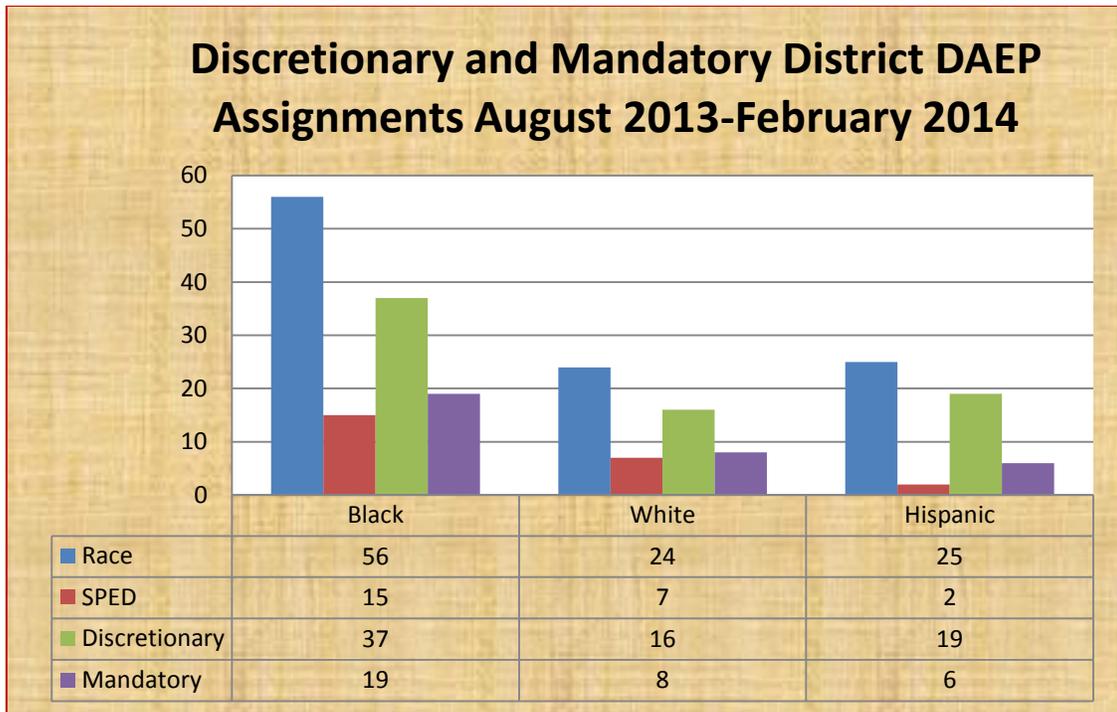
Chapter 37, Sections 37.001-37.022 of the State of Texas Education Code, which endorses The Safe Schools Act, states a student shall be removed from class and placed in a disciplinary alternative education program for any of the following acts committed on or within 300 feet of school property or at a school-related event: (1) any conduct punishable as a felony; (2) conduct that meets the Penal Code definition of an assault causing bodily injury; (3) use, possession, sale, or delivery of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs; (4) abuse of a volatile chemical as defined by the Health and Safety Code; (5) conduct that meets the Penal Code definition of public lewdness or indecent exposure; (6) off-campus violent felony conduct, as found by a court or jury, or as determined by the superintendent based on “reasonable belief”; (7) conduct that meets the Penal Code definition of retaliation against any school employee, regardless of where the conduct occurs; (8) conduct that meets the Penal Code definition of “false report” (for example, a bomb threat) or “terroristic threat.” (p. 199)

Any assignment to a DAEP for any reason other than those listed as mandatory by the TEC are deemed discretionary and are considered to be under the discretion of the school principal and the school district's discipline guidelines.

If educators are to overcome and refuse to continue this line of thinking toward Black students and their behaviors, they will resist definitions of Black students as troublemakers or discipline issues and strive to understand cultural differences (Cordova, 1998; Kavanagh, 2010; Lewis, 2003). As I indicated earlier, one way to begin this journey of cultural understanding is to consider the perceptions of the oppressed – the Black students in the educational discipline system. Racism of any kind is unacceptable. It is unacceptable for victims and it is unacceptable for the perpetrator. This form of racism, often detected in the educational system, might be the worst kind of racism there is – the kind educators often unknowingly facilitate. Just as was not necessarily seen as racial bias many years ago, current racism through inequitable discipline practices is often overlooked from a racial perspective (Scheurich & Young, 1997).

### **District Discretionary or Mandatory DAEP Assignment Data**

Though the information was not publicly reported at the time of this research, I found it important to compile the most recent district data regarding discretionary and mandatory DAEP assignments myself. I found a continuance of reliance on discretionary DAEP assignments as a discipline consequence. Additionally, I thought it important to share information regarding race and SPED data for ease of comparison as indicated in Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* Discretionary and Mandatory District DAEP Assignments for August 2013 through February 2014

The importance of sharing this most current data was to validate that the disproportionate representation of Black students in the district’s DAEP continues. Just as the nation and state trends are not being adequately addressed, neither is the district’s level of inequitable discipline practices.

#### **Inequitable Discipline Practices**

Researchers have indicated that suspensions and expulsions from school often occur in the absence of serious or violent student misbehaviors and are common consequences for minor infractions (i.e., Amundsen, 1993; Aud et al., 2010; Dupper, 1998; Losen & Gillespie, 2012). Vavrus and Cole (2002) found that disproportionate

school suspensions of Black students for non-violent offenses are often increased when the student is racially different from the teacher who is initiating the discipline referral. With the high and increasing numbers of students being suspended from school for non-violent offenses, there is an expectation that researchers attend to the causes and the consequences of common discipline practices in education. The Reverend Jesse Jackson is among community leaders who have shared this view of the need for further study of discipline practices in school settings. He was even arrested once for protesting a Decatur, Illinois' school's suspension of Black students (Baker, 2000). Reverend Jackson was attempting to enter the Dwight D. Eisenhower High School grounds to speak with administrators about the two year expulsion from school assigned to seven students who got into a fight in the stands at a school football game when he was arrested. He wanted to review, with administrators, the totality of such an extreme measure and request that each student be considered individually versus consolidating all seven into the same category of offense. Of the original seven students involved in the expulsion, one moved from the State and the other six had their expulsions reduced to one year and were allowed to attend the DAEP. This was still considered excessive by Reverend Jackson and to no avail he argued to have the students' perfect behavior while attending the DAEP to account for their early return to their home school.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Additionally, McKenzie (2009) claimed, through her qualitative research findings, a need to consider or put into perspective the racial views and perceptions of educators when considering discipline of Black students. She argued that if educators

are to create conditions for the school success of Black students then educators will seek to understand the emotional abuse Black students receive at school. She shared stories and experiences from her 25-30 year service in public schools as well as her research and provided examples of emotional abuse at the hands of educators. Whether the abuse is performed consciously or unconsciously, she claimed the many actions toward Black students by educators in schools are in fact levels of emotional abuse. For further explanation of McKenzie's argument, here are a couple of her statements from her qualitative research:

The anger of the kids has caused me [to be mean to them]; I've gotten sucked into their anger. I mean I've never spoken to kids the way I have spoken to them this year. I mean it's just, I am just this far out of control in my classroom on more days than I want anybody to repeat. (Jennifer, Third Grade Teacher)

I don't know how many times I've said, 'You want a mean teacher? I can be mean to you. I would rather be nice, but if you need me to be, hey.' (Karen, First Grade Teacher) (p. 129)

My boys think it's a competition to show who's the maddest. It is a nightmare when my boys decide that they are going to gang up on me to see who is the maddest because I end up being the maddest, and I have really gotten to the point now where I'm afraid that I have to be really careful with what happens once they make me mad. (Diane, First Grade Teacher) (p. 129)

McKenzie puts these comments into perspective:

When I heard the teachers say these things, something in me awoke. Something that had been pushed down and put to sleep. I *knew* this language. I had *heard* this language. As a child, I had looked into the face of someone who used this language. Why do you make me do this to you? This, I knew, was the language of abuse. (p. 129)

Another example of her findings of emotional abuse in the form of deficient thinking is shared:

... but this is actually a school where homogeneous grouping would possibly work out ... because if you could put all the freaks in one room and let them kill each other, if you could find someone ... to monitor that class and then let the rest of them learn. Triage. Cut loose the ones that you know aren't going to make it, and you could spend all of your time [on the others].

Here, this teacher labels the students as 'freaks,' thereby pathologizing them, seeing them as 'abnormal.' Furthermore, she widens her pathologizing lens by her suggestion to put 'them' together in a room and let 'them kill each other.' Not only is she labeling the students as 'freaks,' she has created a scenario in which she proposes that the best way to deal with what she perceives as their abhorrent or abnormal behavior is to allow them to 'kill each other.' She refers to this as triage and recommends cutting loose or giving up on the ones who 'aren't going to make it.' Although there is probably a certain tongue-in-cheek quality to these remarks, it does appear as if this teacher views these students as

freaks, as abnormal, and is, thus, willing or wanting to give up on these elementary children that she feels ‘aren’t going to make it.’ (p. 132)

There is consistent evidence in the literature that demonstrates school environments are problematic for Black students based on many school personnel’s prevalent biases of race, gender, and class (i.e., Hosp & Reschly, 2004; Langhout, 2005; McKenzie, 2009; Skiba et al., 2011).

### **White Teachers – Black Students**

In a documented audit conducted in response to the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights investigation of the Corbell School District in Texas, Peterkin and Lucey (1998) found, among other things, an overrepresentation of Black students in this school district’s discipline procedures. As supported in the literature, these findings are prevalent throughout the United States (National Black Caucus of State Legislators, 2001). The findings that surfaced based on Langhout’s (2005) work with the Corbell School District were similar to previous research (i.e., Hosp & Reschly, 2004; Vavrus & Cole, 2002) and concluded that many middle-class White female teachers continue to embrace stereotypical views of Black students as trouble makers (i.e., Gathright, 2001; Hyland, 2000; Pollack, 2013; Siegel, 1999).

Pollack (2013) studied White teacher discourse in schools regarding their Black students by working with 10 racially diverse men and women educators from a variety of urban schools in California. Through a four-week journaling activity where the participants wrote about and reflected upon what they heard and witnessed from teachers in their schools it was argued that there existed continued articulated low expectations

and negative assumptions about Black students. One such example that communicated low expectations and negative assumptions about Black students is shared:

...two African American boys in my fifth grade class were involved in an incident in which they supposedly tried to pull a Latina fourth grade girl into the boys' bathroom. The boys were suspended and eventually expelled. Other teachers had heard that something had happened the previous day. After telling a fellow white teacher about which particular boys were involved in this specific incident, the teacher commented, 'Why doesn't that surprise me?' in relation to one of the boys. (p. 875)

In response to this statement, Pollack wrote:

The comment, 'Why doesn't that surprise me?' serves two important purposes: It strengthens the supposed veracity of the story, while introducing or inviting other similar stories about these students. In this way, a seemingly insignificant comment can actually function as a story, especially when it directly or indirectly references other stories. (p. 875)

Similarly, James and Taylor (2010) conducted a study in Canada and worked to find Black students' perceptions and lived stories of interactions with White educators. The participants did in fact indicate that they experienced racial profiling and stereotyping in school and the authors noted that most of the participants seemed to accept this treatment as a normal way of life.

They took for granted that they would be treated differently and 'singled out' by teachers, principals, police officers, and hall monitors because of preconceived

ideas of Black youth and also what they heard from others (James & Taylor, 2010, p. 127).

For example the authors shared:

According to one Grade 11 male student, ‘Even at school teachers treat you differently. . . Like if you’re a Black kid walking through the hallway . . . they’re expecting you to cause trouble or be bad’ (James & Taylor, 2010, p. 127).

The student added that his neighborhood, “might be known as a bad area, but seeing a bunch of guys together should not lead to automatically think gang; or automatically think we’re out there doing something bad with some drugs or smoking or doing something illegal” (James & Taylor, 2010, p. 128).

### **Socioeconomic Factors**

Rorrer (2001) studied the inequity within school experiences between students of low socioeconomic status compared to their middle income classmates and found a resemblance to the findings of researchers contrasting the experiences of Black children and White children in the discipline cycle (i.e., Fenning & Rose, 2007; McKenzie, 2009). Researchers indicated that the low-income students are often the Black students and the more financially affluent students are consistently the White students (i.e., Carolissen, Rohleder, Bozalek, Swartz, & Leibowitz, 2010; Duncan & Murnane, 2011). According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, close to 40% of children are considered to live in poverty (Dalaker & Naifeh, 1998; United States Census Bureau, 2001). Considering the claim that the majority of the 40% living in poverty are racially Black, and the claim that poverty also impacts contrasting school discipline experiences

between White and Black students, the need for understanding and awareness of such inequities between race when coupled with poverty becomes even more problematic and worthy of attention. Statistical evidence of discipline inequity is evident when explored through the lens of poverty and race (i.e., Brooks, 2000; Saporito, 2003). Race and economic status are meshed and tangled into a web that determines experiences (Duncan, Morris, & Rodrigues, 2011; Murray, 2011). The two “are never irrelevant in everyday social interaction and social experience” (Rothman, 1999, p. 15). Race and socioeconomic status “combine and interact to facilitate or frustrate access to rewards, amplifying the impact of any one individually” (Rothman, 1999, p. 16).

Even without the compounded social issues of poverty, many Black children remain overrepresented in school discipline (Skiba et al., 2002). Sheffield-Coley (2009) conducted research regarding discipline consequences at middle schools in Georgia and found similar inequitable circumstances. Her conclusions were in alignment with other researchers’ findings of the inequitable discipline practices of school administrators and teachers toward Black children. She continued to find that the disparities in the number of discipline referrals received and the consequences rendered for the misbehavior were dependent on race. Sprague (2001) warned that educators are not investing the necessary measures to counter this problem. He argued for resources, time, and expertise to be allotted to effectively solving this problem of inequitable discipline practices between Black and White students.

## **Implications of Zero Tolerance**

Similar findings of inequitable discipline practices between Black and White students were supported by Skiba and Peterson (1999). From their research findings, they concluded that there was also a need for educators to distinguish between minor and major infractions when administering consequences. Often both types of infractions are responded to with severe punishment, in the name of Zero Tolerance, and perpetuate the cycle of school exclusion for Black students. Zero Tolerance is a predetermined policy of discipline consequences for student behaviors without consideration of intent or the circumstances surrounding the behavior (Brownstein, 2009). When Zero Tolerance is enforced without consideration of intent or circumstances for the code of conduct violation students experience unfounded and harsh consequences. For example, a student who fished in the morning before school and then accidentally came to school with the knife he used to cut the fishing line in his pocket might be sent to the district's DAEP for bringing a weapon to school. The good intentions of the Zero Tolerance policy have been abused, often allowing for harsh punishments to be assigned for infractions such as insubordination or disrespect as well as for innocent mistakes like the fishing knife example. Current school disciplinary practices exclude the children from school who are struggling the most to succeed (Adams, 2000). Children must be in school if they are to be taught (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2006; Coleman, 2007).

Sheffield-Coley (2009) expressed that Zero Tolerance approaches to discipline have caused a disproportionate representation of Black students being punished for a

variety of infractions. Sheffield-Coley (2009) discovered evidence from the Office of Civil Rights that the data from 3,000 school districts revealed that two-thirds of the suspended student population were Black. Additionally, Wu, McCarthy, and Hoge (1987) found that Black students did not contribute more often to discipline infractions than their White peers and that finding is still prevalent in the literature today (Shirley & Cornell, 2012). Black students are, however, disciplined more often. Clearly expressed in current literature is the fact that Black students are expelled and suspended much more often than White students for similar infractions (i.e., Butler, 2011; Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Monroe, 2005; Skrla & Scheurich, 2003).

Black students in particular are rigidly disciplined due to behavioral expectations based on stereotypes held by the adults on campus (Langhout, 2005). Langhout's (2005) findings were summarized with the contention that children are seen through imposed stereotypes of race, class, and gender and that these features play in the perceptions of the students and thus the discipline imposed. Through her research, (Langhout, 2005) compelled researchers to continue to study this important educational issue with the intent of finding solutions and emancipating Black youth. One such way to work toward finding solutions would be to find patterns in the perceptions of Black youths' experiences prior to being disciplined and use the findings to educate school leaders so change may occur.

### **Importance of Relationships**

The overuse of exclusion from school, for Black students, impedes the development of healthy relationships with adults on the school campus (Costenbader &

Markson, 1997; Youth Rights Media, 2006). Black students have a national high school dropout rate of approximately 40% (Rampell, 2010). Dropout rates increase for Black students who are consistently suspended from school (Skiba & Leone, 2001).

Skiba et al. (2000) cited a 1981 study finding a significant relationship in urban schools among high rates of minority suspension, minority dropout, and student perceptions of racial discrimination. In 1998, Skiba argued that the typical classroom management style in many schools, relying heavily on negative consequences, contributes to school rejection and dropout for Black youth, for whom the choice of either staying in a school or dropping out may be less of a choice and more of a natural response to a negative environment in which he or she is trying to escape. (Sheffield-Coley, 2009, p. 45)

Additionally, Skiba (2000) presented conclusive evidence that Black students' dropout rates were higher than White students' as a result of Black students being removed from school more often making the development of healthy relationships with school personnel problematic.

### **Effects of Harsh Discipline Practices**

Black children who are overrepresented in the discipline cycle and who receive disproportionately severe consequences are learning a negative lesson in justice or lack thereof (The Civil Rights Project, 2000). Educators send a poor and unnecessary message to Black students when exclusionary punishments and disproportionate suspension practices are overused and this lesson negatively impacts the educational future of these students (McKenzie & Skrla, 2011; Wu et al., 1987). Costenbader &

Markson (1997) as well as Adams (1992) are among the many researchers who have revealed that disciplinary consequences of out-of-school suspension are ineffective and discriminatory toward Black students.

There is similar evidence of overrepresentation of disciplinary consequences of corporal punishment for Black students as well as in-school and out-of-school suspensions. Wu et al. (1987) found that American schools dispersed spankings to students in disproportionate numbers as it related to race. Black students received more interactions with corporal punishment than did their White classmates. Nationwide, during the 2006-2007 school year, 17.1% of the students enrolled in public schools were Black; however, 35.6% of the spankings dispersed that year occurred with Black students (Human Rights Watch, 2008). It is interesting to note that the statisticians for the Human Rights Watch also concluded that boys were more likely than girls to receive corporal punishment; however of the girls spanked, most were Black girls. Hence, this is another example of the disproportionate dispersion of severe disciplinary consequences toward Black children. Brown (2002) claimed that students of different races commit similar school infractions; however, often times, if the student was not Black the misbehavior was overlooked or ignored.

While conducting research with middle school students in Georgia, Sheffield-Coley (2009) found that those who received corporal punishment and the reasons for receiving that punishment mirrored the literature regarding those who received consequences of out-of-school suspension and in-school suspension. Once again, it was indicated that the Black student received significantly more often than the White student

consequences of corporal punishment in the form of paddling, licks, or spankings. Regardless of the infraction of insubordination, fighting, class disruption, or disrespectful behavior the Black student received harsher punishment than the White student to include corporal punishment. She indicated that this harsher punishment of Black students was not a deterrent for future misbehaviors. Actually, the opposite was true.

After review of the literature, Guindon (1992) shared similar findings for out-of-school suspensions for minor misbehaviors. He concluded such extreme punishment for minor infractions was counter-productive to changing behaviors. There is empirical evidence in the literature that the use of extreme consequences such as out-of-school suspension and in-school suspension is ineffective in promoting positive behaviors in school (i.e., American Psychological Association, 2006; Bock, Tapscott, & Savner, 1998; Skiba, 2000). In fact, researchers have indicated that harsher punishments result in a reoccurrence of misbehaviors (i.e., Bock et al., 1998).

Throughout the literature, researchers have emphasized that not only are Black students punished more harshly than White students for the same behaviors, White students are often not punished at all while Black students received consequences. As a result of some teachers' low expectations for Black students, the cycle of treating the Black student harsher than the White student and punishing the Black student disproportionately compared to the White student is perpetuated (i.e., Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fine, 1991; Irvine, 1990; Nieto, 1992).

Teachers who are effective with all groups of students treat them fairly and respectfully (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Meehan et al., 2003). Successful teachers are enthusiastic, have a sense of humor, care about their students, and most importantly see beyond race and treat each student as an individual (DiPaola & Hoy, 2008). If teachers and administrators were more culturally aware and treated individuals as individuals and not group students based on race stereotypes, the disproportionate discipline experiences of Black children could be reduced.

Researchers who have conducted studies regarding school punishment practices have concentrated on differences in race and have attempted to understand the disproportionality of discipline between Black and White students (i.e., Hinojosa, 2008). However, there is a lack of data from the student perspective. More work is crucial for understanding the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to being assigned to a DAEP.

### **Inequitable Achievement Gaps**

#### **National Achievement**

Scholars have contended that there is a connection between achievement and discipline (i.e., Leone, Mayer, Malmgren, Meisel, 2002). Jencks and Phillips (1998) reminded readers that there has been an immense amount of research conducted regarding the educational and behavioral achievement gaps between White and Black students. However, the exact level of correlation has not been clarified (Hinshaw, 1992; Gregory & Mosley, 2004). When looking at the data that have been aggregated across the nation, researchers continue to find that Black students are overrepresented in the

discipline system when compared to White and Asian students (i.e., Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Gordon, Piana, Keleher, 2000; Gregory, 1997; Gregory & Mosley, 2004; Skiba et al., 2002).

When Black students are removed from the regular classroom setting due to inequitable discipline practices, the academic achievement gaps are negatively affected. Haycock (2001) reported that Black students' average twelfth grade math and reading levels are comparable to eighth grade White students' levels. Additionally, inequitable discipline practices have contributed to and have often caused the over-representation and misclassification of Black students in special education services (Losen & Orfield, 2002; Parrish, 2002; Roberson, 2011; Skiba et al., 2006).

### **State and District Academic Achievement Data**

As was seen with historically disproportionate discipline rates based on race in the district where my study occurred, there are historically disproportionate academic success rates based on race. Comparing the district's students' scores on State mandated tests, by ethnicity, reveals a discrepancy in achievement scores based on race. The district's passing rates of tenth and eleventh graders taking the TAKS tests for 2011-2012 school year showed passing rates of 62% for Blacks, 79% for Hispanics, and 93% for Whites. Additionally, comparing the State's students' scores on State mandated tests by ethnicity also revealed a discrepancy in achievement scores based on race. The State passing rates of tenth and eleventh graders taking the TAKS tests for 2011-2012 consisted of 63% for Blacks, 69% for Hispanics, and 84% for Whites (AEIS, 2011-2012). Besides racial discrepancies in the district and State's passing rates, it is also

interesting to note the district’s Hispanic and White students outperformed the State’s Hispanic and White students; however, the district’s Black students underperformed the State’s Black students. Refer to Table 3 for a side-by-side comparison of district and State 2011-2012 TAKS tests passing rates of tenth and eleventh graders.

Table 3

*District and State Student Racial Comparison of TAKS Tests Passing Rates of Tenth and Eleventh Graders for School Year 2011-2012*

District Data	State Data
Overall Passing Rates	Overall Passing Rates
62% Black	63% Black
79% Hispanic	69% Hispanic
93% White	84% White

The district’s disproportionate passing rates, based on racial discrepancies, were not and are not a one school year issue. There is a pattern, in the district, of disproportionate academic success based on race. The district’s passing rates of tenth and eleventh graders taking the TAKS tests for 2010-2011 were 59% for Blacks, 81% for Hispanics, and 92% for Whites (AEIS, 2010-2011). The district’s passing rates of tenth and eleventh graders taking the TAKS tests for 2009-2010 were 55% for Blacks, 82% for Hispanics, and 90% for Whites (AEIS, 2009-2010). Refer to Table 4 for a side by side comparison of 2010-2011 and 2009-2010 TAKS tests passing rates of the district’s tenth and eleventh graders.

Table 4

*District Student Racial Comparison of TAKS Tests Passing Rates of Tenth and Eleventh Graders for School Years 2010-2011 and 2009-2010*

District Data 2010-2011	District Data 2009-2010
Overall Passing Rates	Overall Passing Rates
59% Black	55% Black
81% Hispanic	82% Hispanic
92% White	90% White

**Overrepresentation in Special Education**

Many researchers, between the 1960s and 1990s, emphasized student actions regarding the achievement gap (i.e., Coleman, 1966; Hale-Benson, 1986; Kozol, 1991). During this time Black students were perceived by White teachers as not having the necessary skills or proper resources to be successful in school (Coleman, 1966). A possible cause of this perceived lack of proper resources might be the fact that this group can be described even further to show not only an underrepresentation in academic achievement but also an overrepresentation in discipline infractions (Henderson & Verdugo, 2002; Vincent et al., 2012). Black students are 1.5-5.5 times more likely than any other group to be labeled as seriously emotionally disturbed due to discipline infractions (Codrington & Fairchild, 2012; Coutinho, Oswald, & Forness, 2002).

Being labeled emotionally disturbed is one acceptable qualification for placement in special education. There is empirical evidence in the literature indicating that Black students are disproportionately represented in special education (i.e., Artiles & Trent, 1994; Coutinho & Oswald, 2000; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Fieros & Conray, 2002;

Harry, Klingner, Sturges, & Moore, 2002; Parrish, 2002; Roberson, 2011; Skiba et al., 2012). Issues often discussed in regard to the overrepresentation of Black students in special education relate to problems in the referral process and cultural bias in the testing for special services. Researchers have found evidence of disproportionate placement of Black students in special education as early as 1968. Lloyd Dunn (1968) brought this issue forward to be researched and found that Black students were being labeled intellectually disabled at far greater rates than White students. He posited that the students were actually socioculturally deprived, lived in poverty, and that they were not intellectually disabled.

Artiles and Trent (1994) insisted that the overrepresentation of Black students labeled as intellectually disabled or emotionally disturbed in special education was based on inaccurate referral assessment practices of school personnel. These authors called for a focus on culturally sensitive research with an effort to counter inequities which the current educational system perpetuated (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Donovan and Cross (2002) explored the identification and referral process which had produced an inequitable representation of Black students in special education. From their findings, they recommended that school systems develop behavior management interventions, develop skills for working with children with perceived behavior problems, and improve the teacher education programs at the university level to reduce inequitable special education referrals of Black students.

Goran and Gage (2011) brought attention to not only the academic deficits but also the language deficiencies of students who are labeled emotionally disturbed. There

is consistent evidence found in the research regarding the academic deficits for students who are considered emotionally disturbed (i.e., Benner, Nelson, Reid, Epstein, & Currin, 2002; Gage, Lewis, & Adamson, 2010; Reid, Gonzalez, Nordness, Trout, & Epstein, 2004; Roberson, 2011). Reid et al. (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of the academic performance of students who were considered emotionally disturbed and found that a vast majority of the students in their study performed academically at or below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile in all academic functioning to include language. Additionally, Lane, Barton-Arwood, Nelson, and Wehby (2008) concluded similar results. These researchers studied 42 students who were labeled emotionally disturbed and found that the group of students actually performed below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile on all reading, math, and written expression instruments. It is important to note that some researchers argue there is an overrepresentation of Black students carrying the label of emotionally disturbed (i.e., Carpenter, Ramirez, & Severn, 2006; Roberson, 2011). Putting this correlation into perspective allows for the deduction that suspension, expulsion, and labeling of Black students as emotionally disturbed contributes to their overall academic achievement gaps. Additionally, in the National Association of School Psychologist (2013) position paper it was stated:

Consistently, research literature and government reports have documented disproportionality among students of different backgrounds in special education referrals and discipline practices. Specifically, Black/African American boys have been referred for special education at rates far in excess of their presence in the population at large. The 29th Annual Report to Congress on the

Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2007 revealed that Black/African American students (6–21 years of age) were about 1.5 times more likely to receive special education services in general. They were specifically 2.86 times more likely to receive special education services for mental retardation and 2.28 times more likely to receive services for emotional disturbance (ED) than same-age students of all other racial/ethnic groups combined. (p. 2)

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) stressed decisions such as who gets referred for special education services are constructed from a social perspective. Experiences and interactions help to create a belief system pertaining to race. Heath (1995) and Horvat and Lewis (2003) argued that historically the White race has been considered the dominate race for which all other races are compared. Heath (1995) stated that *other* races are compared to the White race to determine what are socially acceptable behaviors. Heath (1995) went as far as to argue that *others* are characterized for the White-ness that they lack rather than for what they are themselves. Marable (1994) expressed a similar finding related to the presence of a White socially dominant culture:

Race is first and foremost an unequal relationship between social aggregates, characterized by dominant and subordinate forms of social interaction, and reinforced by the intricate patterns of public discourse, power, ownership, and privilege within the economic, social, and political institutions of society. (p. 30)

Ward (2000) contended that this form of institutionalized racism is prevalent in schools. She maintained that this is a form of covert racism and is apparent throughout

special education referrals as Black students are disproportionately tracked into lower level courses as well as overrepresented in school discipline suspensions (Delany, 1991).

Blanchett (2006) found that special education had become a new form of segregation and racism. She argued for an end to the disproportionality of educational achievement opportunities and discipline discrepancies between Black and White students which the current form of White privilege perpetuates (Harry & Klingner, 2006; LaVeist & McDonald, 2002; Skrla & Scheurich, 2003). White privilege is often referred to as the advantages some White people accrue from society compared to the societal disadvantages often received by Black people (Eitle, 2002).

Gosa and Alexander (2007) pleaded for educators to acknowledge the significance of race when striving to close the Black-White educational achievement gap. Researchers indicated that there are a variety of different gaps between Black and White students throughout the educational system (i.e., Carpenter & Ramirez, 2007). For example, the overrepresentation of Black students in suspensions and expulsions from school, the overrepresentation of Black students receiving special education services, the overrepresentation of Black students being identified as emotionally disturbed or intellectually disabled, and the overrepresentation of Black students in school dropout rates are a few worth mentioning (Carpenter et al., 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2007; Roberson, 2011; Roscigno, 1999, Skiba et al., 2012).

Skiba et al. (2006) warned that the disproportionality of Black students receiving special education services in the United States remains a critical issue for educators. Specifically, of concern is the number of Black students who qualify as emotionally

disturbed in the special education realm (Harry & Anderson, 1994; Roberson, 2011). Harry and Anderson (1994) also warned that race and culture are factors that contribute to the overrepresentation of Black students in special education. Roberson (2011) strongly relayed in her study of Black students who are labeled as emotionally disturbed, “This overrepresentation should be against the law” (p. 11). Payne (1996) built on the understanding of the cultural belief of many Black students that the ability to physically fight and that being willing to fight for other Black students are survival skills. The White middle class expectations of negotiating through conflict, without physical confrontations, often lead to Black students being suspended or expelled from school. These same students who are removed from the learning environment for physical aggression are often referred for special education testing due to the belief that they are emotionally disturbed (Harrison-Hale, 2002).

### **Need for Movement**

Black students come from an historical lineage of reliance on the need to move (Beachum, 2011). Often rap or rhyme is used as a culturally acceptable means of expression for Black students (Beachum & McCray, 2004). The disconnect between what the Black student finds acceptable and pleasing through the form of music and movement is often perceived as behavioral concerns by the educator (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2010; Green, 2010; Prier, 2007). Differences in perceptions of acceptable means of expression, while at school, result in office referrals for discipline, suspensions from school, and referrals to special education for testing (Neal et al., 2003; Payne, 1996). An active learning environment is most conducive for successful learning for Black students

(Beachum, Dentith, McCray, & Boyle, 2008). Black children find themselves punished or considered hyperactive as a result of their preference for high motor activity (Fitzgerald, 2006; Hinojosa, 2008). When a Black child cannot conform to the White middle class expectation of sitting still and being quiet, they are considered discipline problems and often are referred for special education services (Blanchett, 2006). This vibrant and active expression is culturally supported in Black homes and Black neighborhoods and punished in the school system that is run by White middle class culture (Kunjufu, 2005).

Additionally, Kunjufu (2005) suggested educators use culturally relevant knowledge of Black students' tendencies to be more physical than his or her White peers to teach all children how to solve problems in a nonviolent manner. Similarly, Payne (1996) and Roscigno (1999) recommended that educators teach the skills necessary to navigate through and find success in the school setting as well as in the student's home environment. Cultural understanding of Black students will allow educators increased success with Black students (Allen, 2013; Ishii-Jordan, 2000; Patton & Townsend, 2001). Understanding differences will allow educators to be less frustrated with the behaviors of Black students and will decrease the referrals for emotional disturbance evaluations (Payne, 1996). Hosp and Hosp (2001) claimed that many Black students have naturally high levels of energy and that schools discourage this level of energy. School systems respond punitively toward Black students who are unable to control their innately high energy levels resulting in Black students being punished, medicated, suspended, expelled, or referred to lower academically challenging opportunities – thus

continuing the cycle of segregation, racism, and disproportionate achievement and discipline gaps (Hosp & Reschly, 2004; Klingner et al., 2005; Prier, 2007).

### **Socioeconomic Factors**

Interestingly, Gosa and Alexander (2007) took current research of the disparities within achievement gaps and asked whether there was a noticeable difference between students who were more socioeconomically alike. They were interested in discovering if the inequitable gaps in education were apparent between Black and White students of similar socioeconomic and middle-class means. In other words, they explored whether gaps in academics, discipline, and achievement existed between Black and White students of similar financial means and experiences (Bradford, 2000; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Kelly, 2002). Remarkably, they discovered that parallel gaps existed regardless of comparable or equal factors outside of the school environment. Likewise, Ferguson (2002) left educators with the same question of why Black students who had more financial means than Black lower socioeconomic level students were still experiencing achievement gaps with their economically similar White peers (Ogbu, 2003; Oliver & Shapiro, 1995). In his study of similar achievement gap issues in the Shaker Heights, Ohio, school district between Black and White students, Ogbu (2003) yielded complimentary results. Black and White middle-class suburban students did not fare equally in relation to grade point averages, advanced courses, or college attendance, to name a few. That is, middle class financial means does not necessarily shelter Black students from the other disadvantages and inequities experienced due to the White

middle class norms of the educational system (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Payne, 2003).

Researchers have claimed there is a need for educators to strive for understanding the complexities involved within the current educational system with a focus on an equitable educational experience for all children (Brown, 2002; Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Ford & Malaney, 2012; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Sprague et al., 2001). Gosa and Alexander (2007) eloquently summed up their recommendations after conducting research on the achievement gaps between similar socioeconomic and middle class experiences of Black and White students:

Closing the Black-White education gap, and keeping it closed, necessarily will involve strategies that acknowledge and address the continuing significance of race. Until fundamental changes beyond the family in how race fits into the larger fabric of society, we're afraid today's pleasing "leave no child behind" rhetoric will remain just that. Better-off Black youth will be left behind in large numbers and with them a vast reservoir of unrealized talent. (p. 311)

Researchers seem to agree that there are fundamental differences in the treatment of Black and White students based on race even when the two share similar financial and social status (i.e., Bradford, 2000; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002).

Another study of the disparity between similar socioeconomic, middle class Black and White groups was that of Mendez and Knoff (2003). They found in their study of a sizable racially diverse and predominately middle class school district that a disparity existed in the removal of Black students compared to White students from

school for similar discipline infractions. They found that 50% of Black boys and 33% of Black girls were suspended from school over the course of one school year.

Comparatively, 25% of White boys and 9% of White girls were suspended from school the same year. Despite the research and work in this area of study, there is currently no definitive cause of these discipline gaps in the educational system; however, there is ample proof that race is a substantial predictor of removal from school, even when the social, home, and income levels are similar (i.e., Allen, 2013; Skiba et al., 2002; Wu et al., 1982).

### **Options to Suspensions**

Suspensions, expulsions, and removals from classroom instruction hinder the opportunities to learn and acquire the necessary skills for academic success (Aud et al., 2010; Butler, 2011; Langhout, 2005; Sheffield-Coley, 2009). Disengagement from school and school activities lead to negative academic and social outcomes for students. As it has been established, in the educational literature, Black students are the students disproportionately represented in removals from classroom instruction due to discipline encounters (i.e., Reyes, 2006; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2012). When the educational system relies heavily on removal from instructional opportunities, the academic achievement gap consequently widens.

Reyes (2006) argued that there are options other than removal from classroom instruction to counter discipline issues. She claimed that a common misconception regarding school discipline is that removal is an only option to maintaining a safe school environment. Skiba and Edl (2004) previously argued the same findings as Reyes. They

worked with 325 school principals in Indiana and discovered some successful school administrators relied on alternative actions before considering suspensions or removals from the instructional setting. Some examples of these alternatives were implementing prevention programs, holding beliefs that removal from school does not solve discipline problems, using different approaches for general education and special education students, working with parents before suspensions, and having conversations with students thus building relationships with students early.

As a result of the inequitable removal of Black students compared to White students from school for behavioral issues, educational researchers have spent many years examining the achievement gaps between Black and White students (i.e., Aud et al., 2010; Bainbridge & Lasley, 2002; Bartley, Sutton, Swihart, & Thiery, 1999; Benner et al., 2002; Booker & Mitchell, 2011; Butler, 2012; Henderson, 1975; Lewy, 1985; Skiba et al., 2012). Local, state, and national data have been explored for at least the last 30 years and researchers have successfully documented the disproportionate representation of Black students in school referrals, suspensions, expulsions, and even corporal punishment (i.e., Caton, 2012; Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2012; Wu et al., 1982). Many researchers exploring differences in groups, cultures, or races have focused on the gaps between Black and White students as opposed to other groups such as Hispanics (i.e., Bowman, 2001). Even with the immense amount of work conducted with the intent to understand academic, achievement, and discipline gaps between Black and White students, the educational system has not closed the necessary gaps that would ensure an equitable

education for all student groups. The fight for justice must continue. The educational gaps between Black and White students must be eradicated; therefore, my study was conducted with the intent of taking another step toward doing just that by understanding the perceptions Black students hold regarding their discipline encounters. Therefore, my study was conducted with the belief that if principals are able to understand how they are perceived, by this often marginalized group of students, progress will be made toward not just closing but eradicating unjust achievement gaps in the educational system.

### **Inequitable Representation in the Justice System**

The same trends of over-punishment and overrepresentation of Black students in trouble at school are the same trends that carry over to the juvenile justice system (Brown, Russo, & Hunter, 2002; Fabelo et al., 2011; Sarmiento-Brooks, 2008; Tuzzolo & Hewitt, 2006). Malone (2011) alerted to a common trend between out-of-school suspensions and incarcerations within the juvenile system. There is a pattern that suggests that Black students who are harshly disciplined in the school setting for non-violent misbehaviors, or who are suspended for behaviors indiscernible solely on the behavior, are also overrepresented in the juvenile justice system (Brown et al., 2002; Wald & Losen, 2003; Welch & Payne, 2012). Some researchers have suggested that school communities that have positive and effective means of working with Black students and those schools that break this cycle of inequity also positively impact the racial disparity in the criminal system (i.e., Brownstein, 2009; Mazzotti & Higgins, 2006; Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009). One attempt to develop this level of understanding may be to equip principals with the culturally relevant tools for

working with students who are racially different from themselves (Brown et al., 2002; Caballero, 2010; Gay, 2010; Thorsen et al., 2011; Weissman, 2010). Understanding the perceptions of Black students during the discipline cycle could provide educators the ability to understand and work toward eliminating racial disparities.

### **Student Perceptions of Inequity**

Students who are more likely than others of dropping out-of-school are often referred to in educational research as “at-risk” students (Gavigan, 2010). A variety of variables are considered when identifying at-risk students; some include low socioeconomic status, poor grades, low attendance rates, suspension from school, expulsion from school, and language differences (Barfield, 2012). Of all the different groups of American students who are considered at-risk, Black students are in an at-risk group that is isolated by the sheer amount of negative factors he or she regularly encounters (James & Taylor, 2010; Kerka, 2003; Kleiner et al., 2002; Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004). Black students are often overrepresented in dropout rates, expulsions and suspensions, juvenile incarcerations, special education programs, and unemployment (Carpenter, 2007; Smith, 2004). With the constant influx of negative association with being Black in America, Black students’ perceptions of him or herself and the culture are unfairly penetrated from an early age (Books, 2000; Cole & Omari, 2003; Guenthner, 2008; Howard, 2003; Murray, 2011; Rodriguez, 2006; Shirley & Cornell, 2012).

In addition to the many categories associated with Black students’ perceptions of inequitable school experiences, as mention in the above paragraph, a major concern of

researchers has been the inequitable discipline phenomenon (Bulter, 2011; Skiba, Shure, & Williams, 2012; Townsend-Walker, 2012) Black students have been noted in the research to feel picked on or singled out concerning discipline due to their race (Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994). Hinojosa (2008) concluded, after working with a large urban school district, that there was an astounding difference in the number of Black students punished compared to White students. The Black students in her study were almost four times more likely to be out-of-school suspended and almost three times as likely to be in-school suspended than their White classmates.

### **Student Perceptions Based on Their Race**

When reporting the findings of the study they performed, in an attempt to determine if students have different perceptions of disciplinary treatment at school based on their racial or ethnic backgrounds, Ruck and Wortley (2002) revealed that Black students appear to have perceptions that their race is an indicator of how they will be treated by school administrators. They also indicated that Black students were much more likely to perceive discrimination in regard to school suspension, treatment by teachers, use of police by school authorities, and police treatment at school than were their White schoolmates. Researchers have contended that educators must never underestimate students' perceptions as these views are often much more important in culturally diverse settings than any objective reality (i.e., Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Infantino & Little, 2005; Shirley & Cornell, 2012). Further research regarding students' perceptions is required to authenticate the views of racial and ethnic student groups (Ruck & Wortley, 2002).

At-risk Black students desire to have positive relationships with their teachers (Murray, 2011; Witherspoon, 2011). The student's perception of her relationship with her teacher often impacts the amount of referrals made for special education or for discipline by the teacher with whom the student feels positive (Decker et al., 2007; Graham, 2007; Martin & Halperin, 2006; Mazzotti & Higgins, 2006). Culturally relevant pedagogy involves awareness by the classroom teacher of possible learning differences across cultures. Culturally relevant teachers are cognizant of cultural differences and use that knowledge to create learning environments that support academic success for all learners (Ladson-Billings, 1995; McKenzie & Skrla, 2011). Therefore, school resources should be allotted to make teachers aware of culturally relevant pedagogy and help them find ways to have positive interactions with Black students (Blecker, 2008; Decker et al., 2007; Kavanagh, 2010; Whiting, 2011). Positive interactions allow the student to perceive that he is cared for by the teacher and is valued for his cultural differences thus increasing student success (Caballero, 2010; Decker et al., 2007).

### **Teacher Perspectives on Race and Discipline**

Gregory and Mosely (2004) performed a qualitative study that explored the implicit theories teachers have regarding the causes of discipline problems and how teachers consider culture and race in their theory. They reminded the reader of the importance of taking into consideration what teachers value in student behavior, which is developed through their experiences of maintaining a disciplined classroom conducive to learning. Attention to these values are imperative when studying what factors teachers

attribute to the gap that exists in discipline experiences between Black and Hispanic students and their White and Asian peers. According to Skiba et al. (2012), many contributing factors have been studied regarding issues surrounding the discipline gap without much attention given to teacher beliefs and teacher practices that might also contribute to this gap. Perceptions likely play a tremendous role in the interactions between White educators and Black students. Continued understanding of perceptions could provide needed understanding for racial relevance in the discipline setting.

One reason for lack of overcoming this educational issue, as argued by Skiba et al. (2002), is that there has been little to no work which attempts to understand if there are any teacher patterns in discipline referrals as related to the overrepresentation of Black students and the underrepresentation of White students in the school discipline system. Gregory and Mosely (2004) argued that an understanding of teacher patterns, as related to discipline referrals, would allow for an understanding of teacher perceptions and is the next theoretical step in an attempt to understand this educational concern.

### **Need for Teachers to Understand Culturally Relevant Differences**

Gregory and Mosely (2004) hoped to contribute to the literature surrounding the overrepresentation of Black students in the school discipline setting by expounding on the connection between race and teachers' views regarding students in the discipline system, with a particular focus on Black students. After their research surrounding teachers' perspectives of race and discipline, they recommended that continued research be conducted that would implicitly explore the students' views about their race and their discipline. Ladson-Billings (2004) and Sleeter and McLaren (1995) shared there had

been a shift in teacher beliefs regarding the gap in achievement between the Black and White students and cultural relevancy was becoming of interest.

Currently, educational researchers are at the stage of exploring culturally relevant pedagogy in an attempt to understand and mediate the achievement gap (Caballero, 2010; Carolissen et al., 2010; Howard, 2003). The lack of attention to relevant cultural differences can be considered a form of blind and hidden racism and is considered by some scholars as child abuse. If educators chose to *see* the racism it may be apparent in discipline statistics (Sturgess, 2011). It is apparent and evident who is punished more often and with harsher restrictions (Skrla & Scheurich, 2003). Additionally, McKenzie (2009) articulated that students whom teachers believe are the most disrespectful and unmanageable are the students who believe that those same teachers do not like them and treat them unfairly. The unfair treatment of children can be considered emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is usually referred to as behaviors that attack someone's self-worth interfering with the person's positive emotional development (Kaywell, 2004). When students are emotionally abused they tend to respond with self-defense strategies. These strategies come in the form of flight, submission, or aggression (Gilligan, 2003). Without a clear understanding of racial perceptions within the discipline system, the cycle is likely perpetuated.

White teacher and Black student relationships are predictors for teacher referrals or non-referrals for discipline and/or special education services (Decker et al., 2007). Within the success of these relationships it appears that culture plays a significant and often hidden role when teachers make referral decisions. For example, some Black

children who see the teacher as a resource to help them navigate school are seen by that White teacher as in need of too much support. The student makes an effort to build a relationship with the teacher, the best way he knows, and the teacher sees this negatively and pushes the student into the referral process (Kesner, 2000).

Teachers' racial stereotypes are evident when teachers equate popular Black culture to mean lower academic achievement and higher aggression when a Black student is stroll walking or using neighborhood jargon (Neal et al., 2003). Educators often misinterpret these movements and choices in language as disrespectful and aggressive (Beachum & McCray, 2004). Meehan et al. (2003) posited that teachers who perceive cultural behaviors negatively in turn treat the students negatively which in turn increases student discipline issues.

### **Principals' Responsibilities for Change**

Principals' decisions, which are often led by educational rules and procedures, mandated by public education in the United States, have established a structure that impedes Black students by controlling and punishing them excessively (Fitzgerald, 2006). There is no doubt that much evidence exists to substantiate school districts' discipline policies result in the disproportionate suspension of Black students (i.e., Dehlinger, 2008; Skiba et al., 2012). Fitzgerald (2006) studied a mid-western school community during 2002-2003 and found present the mindset to punish or to control Black children was the recourse for perceived misbehaviors. When he reviewed the statistics of students who were placed in the district's alternative schools that year, the results were similar to what researchers have learned across the United States. In his

study, 113 students were assigned to the alternative school. Eighty-six of those were males. Eighty percent of the placements were Black students. Fitzgerald warned that the educational system continued to hold the Black student's place in society as last place. It is important to note that Trotter (2007) posited that research is needed to gain insights into the skills required by principals to support school success of Black students. Further understanding of Black students' perceptions might add to these needed insights.

### **Importance of Racial Identification and Racial Ascription**

Lewis (2003) shared in her research findings that schools continue to play a key role in reproduction of racial inequality. She contended that racial imbalance is not due to individual or collective factors; it is actually due to larger systemic, structural, and institutional processes that produce racial inequality in school. Racial identity has at least two components — racial identification (how one self-identifies) and racial ascription (the identity others assign to someone). Lewis' argument was that interpersonal interactions in schools help shape experiences and racial ascription, and often matters more than self-identity. Thus the idea that racial identity is often in the eye of the beholder (see Figure 3). She reminded readers that school is often the first place young people truly experience people who are significantly different than they. An example she shared included the struggle one young student had as he self-identified as Hispanic, and his first language was Spanish; however, due to the fact that his skin tone was White and that he obviously had a fluid command of the English language, teachers and students alike considered him White and never even knew he could speak Spanish until his mother told his teachers. Regardless of his efforts to be acknowledged as

Hispanic, that concept never stuck and others' ascription of him was one of being a White male. "Language and physical features often interact with other factors to mark someone as similar or different..." (p. 131). Through her findings, she lent merit to continued research in the area of racial identity. Consequently, it is my hope that the findings from my research which explored the perceptions of Black students and their perceived experiences prior to being assigned to a DAEP will assist educators in understanding racial identity and racial ascription at a new level.

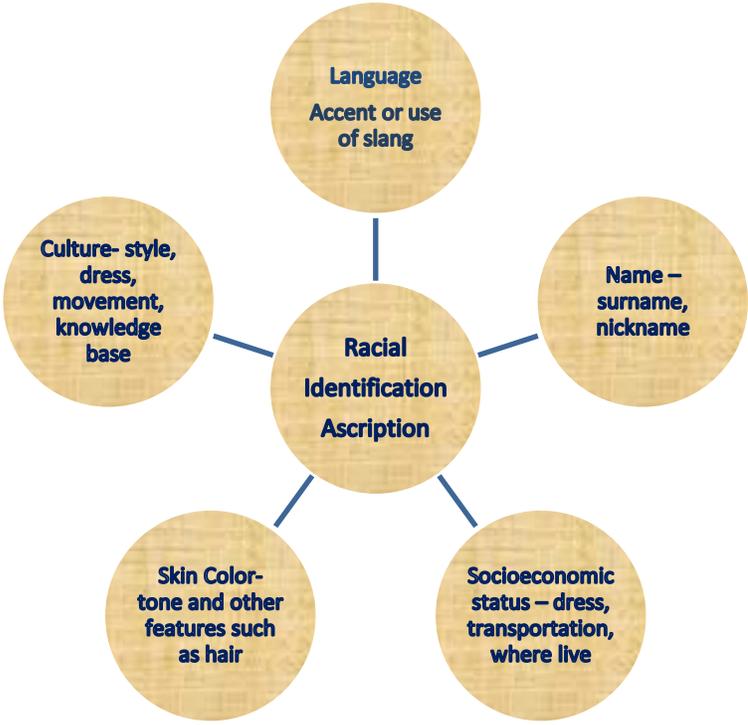


Figure 3, Ascription Process Used to Inform Racial Understanding

Note. Adapted, with much similarity, and with permission, from Amanda Lewis (2003) "Race in the Schoolyard."

## **Equity Traps**

McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) developed the concept of *equity traps*. They defined equity traps as the conscious and unconscious thoughts and perceptions regarding race that trap educators in a cycle of thinking that inhibits an equitable education for all students. Through their research, they provided for some next steps in combating the inequities in schools' discipline settings. Additionally, they contributed to our understanding of the overrepresentation of Black students in school suspension and expulsion from a perspective of blind racism in education. They left educators with suggestions for a more equitable educational system for all. They argued that the principal is the key component to school change. For school culture to change, the principal must have an understanding of equity traps that undermine the success of all students. In an attempt to understand the equity trap that consistently sends Black students out of the classroom, the principal must teach and model cultural relevance to her school staff and students. That understanding will be enhanced by understanding the perceptions of Black students as it pertains to their experiences prior to being assigned to a DAEP.

Bennett and Harris (1982) entered into their research with The Project for the Equitable Administration of Student Discipline with an understanding of the literature regarding disproportionality of Black students' suspension and expulsion from schools, with the intent to identify the reasons why overrepresentation exists. They spent two years conducting research at 11 different high schools. The interviews consisted of 210 student interviews, 210 parent interviews, interviews with 10 teachers from each

campus, and interviews with three to four administrators from each campus. They maintained that the schools in the study that held the highest amount of disproportionality, compared to others in the study, also held the highest scores on the measurements of dislike of the school, feelings of unfair punishment, and lowest on administrator support of school desegregation. The researchers held out hope that schools could make a difference. Unfortunately, these inequities are still present today (Cain, 2012). Administrator support and trust, as perceived by the Black student who represents the majority in the school discipline setting, needs to be explored in an attempt to understand the administrator's impact on the ever present inequity within the discipline setting.

### **Summary**

In virtually all public school settings, most White teachers are ill-equipped with culturally relevant pedagogy and continue the trend of disproportionate punishment of Black students (Fitzgerald, 2006). No doubt, ample data exist supporting the fact that today's educational system's disciplinary settings are overrepresented by Black students (i.e., Butler, 2011; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Shirley & Cornell, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011). Within the contexts of the data derived from research conducted concerning Black children and the overrepresentation of these children in school discipline, it is my assertion that not enough researchers have focused on the perceptions of the students regarding their experiences in the discipline system.

In addition, it is important to expand on the minimal amount of research that is alluding to Black students seeing their race as a factor in the discipline system.

Therefore, through my research, I have expounded on the current literature and examined deeper the perceptions of Black students regarding their experiences in school discipline. Specifically, I explored the perceptions of Black high school students' experiences prior to being assigned to a DAEP.

McKenzie's (2009) claim that White educators are emotionally abusive to Black children is a daunting thought for me to consider and a practice I want to see eradicated. I believe past and current practices are responsible for continued discrimination, increased dropout rates, high numbers in special education placements, and overrepresentation in discipline settings and in prisons. McKenzie (2009) warned that all educators are responsible for our schools failing Black children. She contended that if those in academia do not begin to develop equity conscious skills in those who educate the most vulnerable populations, this most egregious cycle of abuse will continue.

In this chapter, I shared an extensive review of the literature. This review included an historical perspective, inequitable discipline practices, inequitable achievement gaps, inequitable representation in the justice system, student perceptions of inequity, teacher perspectives on race and discipline, principals' responsibilities for change, as well as national, state, and local data regarding disproportionate discipline practices. In Chapter III, I explain the details of the methodology used in the study. This includes the rationale for a qualitative research design, researcher perspective, context of the study, instrumentation, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability of the study, trustworthiness and credibility of the study, and ethical considerations.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHOD**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of my study was to understand the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to being placed in a DAEP, with the intent to positively inform principals' practices related to student discipline. My findings will be used to inform principals' practices related to student discipline. The research was guided by the following question: What are the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to their assignment to a DAEP campus?

My research was guided by a phenomenological single case study research method. Yin (1994) defined case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (p. 23).

In this chapter, I outline the overall research design which includes the rationale for the use of a qualitative research design, researcher perspective, context of the study, sample instrumentation, participant selection, data collection, data analysis strategies, issues of validity and reliability, and ethical considerations.

#### **Rationale for Use of a Qualitative Research Design**

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) posited that qualitative research is an umbrella term used to describe a variety of methods for conducting research with common characteristics. They maintained that qualitative research is approached with intent to

unfold perspectives as the research matures. Conversely, researchers employing quantitative study approaches incorporate hypotheses to test or specific questions to find answers. The authors shared five characteristics often found in qualitative research:

1. Naturalistic qualitative research allows for the researcher to be a key element in the research. Naturalistic qualitative researchers conduct research in the natural surroundings of the subjects. It is common to find qualitative researchers in classrooms, hospital rooms, work place environments, and they may be seen visiting, interviewing, and/or possibly videotaping subjects.  
(pp. 4-5) I conducted my research in the students' DAEP setting.
2. Descriptive data collection is common in qualitative work. Words or pictures are collected in the form of note taking, scribing, or narrative. Every detail of the environment is important to the qualitative researcher, decorations, specific words, jokes, gestures, routines, order, etc. "Nothing is taken for granted, and no statement escapes scrutiny" (p. 6). Even though the interviews were audio taped, I took notes on key expressions or gestures to help provide meaning to the words being taped.
3. Concern for the process is important to the qualitative researcher. The why, how, and what is imperative to understand. Why did this occur? How did this occur? What is significant about this occurrence? (p. 6) This was a key element of my data collection design. The who, what, why, and how of my semi-structured interview questions provided an opportunity to explore an

understanding of Black students' perceptions of the phenomenon of their overrepresentation in the DAEP.

4. Inductive analysis of data are found in qualitative research. Qualitative research is constructed without the desire to prove or disprove an hypothesis. Qualitative research develops as information begins to interconnect. (p. 6-7) Regarding my research, I did not have a theory to validate nor negate. As the conversations progressed, connections and themes began to unfold; and, the information that was derived in this manner has the potential to inform principals' understanding of the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to being placed at the DAEP.
5. Creating meaning is the ultimate goal of the qualitative researcher. It is desired to understand how people make meaning of their lives. Concern for finding the perspectives of the participants in the study is of importance. (p. 7-8) Additionally, this was the ultimate goal of my research. My goal was to understand a phenomenon through a phenomenological single case study of the perceptions of the population most affected by the phenomenon.

Kuhn (1996) shared similar beliefs with those of Bogdan and Biklen (2007). He emphasized the significance of perspective in qualitative research. Kuhn maintained the importance of entering qualitative research free of a controlled environment, if in fact researchers are to allow for perceptions and understanding to evolve. Comparatively, quantitative researchers seek to prove or disprove a belief.

Marshall and Oliva's (2001) comment regarding perceptions as "selective seeing" that creates human biases are important to be considered (p. 217). Larson and Ovando (2001) maintained, "human beings consistently sort and classify women, men, rich, poor, and all people of color by schemas that reduce individuals and groups to social and cultural stereotypes. These stereotypes...perpetuate inaccurate constructions [perceptions] of the other" (p. 77).

Additionally, Sage (2007) compared quantitative and qualitative methods of research. When describing quantitative research, he emphasized the use of a definite amount or number in experiments which are often represented in graphs or formulas. He asserted common research tools for qualitative work are interviewing, document analysis, and observing.

Summaries of the research related to characteristics of quantitative and qualitative research render specific delineation. It is common to refer to positivism when referring to quantitative research and interpretivism when referring to qualitative research. Quantitative researchers use the scientific method to validate their studies. Such researchers attempt to prove or disprove their hypothesis. Quantitative researchers conduct experiments and use statistical data in their findings. On the other hand, qualitative research is often conducted with the researcher participating in the observations and interviewing subjects. The use of focus groups to garner knowledge is consistent with qualitative research methods as well.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined case study as, "A detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or a particular event" (p.

271). Harrington and Garrison (1992) claimed, “Cases provide opportunities for inquiry...bounded by experience, framed by theory, generating possibilities, and transforming practice” (p. 721). A phenomenological single case study approach is a logical avenue for the research of examining a particular event (over-representation of Black students in school discipline) through inquiry of the participants’ lived experiences.

Based on the prior arguments, I used qualitative research techniques to aid me in answering my research question. More specifically, I employed a phenomenological single case study design. I consider the design as a single case study, as I conducted my research from one setting which was the discipline alternative educational placement school, DAEP, in a suburban school district outside of Houston. Demographically, the district’s student population is majority White; however, its DAEP student placements are majority Black. Furthermore, as suggested by Schwandt (2007), this research design aligned with phenomenology as it required that I conducted research from a lens free of any assumptions derived from my everyday life experiences and that I attended to the participants’ views of his or her life experiences.

Collinson (1978) explained the importance of phenomenological studies to be free of the researcher’s biases and assumptions if untainted descriptions were to be attained before concluding an accurate theory based on the subjects’ lived experiences. Additionally, Creswell (2007) agreed that a phenomenological research typology was effective when attempting to find patterns and relationships in perceptions of lived experiences while studying a small number of participants. According to Moustakas

(1994), the techniques within phenomenology case study typology are as follows, and were utilized in my study: (a) preparation, (b) data collection, and (c) organizing and analyzing data collected.

More specifically, his seven steps are outlined within the categories of preparation, data collection, and analyzing the data. For instance, when *preparing* for the study, the researcher will 1) discover a topic and question with autobiographical meaning, social meaning, and significance, and 2) conduct a literature review. *Data collection* contains additional steps; the researcher will 3) construct criteria to identify participants, and 4) provide participants with the study's purpose, obtain informed consent, insure confidentiality, specify the researcher's and participants' responsibilities, and stay consistent with ethical research principals. The remaining steps are found in the *organizing and analyzing* of the collected data, 5) develop an interview protocol, 6) conduct and record interviews focusing on a bracketed topic and question, and 7) organize and analyze the data and develop individual composite, and synthesized textural and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2013).

### **Researcher Perspective**

In August 2009, on my first day as the new principal for my district's discipline alternative educational placement (DAEP) school, I entered one of the secondary classrooms ready to embrace my new group of students. When I entered the room, I was immediately taken back by what I saw. All of my students were Black. What? How could this be? I have worked in this district for years as a classroom teacher, an assistant principal, an associate principal, and now as a principal. I knew the majority of the

students in the district were White. Only about 13% of the student population was Black, and yet 100% of the students I saw in this discipline setting were Black. At that very moment, I became determined to understand this phenomenon; and so, the research and the reading began.

I know principals, teachers, school policies, and procedures, within the school district where my research was conducted, as I have worked closely with many of them for the last 17 years. This knowledge allowed for a flow of conversation during the interviews. I was privy to background information regarding people and places the participants chose to discuss. I was familiar with the programs, the staff, and the physical layout of the different secondary schools and that contributed to my credibility with the subjects.

Trust was established between the subjects and me. I have been an assistant principal, associate principal, and principal at the secondary level in the school district for the past 12 years. Prior to that, I was at the elementary level in the district for five years. Over the years, I have developed a reputation as a fair and culturally aware educator. I have worked with many of the district's most marginalized population and have developed a level of trust with students and families who are often considered to be *others*. My experiences have allowed me to gain a level of credibility with students, parents, and staff.

### **Context of the Study**

In Texas, students who violate the student code of conduct may be required to serve their punishment at a DAEP. DAEPs are discipline alternative educational

placements. Many types of students can be found serving disciplinary consequences in a DAEP. Some DAEP students for example are being punished for persistent acts of misconduct. This infraction could be a result of being tardy too many times in a given period of time or perhaps for not wearing school identification many times over a course of a given period of time. Students with more severe choices for behavior can also be found in DAEPs. It is common to find students who have been in fights at school as well as those who have come to school under the influence of drugs or alcohol placed in a DAEP. A DAEP placement could result from flagrant disrespect toward a teacher or principal or for having a weapon at school. It is also common to find students who have been incarcerated, for nothing pertaining to school, serving a transition period of time in a DAEP before reentering the regular school setting. Students who have made a one-time poor choice can be found in a DAEP and so can some reoccurring seriously behaviorally challenging students. School safety and school discipline are priorities for school districts and for communities. DAEPs are one way school districts provide a safe and civil school district (Neiman & DeVoe, 2009). Therefore, the choices that place a student in a DAEP certainly run the gamut and may differ among school districts.

The United States educational system has provided some type of alternative discipline program for at least the last forty years (Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009). The need for alternative settings for school discipline has a direct correlation to zero tolerance and accountability concerns (Skiba, 2000). Even though zero tolerance has its conception traced to the 1980s war on drug trafficking, many agencies have adopted a form of the concept and that includes public education (Skiba, 2000). In 1989, schools

in New York, California, and Kentucky began using zero tolerance for violations of drugs, fighting, or gang affiliation policies and expelled students from school for such actions. By the early 1990s, many school districts across the United States had implemented zero tolerance policies and these policies included less serious behaviors such as class disruption and persistent acts of misconduct (Skiba, 2000; Weiland, 2012).

With the increased use of zero tolerance policies in school districts resulting in an increased number of students being expelled from school, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) argued the need for an educational placement for expelled students (Foley & Pang, 2006; Gable, Bullock, & Evans, 2006).

Since the 1996-1997 school year, Texas public school districts have been mandated by Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code to provide DAEPs for students who are removed from their home campus (TEC, 2010). This law sets the requirements for discipline violations that mandate removal from the student's home campus and placement in the DAEP. Those are called mandatory placements. This law permits school districts to develop a code of conduct that allows for discretionary placements to a DAEP as determined by local school boards (TEC, 2010). The basic requirements set by the Texas Education Code are that each DAEP must:

- Be provided in a setting other than a student's regular classroom
- Separate students assigned to the program from those not assigned to the program

- Focus academically on English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, History, and self-discipline
- Provide for the educational and behavioral needs of students
- Provide supervision and counseling
- Require each teacher in the program to be certified
- Require each teacher in the program with a special education assignment to be appropriately certified and permitted for the assignment (TEA, 2007; Weiland, 2012)

The school district used in this study is in a growing and thriving community.

The 2013-2014 student enrollment is 11,704 (District Data File, 2013) and for the last five years enrollment has grown annually at a rate of approximately 3% (School Board Meeting Minutes, 2012). The district is composed of two comprehensive high schools (9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>), one high school of choice (9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>), two intermediate schools (5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>), two middle schools (7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>), and eight elementary schools (PK – 5<sup>th</sup>). The district also has two discipline schools or DAEPs, one for seventh through twelfth grades and one for six-year-olds through sixth grade. With the district's eight elementary schools at a combined 93% capacity, it is projected a ninth elementary school could be needed as soon as the 2015-2016 school year. Additionally, based on these projections, three additional campuses could be needed by the end of the decade: a third intermediate, a third middle school, and a tenth elementary (School Board Meeting Minutes, 2012).

The district's current 2013-2014 enrollment of 11,704 is racially similar to its 2012-2013 enrollment data. For the 2013-2014 school year, the district's largest student

groups are 14% Black, 21% Hispanic, and 54% White. There are smaller racial populations accounted for such as 3% multi-ethnic, .3% American Indian, 8% Asian, and .1% Pacific Islander. Comparatively, the district's 2012-2013 enrollment were 11,175. Again, the district's largest student groups were 13% Black, 22% Hispanic, and 53% White. The smaller racial populations accounted for were 3% multi-ethnic, .2% American Indian, 8% Asian, and .08% Pacific Islander. Refer to Table 5 for a side by side comparison of the district's 2013-2014 and 2012-2013 student demographics. State student demographic data for school years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 are not available to the public at this time.

Table 5

*Comparison of District Demographic Data for School Years 2013-2014 and 2012-2013*

District Data	
Local District Data 2013-2014	Local District Data 2012-2013
11,704 Total Enrollment	11,175 Total Enrollment
14% Black	13% Black
21% Hispanic	22% Hispanic
54% White	53% White
35% Economically Disadvantaged	36% Economically Disadvantaged

Obtained from the most recently available AEIS report (2011-2012), the district's student ethnic demographics were 13% Black, 20% Hispanic, and 56% White.

Economically disadvantaged was 35.6%. When comparing the 2011-2012 district AEIS ethnic demographic data to the state of Texas ethnic demographic data for the same school year there were some notable differences. Texas schools' total student population

of 4,978,120 consisted of 13% Black, 51% Hispanic, and 31% White. It was reported that 60% of the State’s students were considered economically disadvantaged. Texas was purported to be a majority Hispanic student school system and the school district to be researched a White district. Interestingly, the Black student population was similar in district percentage to total State percentage. Additionally, the district was considerably less economically disadvantaged than the State’s student average. Also of interest is the ethnic delineation of teachers. The district’s teacher ethnic demographics were 3% Black, 6% Hispanic, and 90% White. Statewide, the teacher ethnic demographics were 9% Black, 24% Hispanic, and 63% White (AEIS, 2011-2012). Refer to Table 6 for side by side comparison of district and State student racial groups and Table 7 for side by side comparison of district and State teacher racial groups.

Table 6

*District and State Student Racial Comparison for School Year 2011-2012*

District Data	State Data
2011-2012 AEIS Data	2011-2012 AEIS Data
10,613 Total Enrollment	4,978,120 Total Enrollment
13% Black	13% Black
20% Hispanic	51% Hispanic
56% White	31% White
36% Economically Disadvantaged	60% Economically Disadvantaged

Table 7

*District and State Teacher Racial Comparison for School Year 2011-2012*

District Data	State Data
2011-2012 AEIS Data	2011-2012 AEIS Data
Teacher Ethnic Demographics	Teacher Ethnic Demographics
3% Black	9% Black
6% Hispanic	24% Hispanic
90% White	63% White

**Missing the Mission**

“The mission of [*this district*], in partnership with the community, is to provide a quality education that prepares our students for the challenges of life” (District Improvement Plan, 2013-2014). Unfortunately, the district is not fully adhering to its mission statement as evidenced by disproportionate achievement gaps that include disparities between passing rates on mandated state exams, graduation rates, and discipline practices. Students gain a better chance at academic success if the students are actually in class learning with their teacher and their peers (Hayes, 2010). Evidenced by district data, Black students are disproportionately removed from general classroom instruction due to consequences for behaviors and they experience disproportionate levels of academic success.

**Instrumentation**

A series of questions were used to stimulate semi-structured conversations with the interview participants. This allowed for a relaxed conversation to manifest and detoured the conversation from a formal ask and respond format. Bishop (2008)

contended, this type of semi-structured interview allows for the flow of conversation so as to “co-construct a mutual understanding by means of shared experiences and meaning” (p. 167). Foley and Valenzuela (2008) found similarly as they argued semi-structured interview conversations allow the participants to contribute meaningfully to the process. The use of open-ended semi-structured questions contributes to countering any preconceived findings from the researcher’s bias or previous research (Creswell, 2008). Refer to Appendix A for the semi-structured interview questions.

The semi-structured interview questions used in this study were adapted, with permission, from Casteel’s (2000) study of African American students’ perceptions of their treatment by White teachers. There is commonality between his study and mine. We both desire to understand the perceptions of high school students’ experiences prior to being assigned to a DAEP. His was of White teachers and mine was of the experiences of Black high school students prior to DAEP placements. He was able to reach a point of saturation by receiving common responses to questions, which allowed for continued themes to emerge, which in turn validated the effectiveness of his research questions. Within the semi-structured interviews, I added to the validity of my questions by completing member checks continuously throughout the interviews. Member checks are an important element of qualitative data collection and analysis as it provides an opportunity for the researcher to verify or validate the interpretations of the raw data (Merriam, 2002).

## **Selection of Participants**

Black High school students placed in the DAEP during this research period, and/or their guardians, were met with by at least one of the four DAEP teachers who were personally trained by me to recruit participants and retain consent and/or assent prior to starting his or her assigned placement. Guardians of students who were under the age of 18 years were required to consent along with the students' assent in order for the student to participate in the study. Each parent/guardian and/or student had the purpose of this research study explained to them and they were given the opportunity to have the student participate in the study. The participant pool had the possibility of ranging in age from 14 to 19 years as well as being male or female. The selection of participants was purposeful as I identified a certain population of high school aged students; however, the participants were random as I had no influence on who actually got in trouble on their home campus and got sent to the DAEP, nor did I have control over which DAEP placed students agreed to participate. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) explained this process of participant selection as *purposive sampling*. Purposive sampling allows for a means of choosing participants from a group of possible participants based on a specific interest of study. As reflected in the review of the literature in Chapter II, the probability of having access to a sample of possible participants who met the qualifications of this study was high. In fact, the only high school students assigned to the DAEP during the time I conducted my semi-structured interviews were Black students.

## **Data Collection**

### **Informed Consent and/or Assent**

Participants were identified as their DAEP placements occurred. When a student is assigned to the DAEP, there is a mandatory parent and student meeting that occurs prior to the student beginning his or her assigned disciplinary placement. It was at this parent and student meeting that the trained staff explained the purpose of the research and requested consent from the parent/guardian of minor students and/or assent from students. The informed consent was explained and it was made clear that the parent and/or student could withdraw from the study at any time. The fact that there was no known danger or harm coming from participating in this study was shared. Participants were advised that they were not being promised anything for their participation in the study. Also, it was clearly stated in the informed consent that no one will be penalized or suffer any negative consequences if they chose not to participate.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

A phenomenological single case study approach allowed each student to be interviewed individually, after placement at the DAEP. There was a list of questions I addressed with each student for the semi-structured interviews. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined semi-structured interviews as, “Interviews in which the same general questions or topics are brought up to each of the subjects involved” (p. 275). The use of semi-structured interview questions allowed for individual and unique perspectives and experiences to be shared while maintaining a general structure for obtaining information.

To assist me in my research to understand phenomenological experiences of a specific cultural group of students, the use of a single case study to enhance an understanding of the experiences of a particular group of Black high school students who were sent to the DAEP was most appropriate. The interviews took place during the DAEP students' regular school day. The participants and their parents were made aware of the purpose of the research as well as the expectation for honest feedback in a safe environment. All of the interview questions were directly related to the desire to understand the perceptions of the participants (Creswell, 2008).

At the beginning of each interview session, all participants were assured of the measures taken to protect their identities and to provide for confidentiality as outlined in the consent and/or assent protocols. As part of the assurance of confidentiality as well as a method to assist if additional member checking was needed, I assigned each participant a unique code. A total of 13 interviews were conducted of seven different participants. The audio-taped interviews were transcribed using Dragon Naturally Speaking, which is speech recognition software, version 12, manufactured by Nuance. As I listened to the interviews line by line, I repeated each word into the voice-to-text computer program. This allowed for the program to type what was being said, and this procedure aided in the efficient use of time to accurately transcribe 13 interviews. The transcribed interviews were numbered as follows: BM1JC #1, BM1JC #2, BM2JR #1, BM2JR #2, BM3CW #1, BM3CW #2, BM4TW #1, BM4TW #2, BM5DW #1, BM5DW #2, BM6NW #1, BF1SJ #1 and BF1SJ #2. The #1 represents the first interview with the participant and the #2 the second interview with the same participant. Interviews 1 and

2 were conducted on separate days ranging from 1 to 4 days of separation. Later, in Chapter IV, the participants are assigned pseudo names to assist in the understanding of each participant's story.

### **School Documents**

Student school records can be a valuable point of reference for obtaining a global view of a whole student. Student participants' school records were used to expand on the information rendered during the individual interviews. By exploring the information housed in school recorders, I was able to determine if any causality existed between the students' perceptions of discipline and other factors such as socioeconomic level, history of academic accomplishments, and discipline history. Part of the consent/assent process focused on my access to personal student data.

### **Data Analysis**

My decision to use a phenomenological single case study method for my research is supported by well-known case study researchers who have agreed on common steps in the process (i.e., Moustakas, 1994; Simons, 1980; Stake, 1995; Yin 1984, 2009). I used these common steps that encompassed the recommendations of Maustakas (1994) for collecting and analyzing data:

- Determine and define the research questions
- Select the cases and determine data gathering and analysis techniques
- Prepare to collect the data
- Collect data in the field
- Evaluate and analyze the data

- Prepare the report

Taped individual interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcription was categorized by reoccurring themes. Qualitative data are often analyzed using a thematic approach (Boyatzis, 1998). The model within thematic analysis that I used was the development of common themes from the semi-structured interviews. As themes/topics arose, the use of color coding was employed to group like themes together. Boyatzis (1998) shared:

A theme is a pattern found in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon. Thematic analysis enables scholars, observers, or practitioners to use a wide variety of types of information in a systematic manner that increases their accuracy or sensitivity in understanding and interpreting observations about people, events, situations, and organizations. (pp. 4-5)

Specifically, the themes were coded using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding was used to break apart the information provided in the transcripts and to develop a process of categorizing pertinent information. Open coding was accomplished through a detailed examination of the data provided in the transcripts and then by categorizing and naming the developing phenomena or similarities that occurred (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This is an important step in the coding as a name or code word is assigned to each related emerging concept (Merriam, 2002). I used color coding to delineate like themes during this step.

Axial coding was used to compare and find relationships between the categories developed from the use of open coding. Strauss and Corbin (1990) referred to this step as a way to make connections between the coded categories and sub-categories to create main categories of interest. Finally, selective coding was used to examine saturation of information within the categories (Merriam, 2002). This allowed for the development of the final common connections and perceptions that overlapped the life-experiences of the participants.

Additionally, document data was analyzed after the semi-structured audio-taped interviews were conducted to develop a thorough understanding of the subject as a student involved in the discipline system. The documentation also allowed me an opportunity to solidify the understanding of a complex subject – a subject, who might fall under several categories, Black, economically disadvantaged, slow learner, and/or behaviorally challenged, for example. Refer to Table 8 for an understanding of data that was retrieved from analyzing school records.

Table 8

*Document Analysis*

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Other information from document analysis will be obtained from school records such as:

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- The socioeconomic level of the student
  - The discipline history of the student
  - The at-risk categories
  - Special education indicators
-

### **Validity and Reliability of the Study**

Examination of the documents was used to support triangulation of the data. Triangulation of the data occurred through the use of data analysis, transcribing and coding data from the interviews, and frequent and consistent member checks. Merriam (2002) reminded researchers that multiple sources of data collection methods that include interviews and document analyses are useful means of triangulation in qualitative research. Specifically, triangulation of the data allowed for insight regarding differences and similarities among the perceptions of these particular students' experiences prior to placement at the DAEP regardless of or perhaps as a result of the referring principal's race, age, or gender for example.

The findings of the qualitative data obtained from interviews and document analysis were used to determine common themes among Black students assigned to the district's DAEP as the themes pertain to perceived experiences with school discipline. It is my hope that the findings will be used to enhance dialogue and create opportunities for continued research in an effort to decrease the over-representation of Black students in the DAEP setting.

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

To be transparent in my purpose, I took time with the participants and explained that since I became principal at the discipline alternative school, I have been bothered by the fact that almost all of my students are Black students. I shared that I believe there is a problem with the over-representation of Black students in trouble when compared to the total number of Black students in the district.

Trustworthiness and credibility are at the core of the research when requesting people share their lived stories. Tschannen-Moran (2004) shared in her research findings, “Earning a reputation for consistency and fairness will pay dividends as you are involved in discipline and exercise your responsibility to shape the character of the young people in your care” (p. 150).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued the importance of credibility to establish trustworthiness in meaningful qualitative research. In consideration of Lincoln and Guba’s advice to provide trustworthy research data in a means that contributes to the current literature, my research approach mirrored the claims of Schurink, Schurink, and Poggenpoel (1998), and Moustakas (1994). These researchers claimed that trustworthy research data are achieved by following four steps. These steps are bracketing, triangulation, member checking, and thick descriptions.

### **Bracketing**

According to Schwandt (2007) Husserl’s work published posthumously in 1950, referred to a need for researchers to remove themselves from how they understand life experiences by *bracketing* their epistemology and setting it to the side so to speak. Husserl claimed that only then can the researcher begin to understand the actual perception of the experiences of her subjects. Similarly, Moustakas (1994) warned of the importance of bracketing, or obtaining epoché, as he referred to it. He claimed the ultimate purpose of epoché is to find a “perfect and pure state of mind in order to hear others’ experiences” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). To clarify further, Ashworth (1999) explained bracketing by stating:

The procedure has the purpose of allowing the life-world of the participant in the research to emerge in clarity so as to allow a study of some specific phenomenon within the life-world to be carried out. The researcher must suspend presuppositions *in order to enter the life-world...* Two main categories of presuppositions should be bracketed: those to do with the temptation to impose on the investigation of the life-world claims emanating from objective science or other authoritative sources, and those to do with the imposition of criteria of validity arising outside the life-world itself. (pp. 708-709)

### **Triangulation**

Merriam (2002) explained triangulation as a method used to ensure internal validity of research findings. She argued the use of collecting data through a variety of sources such as interviews, observations, and document analysis as a best practice for triangulating research data. Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited triangulation as a process that compared research results through a variety of sources in an attempt to validate the information. I was able to triangulate data by comparing the perceptions of different student participants through semi-structured interviews, analysis of school records, and conducting frequent member checks to find common themes. Simply, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined triangulation to mean that many sources of data are better in a study than a single source because multiple sources lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena being studied (pp. 115-116).

## **Member Checks**

Schwandt (2007) explained the use of member checks to solicit feedback from the participants involved in qualitative research. He claimed verifying the findings substantiate validity and enhances the confirmability of the research to other research. Maxwell (2005) argued the use of member checks as the, “single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpretation of meaning of what they say and the perspective they have on what is going on” (p. 111). Hence, I used member checks as a means to verify my understanding of what the participants were sharing; I often restated what I believed was being said. Merriam (2002) shared the importance of member checks for obtaining validity and reliability in the research as the researcher’s interpretations are accepted or rejected by the subject. Solomon and Flores (2001) reminded researchers, “Conversation leads to mutual understanding, and understanding should lead to resolutions and engagements, actions that will bring about new situations and open up new possibilities” (p. 113).

## **Thick Description**

Thick description is considered an important step toward obtaining trustworthiness and credibility for research findings in qualitative work. Creswell (2007) maintained the imperativeness of capturing the participants’ feelings, voices, and details of their experiences and perceptions as accurately as possible. Schwandt (2007) described thick description:

to thickly describe social action is actually to begin to interpret it by recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, motivations, ... that

characterize a particular episode. It is the interpretive characteristic of description rather than detail per se that makes it thick. (p. 296)

Merriam (2002) explained thick description as a way of providing enough data from the study to allow the reader to transfer the information and compare it their own situation. I was able to obtain rich and thick descriptions of the participants in my research study by transcribing interviews and then sharing pertinent conversations in my findings allowing for the reader to hear the voices of my participants.

### **Ethical Considerations**

When conducting research that includes human subjects two major issues arise. These issues surround the protection of subjects from harm and informed consent. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) encouraged a system that insured participants enter the research study voluntarily and if there are any potential dangers associated with the study the participants are made clearly aware before beginning the study. Additionally, they added the importance of participants not being exposed to risks that are greater than what might be gained from the findings of the study.

Similarly, Cowburn (2005) warned of the need for confidentiality and informed consent when conducting qualitative research with human subjects. Following this advice, I made sure that all my subjects and their parents, if the subjects were minors, were informed of the purpose of the research and that their participation was completely voluntary. Information sessions occurred during meetings with participants and/or guardians and trained staff members where participants were informed in writing that they may withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences being

imposed. Participant information was held in confidence. The data was coded in such a way that the participants cannot be identified by readers of the research.

Ethical guidelines were followed with approval of the university internal review board; specifically, the purpose of the study was made clear to the participants, open-communication to deter the illusion of deceitful practices was held, checking for understanding by sharing information with the participants occurred, and I maintained confidentiality (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Additionally, the interviews were audio-taped, which contributed to accuracy in interpretation (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). During the collection of data, all identifying information was in my presence or locked away. At the conclusion of my research study, all identifiable data was destroyed.

### **Chapter Summary**

In Chapter III, I restated the purpose and the research question of this study as well as the rationale for a qualitative study. I presented the methods I used in my research to find the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their perceptions of their experiences prior to being sent to the DAEP. I discussed how participants were chosen through purposive sampling as they were students who were placed at the district's DAEP. The data collection and instrumentation procedures and protocols were explained. The validity and reliability of the study, supported through the use of triangulation, was discussed. Trustworthiness and credibility established through bracketing, triangulation, member checks, and thick descriptions were shared. The overall phenomenological single case study procedures used to determine the lived experiences of the participants during discipline were presented.

In Chapter IV, I will share the data analysis of the perceptions of Black students during discipline. The perceptions will come from thick and rich descriptions of the individual interviews with the participants.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

The purpose of my study was to understand the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to being placed in a DAEP, with the intent to positively inform principals' practices related to student discipline. The research was guided by the following question: What are the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to their assignment to a DAEP campus?

To begin the process of answering this question, I developed a semi-structured interview protocol. I used Casteel's (2000) validated semi-structured interview questionnaire as the foundation from which to develop my inimitable semi-structured protocol, see Appendix A. I also developed consent and assent protocols and trained four teachers to present the information to potential participants and their guardians. I used the recommended materials provided by Texas A&M University's IRB Department to train the teachers. Materials included a PowerPoint presentation, copies of the consent, assent, and semi-structured protocol as well as a signed statement from each trained teacher verifying his or her training and willingness to recruit participants for the study.

Participants were recruited by the trained teachers during the student/parent intake meeting that occurred before the student began his or her DAEP assignment. After the intake meetings were completed, the recruiting teacher asked all high school level students and their parents if they would stay for a few more minutes to discuss my research project. After those who volunteered to stay and listen received the

information, they were offered an opportunity to participate. Those who agreed to participate signed the appropriate consent and/or assent forms and were given a copy of what they signed, see Appendices B and C. Then the recruiting teacher alerted me to the fact that I had a participant and turned the signed form(s) in to me. The teacher recruiters enlisted a total of 10 participants for my study. Before the interviews began, one male participant was arrested for violation of probation, and one female participant moved away from the school district. This reduced the participant pool to eight possible participants. Within the timeline set to conduct the interviews, I was able to interview seven of the eight volunteers. Six of the seven participants were interviewed twice. The first round of interviews averaged 1 hour in length and the second round of interviews averaged 30 to 40 minutes each. One participant, Chef Thug, was only interviewed once because he had completed his DAEP assignment before I could return for his second interview.

I also reviewed individual school documents for each of the seven participants. The review of the documents allowed me to determine similarities and differences in the participants' school experiences while in this school district. In particular, I found indicators for socio-economic levels, special education qualifiers, past discipline histories, at-risk indicators, and academic performance levels. Regarding the exploration of academic performance levels, I reviewed each participant's success on state mandated exams. Depending on the year of entry to high school, specifically, entering ninth grade during or after the 2011-2012 school year, some students were held responsible for

passing the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exams while others were tested with End of Course exams (EOCs).

In the remainder of this chapter, I share the findings obtained from the interviews with participants, and findings from the examination of school documents. This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I present brief demographic data of each participant. In the second section, I share the common themes that emerged pertaining to perceptions from the participants' views of their lived experiences prior to their DAEP assignment. To advance credibility, I use low inference descriptors throughout the findings.

### **Demographic Profiles**

#### **Participant (BM1JC) Mr. Riir**

Mr. Riir is an 18-year-old Black male who is in the tenth grade. He lives with his mother and stepfather. He is identified as eligible for free or reduced meals. He received his 60 day discretionary assignment to the DAEP for fighting and for the use of profanity. This was his second placement during the same school year; therefore, he was assigned 60 days. As of January of the 2013-2014 school year, he had received nine documented discipline referrals during the current school year. He received his first DAEP assignment, for this current school year, in September, 2013, at which time; he was assigned a 30-day mandatory placement for smoking marijuana on the school bus. Since he began his secondary level experience, in this school district in 2012, he has received 24 discipline referrals. His at-risk indicators include non-mastery of two or

more subjects, failure of Biology and English II EOCs, and placement in a DAEP. He is not identified for special education services.

The pseudo name, Mr. Riir, was assigned to this participant for his candor and honesty when he explained to me that *racism is in the air*. He stated it was everywhere and in his school. Furthermore, during an emotional recollection of experienced racism, Mr. Riir very clearly informed me that, “The struggle is real.” I think about those words daily. Mr. Riir teased me the last day of school before spring break, 2014, several months after my interviews with him. He did this by writing a message to me that stated, because of my work, “The struggle would not be real anymore.” This short note was a reminder to me that he and I both had a breakthrough in cultural understanding when he shared with me and I listened to him – truly listened to him.

#### **Participant (BM2JR) Chill’An-Xiety**

Chill’An-Xiety is a 16-year old-Black male who is in the tenth grade. He lives with his mother, father, younger brother, and younger sister. This student and both his siblings are adopted from different birth families. Both adoptive parents are White. He believes his sister is mixed with Hispanic or Black, and states his brother is White. He is not identified as eligible for free or reduced meals. He received his current 30-day mandatory assignment to the DAEP for possession of marijuana and for being under the influence of marijuana at school. This was his first assignment to the DAEP during the 2013-2014 school year. As of January of the 2013-2014 school year, he had received five documented discipline referrals during the current school year. Since he began his secondary level school experience, in this district in 2011, he has received two other

DAEP assignments and 52 documented discipline referrals. His at-risk indicators include non-mastery of two or more subjects and placement at a DAEP. He is identified through special education as emotionally disturbed and other health impaired (ADHD).

The pseudo name, Chill'An-Xiety, was assigned to this participant for his need to self-medicate with marijuana to counter his anxiety. He shared many stories about the need to calm himself and how he and his doctor have tried many prescriptions in an attempt to find one that mimics the effects of marijuana. The prevalence of this need was a significant part of his daily battle and was apparent from my initial conversation with him. When I asked him to tell me about himself, he replied, "My name is [stated his name]. I like to play football. I'm a very good basketball player. I get in a lot of trouble at home and at school. I like to – I'm involved with drugs and that's about it. I like to use marijuana. My parents, everybody tells me to quit. I just, I just can't."

### **Participant (BM3CW) Movin'Grovin'Idol**

Movin'Grovin'Idol is an 18-year-old Black male who is in the twelfth grade. He lives with his mother, older sister, and sister's boyfriend. His biological father lives in a neighboring city, and he occasionally sees him. He is identified as eligible for free or reduced meals. He received his current 30-day mandatory placement at the DAEP for assault against a district employee. This was his first DAEP assignment this school year. The alleged assaulted employee filed Class C Misdemeanor assault charges against the student. As of January of the 2013-2014 school year, he had received six documented discipline referrals this school year. Since he began his secondary level school experience, in this district in 2011, he has received three other DAEP assignments and a

total of 35 documented discipline referrals. His at-risk indicators include non-mastery of two or more subjects and placement at a DAEP. He is identified through special education as other health impaired (ADHD) and for a learning disability in reading comprehension, reading fluency, and written expression.

The pseudo name, Movin' Grovin' Idol, was assigned to this participant for his desire to move and sing and because he tried out for the reality TV show, American Idol. Movin' Grovin' Idol enjoys singing, dancing, and footwork, "It is just movement of the hands and feet and a little bit of the body. I like to ride around." He is referring to riding his long board around the community. A long board is similar to a skate board. He shared how he was a decent singer, "I went to American Idol last summer. I went to try out and I passed the first stage; but, the second stage they told me I didn't have enough energy into my performance and to come back next year and do it again."

#### **Participant (BM4TW) DA'Lyrics**

DA'Lyrics is a 16-year-old Black male who is in the tenth grade. He lives with his father. The student is not identified as eligible for free or reduced meals. This student was assigned to the DAEP for a discretionary 10-day transition from the Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Placement (JJAEP). JJAEP is the most restrictive school setting outside of incarceration. Students who are not incarcerated and who attend the JJAEP are permitted to return home each evening. Along with teachers, the JJAEP is staffed with guards and probation officers and is in close vicinity to the juvenile jail facility. Students who are unable to be successful in the JJAEP are transitioned to the juvenile facility and incarcerated. DA'Lyrics is new to this district. He moved away

from his last school district when he was released from JJAEP, and came to live with his father in this district. He previously lived with his mother. His siblings are all older and on their own. He received his original discretionary placement in another district's DAEP for persistent acts of misconduct. While at that DAEP, he was charged with a terroristic threat against a DAEP employee and placed in JJAEP. While attending school at the JJAEP, he was arrested twice for failure to follow directives and assigned to the juvenile detention center (JDC). His at-risk indicators include assignments to a DAEP, non-mastery of two or more subjects, being retained, failure of Algebra I, Biology, and English II EOCs, and of being expelled. He is not identified as eligible for special education services.

The pseudo name, DA'Lyrics, was assigned to this participant for his story about how singing the lyrics to a song resulted in his arrest. Also, he used the word DA, for district attorney, in one of his recollections with being on probation, "On December 20<sup>th</sup>, the DA told me that if I didn't get in trouble at all, I'd get discharged on time. And then, I didn't pay my fees on time and so I've got until the 28<sup>th</sup> of this month and then I get discharged." His familiarity with language such as *the DA*, coupled with his last arrest involving lyrics from a song, DA'Lyrics emerged.

### **Participant (BM5DW) Grand-Loven Headshaker**

Grand-Loven Headshaker is a 16-year-old Black male who is in the tenth grade. He lives with his mother, and younger brother and sister. He is identified as eligible for free or reduced meals. He received his current 30-day discretionary placement for theft of a school iPad, for viewing pornography on the iPad, and for breach of computer

security. The school district filed Class B Misdemeanor possession of stolen property charges. As of January of the 2013-2014 school year, he has received three discipline referrals. Since he began his secondary level school experience, in this district in 2012, he has received no other DAEP assignments, and has a total of seven documented discipline referrals. He stated that he received one other DAEP assignment, in one of his prior school districts, for persistent acts of misconduct. His at-risk indicators include non-mastery of two or more subjects, failure of English I EOC, and placement at a DAEP. He is not identified as eligible for special education services.

The pseudo name, Grand-Loven Headshaker, was assigned to this participant for his love for his grandmother and for the fact that throughout our taped interview, I needed to remind him to speak as the audio recorder could not pick up his head shakes in response to questions. He shared that his mom became pregnant with him when she was 14 years old and in high school. Therefore, his grandmother played a significant role in his early life. When talking about his grandmother, he stated, “We like real close.” Though he and his family do not live with his grandmother anymore, he enjoys visiting and staying with her.

**Participant (BM6NW) Chef Thug**

Chef Thug is a 17-year-old Black male who is in the tenth grade. He lives with his mother, father, and younger brother. He is not identified as eligible for free or reduced meals. He received his current 30-day discretionary placement for representing a substance to be drugs and for the provocation of a fight. As of January of the 2013-2014 school year, he had received six discipline referrals. Since he began his secondary

level school experience, in this district in 2010, he has received one other DAEP assignment along with a total of 11 documented discipline referrals. His at-risk indicators include non-mastery of two or more subjects and placement at a DAEP. He is not identified as qualifying for special education services; however, he does have a documented diagnosis of ADHD for which he takes no medication.

The pseudo name, Chef Thug, was assigned to this participant for his shared internal struggle of conflicting elements in his life. Chef Thug explained that it is sometimes difficult for people who only see the thug side of his life (dealing drugs) to understand there is another side to him. He has aspirations of becoming a chef and he absolutely loves to create meals. He actually attends culinary classes at school.

#### **Participant (BF1SJ) Single Lady**

Single Lady is a 16-year-old Black female who is in the tenth grade. She lives with her mother and stepfather. She is identified as eligible for free or reduced meals. She received her current 30-day discretionary placement for insubordination and cursing at school personnel. As of January of the 2013-2014 school year, she had received eight discipline referrals. Since she began her secondary level school experience, in this district in 2010, she has received one other DAEP assignment and a total of 66 documented discipline referrals. Her at-risk indicators include failure of Math and Science TAKS, and placement at a DAEP. She is identified for special education services as a student with a learning disability in basic reading and math problem solving and who has been diagnosed as emotionally disturbed. She is taught in resource classes, receives counseling services, and has adaptive behavior supports.

The pseudo name, Single Lady, was assigned to this participant for being the only female in my study. Additionally, her love for music allowed for the creation of a pseudo name through a combination of being the only female in the study and Beyonce's song, *Single Ladies*. Single Lady shared she loves to sing, loves to play basketball, and loves her two nieces. She was in the school choir until she was dismissed due to her behaviors. She shared, "Well, when I was six I sung in a church with my cousins...like half my family we can sing. Like my mom, she can sing Whitney Houston real good."

A summary of demographic data is presented in Table 9. Each indicator for each participant was counted. For example, three participants were identified as qualifying for special education services, and all three were identified under two different categories each; therefore, there were a total of six categories of qualification for special education between the three participants. The same holds true for other indicators such as at-risk. All students in this study were at-risk by the sheer fact they were assigned to a DAEP. Additionally, several students held more than one at-risk qualifier. In addition to the demographic information shared above, data regarding interactions with authority figures throughout the criminal justice system were shared by each participant during the semi-structured interviews. That descriptive information will be discussed later in this chapter. That data in the form of the number of recalled experiences with the criminal justice system were also accounted for in Table 9.

Table 9

*Demographic Information*

Indicator	Frequency
Race	
Black	7
White	0
Hispanic	0
Gender	
Male	6
Female	1
At Risk Indicators	
Non-Mastery of two or more subjects	5
Failure of a State Mandated Exam	3
DAEP Assignment	7
Special Education Services	
Yes	3
No	4
Special Education Qualifiers	
Emotionally Disturbed	2
Learning Disabled	2
Other Health Impaired	2
Economic Status	
Qualifies for Free or Reduced Meals	4
Does not Qualify for Free or Reduced Meals	3
Prior Police Involvement	
Yes	7
No	0
Total Incidents of Recalled Police Involvement	24

**Qualitative Findings**

I used a semi-structured interview protocol to collect qualitative data. The interview questions were developed to illicit open discussions from the participants' lived experiences as students who were embedded in the school discipline continuum, as well as to avoid any preexisting assumptions on my part. After the transcription of the interviews, I was able to read and re-read each discussion. Boyatzis (1998) concluded

that transcribed individual interviews, that are analyzed using a color coded thematic approach, are considered a valuable systematic approach that increases the researcher's understanding of her observations. Using this approach, I found and marked similarities among the participants' responses, which are referred to by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 2008) as open-coding. Next, I color coded like themes from the written transcripts as a means of axial coding. Axial coding provides an avenue to make connections between categories and sub-categories, therefore, creating main categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 2008). Applying axial coding allowed me to place attention on similarities and to assign each emerging category an individual color. Finally, after comparing the thick descriptions among each individual's lived experiences, and discovering saturation of common and shared experiences among the participants, which is referred to as selective coding, (Merriam, 2002) the main commonalities from the students' perceptions became apparent. The reoccurring and common themes among the participants provided important information that has the potential to positively impact principals' practices.

While analyzing and coding the transcribed interviews, several themes arose. The participants sometimes used the same vocabulary to describe a perception and other times used different words to describe a similar belief. Therefore, I clustered like themes together based on the meaning of the perception not only the words used. I consistently checked my understanding of what was being said and solicited feedback as to the clarity of my understanding. This allowed for the development of richer descriptions of common perceptions. The reoccurring themes were categorized as (a) the participants' perceptions of the importance of being heard, understood, and

respected, (b) the participants' perceptions of experiences based on racism and/or stereotyping, and (c) the participants' involvement with the criminal justice system.

### **Heard, Understood, and Respected**

The participants spoke often of a connection between their perception of their escalated behaviors that ultimately resulted in additional or more stringent discipline consequences being assessed based on how they felt they were heard, understood, or respected. Edwards and Daire (2006), as well as Morrison et al., (2001), argued that student behaviors are often dependent on previous experiences with school authority figures. The perceptions of negative previous experiences significantly diminish the possibility of positive behavioral outcomes (Mazzotti & Higgins, 2006). When several perceived negative interactions or negative relationships have occurred, a negative perception of school in general and misbehavior increases (Brendgen, Wanner, & Vitaro, 2006).

From the findings of my research, I suggest there is a connection between perceived treatment in the form of being listened to and understood and the decision by the student as to his or her reaction to being disciplined. A participant, Mr. Riir, who was assigned to the DAEP due to a fight on the bus, stated throughout the interviews that he was wronged, betrayed, and over-punished as a direct result of not being heard and due to his past discipline. He stated that he never hit the other student in the altercation. The other student was a female and he stated he only restrained her from hitting him more.

In a way she [principal] knows that I didn't do anything to harm that female and yet she feels the need to over exaggerate on how I was aggressive. ...and ignored the fact that for one she hit me several times. Even after I was hit, I still didn't punch her...it was more of a restraint. That is why I feel betrayed because I felt like she knows what I could've done and by me making that decision was the right decision. And, I just felt like she was like whatever, 'He's been there [DAEP] before we'll send him back.'

Participants expressed their perceptions of situations and stated their reactions to situations are often based on how the school authority figure approaches the situation. Movin' Grovin' Idol shared an interaction where he felt disrespected by the teacher who was attempting to correct his behavior and his behavior that followed made the consequences worse.

I remember one time I came [to the DAEP] because I made [stated principal's name] cry. What happened was I was walking in the hallway and I had my hoodie on and I had my ear buds in and they were all the way up. A teacher tried to get my attention and I didn't notice and he came up and like grabbed my arm. Like he came up behind me like he was fixing to take me down. That is how I took it and I flipped his arm and said don't fucking touch me. He said I hit him. I was just defending myself. I was like you were not supposed to grab me like that, one, and two, you could have just tapped my arm and I would have gone on about my happy way.

He continued his explanation of what happened after he got to the principal's office:

It wasn't entirely her [principal] fault. But the incident with the teacher pissed me off and I stood up and the chair flung into the wall and I just started throwing words at her and she just started crying and she told me to go and sit outside and calm down. I was like blah, blah, blah, fuck you. Fuck this school and I walked out.

The student was able to process this experience and shared that the principal watched the security tape and did agree that the teacher had been aggressive in his approach and the student reacted appropriately for the situation. However, he was sent to the DAEP for his reaction to this experience once he was in the principal's office.

Most participants shared an example of not being heard or shown respect as discipline referrals were not discussed nor were they able to share their side of the story before discipline consequences were assigned. This common experience between the participants does warrant some conversation. For instance, I will share a participant's experience among the many that manifested during the interviews. DA'Lyrics, shared how he was often notified that he would be attending in-school suspension.

Like [mentioned the school] sometimes when you get a referral they won't call you in for it. They will just give the list to your first period teacher. And, I'm like how am I supposed to go to ISS [in-school-suspension] when I haven't even read my referral? You didn't tell me I was going to ISS or what led up to this? So, I'm like well I'm not going. How would it be like if I just go outside and tow your truck and you really want to know why and I don't tell you? Is it because

you are behind on payments or wrong parking spot? Like, it isn't fair. I'm not going.

This is again another example of a student sharing his decision to make a decision such as not going to his assigned ISS placement, based on his belief that he was not communicated with, given a chance to know what he did wrong, nor given any explanation.

Whether participants used words such as, betrayal, justice, fair/unfair, over-punished, punished based on past behaviors, or shared the need to be cared for by the adults in their schools, their messages were clear. They strove to be heard, understood, and respected. Gilligan (2003) claimed that these words are associated with shame and provided a partial list of additional synonyms for words that leave students with the feeling of shame; Gilligan further stated:

... feelings of being slighted, insulted, disrespected, dishonored, disgraced, disdained, demeaned, slandered, treated with contempt, ridiculed, teased, taunted, mocked, rejected, defeated, subjected to indignity; feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, incompetence; feelings of being weak, ugly, ignorant, or poor; of being a failure, 'losing face,' and being treated as if you were insignificant, unimportant, or worthless. (p. 1155)

These words or words that brought similar meanings and feelings were apparent throughout my study as well as my experiences of working with Black students assigned to a DAEP. I confidently assert that these students are shamed by the current state of educational disciplinary practices.

In contrast, a couple participants were able to reflect positively on adults in schools who have heard, understood, and respected them. Their recollections hold value for positive change in principals' practices, if practitioners are willing to emulate similar positive practice. Mr. Riir shared:

Man, last year [mentioned principal's name and identifying information]...that is my hero, and he's totally opposite. He's White and I mean like full-fledged White. And, I'm like nowhere near that, and me and him, just boom like that's my home dog. He actually listened to what I had to say. He gave me feedback. He told me where I was wrong and how I could've went about it. But, he also told me you are right but the way you go about situations makes it wrong. ...and from there, if I had a problem, I would talk to him. He's basically the only person...I would give 150% respect to.

In contrast to DA'Lyrics' experience I shared regarding not knowing ahead of time about assignments to ISS or even what was written on his referrals, Single Lady shared an experience where she felt understood and informed as the complete opposite occurred. During a member check, I restated what I thought I heard her say and she confirmed my understanding.

The difference is [between two contrasting experiences with two different principals] the second principal talked, read the referral, told you everything that was being said about you on the referral by the teacher, and then listened to you. Then, he told you what your punishment was going to be, and explained why.

She added, “Yeah, and he ain’t afraid to say the cuss words either.” Single Lady was referring to exactly what the referral alleged to include - the *cuss* words.

Yet, Chef Thug shared that his current DAEP placement was decided and assigned before he got to the principal’s office. He stated that when he entered the room, his parents, the school resource officer, and several principals were all there. They had discussed the situation without the student present and made the decision to assign him to the DAEP. His response to being given a chance to tell his story was:

They weren’t trying to hear it. ...but, I’m like whatever. I was like my whole attitude fixing to change. I was like they better not talk to me. I sat there and tried to tell them the truth. I tried to ease them down but I was like alright I don’t care anymore.

Like several other students in the study, Chef Thug also shared his disdain for being yelled at by educators. He explained how when he is yelled at or perceives he is not receiving the teacher’s attention, for instance when he has had his hand raised for a period of time and decides to speak out without permission and in return gets yelled at, he becomes defiant, says inappropriate things to the teacher, and walks out of class. These behaviors escalate the situation from one of the teacher showing dislike for his speaking without permission to one that has an ISS consequence. When I asked Chef Thug what he would prefer the teacher to do in this type situation he replied, “Listen. That is all I ever want, is listen. I don’t talk much. Just listen.” What a powerful statement.

Mr. Riir mentioned being yelled at by his football coach before being removed from the team:

I could barely deal with teachers and they don't even use half as loud as the volume you're [coach] using right now. ...I was going in there, in the weight room, to grab a 45 weight when I was cursing [because coach had yelled at him]. Like man this is some bull shit and coach heard me. He was like, 'We don't use that kind of language.' And I was like man fuck that and I walked in and opened the door and that's when he walked in behind me and started screaming and I started screaming back.

DA'Lyrics shared, from the very first question I asked him, that he did not like to be yelled at. I asked him to tell me about himself. He responded:

I like sports. I don't like people to yell at me. It is like why you yelling at me? I'm not yelling at you. I don't like being disrespected. I don't like when teachers bother people for no reason. That aggravates me. And, I like school but most the time it is boring. ...in order to get success in life, you have to make something out of yourself. And school is where it starts.

Single Lady explained why she felt she was successful in a particular teacher's classroom. "She is nice. She is very nice. She is like the nicest teacher I ever had. Like I mean she gets mad at us sometimes but she don't get upset and yell like some other teachers do. She not like that." When Single Lady was asked what she thought about her current DAEP placement, she articulated:

There is a lot of respect down here. If you need help, they will help you. When they tell you to do good stuff [behave appropriately], they say it in a calm voice. Like at the other school, they kind a yell at you. ...I don't like to be yelled at and so it makes me mad. ...it pumps me up. It makes me go off.

Even Chill'An-Xiety, who was always relaxed and chilled during our conversations, made a reference to yelling. He was sharing that he had "bad" principals when he was in elementary school. "I wish we would've been able to communicate better. We could of got a better relationship or something. I don't know. They were just really grouchy. ...they were just really mean. ...they would just yell at me. ...just yell at me for like little stuff."

In contrast to stories of being disrespected, Chef Thug shared an experience with an administrator from his past with whom the student perceived cared about him and listened to him:

The only principal who ever listened to me was ... He will listen and then say some good advice. He doesn't yell. He doesn't argue. He tries to put me in the right track. Then, he will laugh and joke about it. Any other principal they don't be trying to hear it. They be giving you your sentence and trying to get you out of their face. That is the part that makes me want to blow it.

This student's account brought additional merit to DiPaola and Hoy (2008) as they argued that successful educators are enthusiastic, have a sense of humor, care about students, and most importantly see beyond race and treat each student as an individual. The student continued a little later, "I got to tell my whole side. He listened to every

word. He would check on me – on my grades. He knew it all. He used to call me Chef. He would say what’s up, Chef?” When I questioned the word chef, the student replied:

One day I got in trouble and he was like what do you want to be? What do you want to do? And I told him. He was surprised. My reputation at school, everybody thinks I’m gangsta. I’m a thug from the hood drug dealer. He was like stop lying. I’m like I’m dead serious. I showed him a couple pictures of what I have cooked. He flipped out. When you gonna make me a plate?

It is apparent that frustration overcomes the students in this study when they perceive their explanations fall on deaf ears. There is a commonality among each participant that when the student feels unheard and misunderstood, they react in an escalated and somewhat aggressive manner in response to their perceived disrespect. This in turn escalates the situation and increases the level of consequences for the student. Gilligan (2003) cautioned that people with predisposed issues of disruptive behavior are likely to act out when perceiving that they are being disrespected. Combining the empirical research of Black students’ over-representation in DAEPs, and in jails, with participants who have histories of being students with behavior problems, and who have been disciplined in DAEPs, examine the following quote (Gilligan, 2003).

When I saw this prisoner I asked him, ‘What do you want so badly that you are willing to give up everything else in order to get it?’ ... In response, this man ... astonished me by standing up tall, looking me in the eye, and replying ... ‘Pride. Dignity. Self esteem.’ And then, he added, ‘And I’ll kill every motherfucker in that cell block if I have to in order to get it.’ (p. 1150)

My findings were similar to Gilligan's (2003); just as he warned, so do I. Black students who are being disciplined at school desire a perception of being respected and dignified through the process. When they perceive that they are not heard, their behaviors often escalate to a level of physical and verbal aggression. Participants articulated, just as was shared in the above quote from a prisoner, they would physically do what they perceived necessary to be seen and heard. Unfortunately, an aggressive response opens the door for the principal to assess harsher punishments and increased removal from the learning environment as these behaviors often justify ISS, DAEP, or police intervention.

For instance, Movin' Grovin' Idol recalled and blended a couple situations together to tell a story about feeling disrespected by school authorities. The female principal about which he speaks is Black and the assistant principal is a White male.

One day, I was in the theatre room and I was there for UIL watching my choirs doing their thing. Toward the end of the day she [principal] asked me what I was doing in there and I told her, 'Doing my UIL thing.' Then, she was like, 'I'm gonna ask you one more time.' And then at that point it was like you shouldn't talk to me like that. I explained to her saying that to me is like her slapping your son in front of the whole school. It was kind of disrespectful.

When asked what he would prefer she had said to him, he replied:

...she could have just said, 'Come on. Tell me what you are doing in here.' Not just saying I'm going to ask you one more time. That is like only a house hold

thing should say. Like my stepdad would be like, ‘I’m going to ask you one more time and then there will be consequences.’ Like physical consequences.

Then he transitions to the reason he is assigned to the DAEP:

How it all started was like after school. ...I was standing on my long board, just standing on it, not moving, just standing on it, and leaning against the wall. And the teacher comes around the corner and very rudely says, ‘You have ten seconds to get off that board.’ ...and I just reacted right off the top. For one, to me, it came across in a very rude way. ...he radioed for an assistant principal ... and I kept walking... and go home so I wouldn’t have to deal with anything else.

When [names AP] arrives he says, ‘We will deal with him on Monday.’ ...the teacher keeps following me and comes up behind me. I put my board down and I stepped on it and pulled out my phone. ...he reaches down to grab it [the board] and at that point I push him. At that point, I told him to stop. Don’t do that.

And then, he gets up again and tries to grab it again, and I push him again.

Movin’Grovin’Idol shared, like many of the other participants, his increased aggressive reactions to perceptions of being disrespected. Also, like the other participants, increased exclusionary discipline consequences occurred in light of his response to school personnel.

### **Racism and Stereotyping**

Phelan et al., (1994) claimed that Black students have been noted in the research to feel picked on or singled out concerning discipline due to their race, and this was also apparent in the findings of this study. Disproportionality of discipline consequences

based on race and socioeconomics continue in the practices of school authority (Monroe 2005, 2006). Day-Vines and Day-Hairston (2005) concurred there is a connection between school discipline policies and the disproportionality of minority students receiving school discipline. The perception of mistreatment or over-punishment based on race was found in the findings of this study. Skiba (2002) warned that overt racism is not necessarily the reason for inconsistent discipline practices because neglect to recognize differences in culture is an apparent practice of educators. Inconsistent distribution of discipline methods that are perceived to be based on categories such as socioeconomic status and race must be brought into question (Guenther, 2008; Stader, 2004; Mendez & Knoff, 2003). The perceptions of being judged based on race and stereotypes related to the students' socioeconomic level were evident as well in the findings of my study. Mr. Riir shared:

I wish I was privileged enough to be raised in the good neighborhood, maybe I wouldn't be as I am right now. But being that I am, I know what I come from. I know the struggle. Even though people say it [racism] don't exist ...I still feel like it's in the air, like it's around in the school.

Additionally, DA'Lyrics clearly articulated his perceptions of differentiated treatment during discipline based on race. While listening to him, I automatically recalled Fitzgerald's (2006) claim that Black children are often not seen as children at all but as mini adults who must be controlled. He added that during slavery, Black children were thought of as dirty and savage. He contended those images and repressions continued as Black children's behaviors are often seen as intentional where their White

classmates' same behaviors might be seen as childlike innocence. Similarly, DA'Lyrics shared:

I have seen students do what I've done and their consequences have been less than what I got. White people are more likely to get less punishment. At [names the school] you are not going to see many White people in ISS because they [principals] will be like he just made a mistake. But if a Black person does something, they be like oh you knew what you were doing... That isn't really true because he is another color doesn't make him no better. Doesn't make me no better and doesn't make me no worse.

When attempting to share that even when the student is unsure if someone from another race is racists toward Blacks or not, there is often at least perceived stereotyping of him based on being Black. For instance, Mr. Riir stated:

I just think like Blacks are looked at as violent. I mean in a way some of us are, but not all of us. I just think it's more now because it's like on the news and it's everywhere and on YouTube. Like, we fighting and all the other stuff. I know why people watch it. I know they must look at it and in a way kind of feel like ashamed. Just like when you have to share a room with somebody you really don't like. That's how I kind of think it is. It's like they [Whites] sharing the world with us [Blacks] but they really don't like us. You know. It just sucks. Black people, we're used to being disrespected, and we're used to being stereotyped, and all that. So, I mean honestly when it comes down to being

treated fair, we don't care, we'll speak up if we have to. When a White person hears it, it's like what? Are you trying to question my authority?

This particular student, who represents a group of people who are often stereotyped as aggressive - a large, physically fit, 18-year-old, Black adult male student, in a DAEP, broke down crying as he tried to share his feelings of racism and stereotyping. His perceptions were based on his race, as well as the power struggle he perceives between Black and White people for control of situations. Guenther (2008) summarized the concept of feelings, perceptions, and need for respect:

...the way in which humans feel or sense their surroundings determines their response to environmental stimuli (Davis, 2004; Payne, 2003). Perhaps most important to understanding student behavior is accepting the results of educational psychology research that show that 'experiences generate emotions, which bring relevancy and meaning to students...' (Madrazo Jr., & Motz, 2005, p. 2) and '...next to nothing in learning occurs without relationships of mutual respect' (Payne, 2002, p. 82). (Guenther, 2008, p.2)

I found Chef Thug's recollection of his experiences with his current DAEP assignment of interest as it relates to differentiated treatment of Black and White students regarding discipline. His story went like this:

This boy named ... was trying to get some money. He was trying to hit a lick. [Hit a lick means get drugs for free or to steal the drugs]. He asked if I had some weed he could sell and I was like naw that is not how it works. If I give it to you, you have to sell it and give me the money. I can't just be giving you weed. So,

he was like alright. He went home and pulled some kitchen seasons and told the boy [an entirely different boy who wanted to buy from him] it [the weed] was grind up and told me to give it to the boy in school because I had a class with him. Plus, I'd see him before he did. So, I gave it to the boy and got the money. Then, he went home and smoked it and he came back and said, 'I want to fight.' I was like ok let's get it. I'm like I don't care you still want to fight me over something my homeboy did. I'm still fixing to fight you anyways.

The part of the story that comes later is what I find of racial interest. The boy who was threatening to fight this participant in the school cafeteria, which did cause a disruption of the school setting, was "like a big ole White kid." According to Chef Thug, the principal understood that both boys were involved in what they both thought to be a drug deal at school. It just so happened that the student who supplied the drug, supplied a fake drug. Both students were involved in the disruption of the school setting.

Chef Thug reflects:

He acted like he wanted it, so I was going to feed it to him. We had a big ole crowd, but what I was really trying to do was stall the fight so I wouldn't have to touch the boy and the principals could get me out. We were just standing there and I bucked up and he flinched and I was like boy sit down before I hurt you.

As an administrator myself, I understand that both parties are at the least guilty of participating in what was believed, on their part, to be a drug deal and they both had a hand in the possibility of a fight. What is interesting to note is that the White student

received three days ISS and the Black student received a DAEP placement. The original supplier of the fake drug was never discovered as there was a level of loyalty within the group not to snitch or identify the other student.

On my second visit with Single Lady, she advised me from the minute we got started with the interview that she had something she wanted to share with me about racism. She also told me that she talked with her mother since our last visit and she and her mother decided that Single Lady should share her story.

...it was a pleasant lunch and I think on the first or second week of school, football players that were White or whatever were staring at us. So, we told [named principal] about it but he didn't do nothing to them. Then, there was a situation in the hall where they threw something and my other friend [named friend] and we all got into it. They [principals] sent us [Black students] home but they didn't send the other ones home. So, like we just thought that was weird. Mom was mad about it.

I conducted member checking at this point. I restated the names of her friends who were with her and verified that each one was Black and that this incident occurred between the cafeteria and the main hallway and that all the football players were White. Single Lady was able to add that the football players threw food such as potatoes and balled-up bread at them. She maintained that she told the principal before the incident that they were being picked on by the group of athletes and nothing happened. Then, she told me more:

Okay we walked into the hall...[students] was getting into it. Then one of the dudes said something to me. So, I started going off on him or whatever. Then,

they sent us home [the Black students]. Then, he [her friend] was like what the crap? It was like a game on that day. I guess that's why they didn't send them [football players] home. They still should have sent them home too or something.

Movin' Grovin' Idol reflected on his perceptions of treatment based on a mixture of racism and differences in age or generational gaps between students and adults at school. He spoke of teachers needing to understand things are different now than in their (teachers') generation and that includes understanding racial differences. He explained that if someone came up to me [White person of a different generation] "throwing words," I would not do anything about that. However, if someone came up to him "throwing words," that would be a threat. He continued with the need for school personnel to understand:

...how different races take things. Like slang. If one of us Black boys walks up to one of our home boys, ...like any White boy might do – 'What's up boy? What's up bro?' ...and us Black people are like what's up nigga and stuff like that. Nigga is like our home boy. If we walk up in front of the teacher and said that to one of our home boys it would be like, 'What did you say?' ...but with us they just need to understand the youth more and why they do that or say that.

This conversation led Movin' Grovin' Idol to continue his dialogue regarding other racial words and the words pertained to a mixture of racial discrimination and generational gaps.

...OK. I have caught White people and I wouldn't allow a White person to call me a nigger. That word came from slavery and that word is calling me stupid. I don't like to be called stupid and Black people during slavery weren't very smart. They weren't allowed to go to school. They had to do what they did physically. And the word nigga, it is just your home boy or your friend.

Grand-Loven Headshaker shared an experience of his perception of racial stereotyping when talking to me about relationships with past principals. He was referring to being lumped into a group based on his race. "There are a lot of bad kids down there, I would say. It's like the principals' experiences with those kids, they think like you are a troublemaker just like them. So, they're gonna like treat you like them." I asked him to clarify which students and he told me that he had something in common with the kids the principals saw regularly. Trying to understand his point, I asked another clarifying question, "What was the commonality?" He told me it was his race. "Like the majority of the kids there are Black." His point was that many Black students, at a previous school, were considered behavior problems and he felt that because he is Black that he was automatically assumed to be a behavior problem as well.

### **Criminal Justice System**

One of the most blatant commonalities among all participants was their involvement with police officers and other criminal justice experiences. Often, these interactions began at young ages. Mr. Riir shared that his first arrest occurred when he was 15 years old and in the eighth grade for tampering with a witness.

I was just going to fight some boy because he had my friend locked up, and then I ended up being in there [jail] with him. My friend...he had got out before me... He already done like two months. And I was in there for like a week. Chill'An-Xiety shared that his first arrest occurred when he was 12 years old: I got [arrested] for evading arrest because my mom called the cops on me because I hit her. I didn't, it was more like that [acts out a tap on his arm] but I still hit her. She called the cops on me. So they were telling me I had to go to my dad's house. So I ran off from them because I never really liked my dad. So, they tell me I had to either go to his house or go to jail. So, I ran off from them to try to escape...and then they caught me and got me for evading arrest.

During this time, Chill'An-Xiety's parents were separated and are currently back together. He admitted to being arrested a couple more times and being sent to the juvenile detention center. His involvement with police have centered on his addiction to illegal drugs. He has overdosed at school and has been caught with drugs at school. These infractions have resulted in a mixture of hospitalizations, jail time, and assignments to the DAEP.

Movin'Grovin'Idol shared that his first recollection of getting in trouble with law enforcement occurred when he was 12 years old for stealing candy. His first arrest was at 15 years of age for being in possession of stolen property. He did maintain his innocence in this situation and stated the charges were eventually dropped.

The first trouble with the law, I think I was 12. I stole some candy from HEB.

The reason why is that I had run away because I was having troubles at the

house. And I was hungry and the day before I was actually going around with my older brother and he was walking around doing the same. And that was my first time seeing someone steal. So, I went in there the next day and thought I can do this. I did exactly the same thing he did. I walk out and people come grab me and I go back inside and get caught for stealing.

Additionally, he was 15 and in the tenth grade when he was arrested for suspicion of being involved in burglaries as he was in possession of stolen property. He has received tickets and violations for other minor infractions such as truancy and possession of tobacco products. He was arrested this (2013-2014) school year, as an 18 year-old twelfth grader, for possession of three and one-half ounces of marijuana and spent two and a half months in jail.

DA'Lyrics shared that his first experience with law enforcement was when he was in the fifth grade. He claimed he was at a public park one evening with his older cousin. A police officer corrected their behavior as the cousin was too old to be on some of the equipment. They ran from the police, were caught, and taken home. His next recollection of police interaction occurred in sixth grade when he got a ticket for fighting at school. Later when he was in ninth grade, he was skipping school and smoking marijuana when he was spotted by a police officer and was returned to school. His first arrest occurred one evening when he was in the ninth grade for possession of marijuana. While at a DAEP assignment in tenth grade, he was arrested for allegedly posing a terrorist threat against school personnel. He states that while he was walking to the office for being disrespectful during lunch, he was singing a song. There was a line in

the song, “I got a bullet with your name on it.” The staff member claimed he was threatening her and reported the incident. The school resource officer arrested him and placed him in the juvenile detention center. He has also been arrested twice while attending school at the JJAEP, for persistent acts of misconduct and failure to follow directives.

Grand-Loven Headshaker shared that he received a theft charge when he was in middle school. That resulted in a ticket from the school resource officer and an appearance before a judge. Then, in eighth grade, he was charged with assault for hitting another student. Again, the school resource officer issued a ticket and the student appeared before a judge. His third interaction with law enforcement was at the age of 14 or 15 when he and a friend were walking home from a park and his friend threw a bottle at a passing car. The driver stopped and called the police. He was released to his mother. Currently, he is at the DAEP for theft of a school iPad. Charges were filed and he is awaiting his court date.

Chef Thug shared that he once stole a bike and was caught by the police. The owner of the bike did not press charges and he was released to his parents. His only other interactions with law enforcement have occurred when in trouble at school and the school resource officer is present.

Single Lady shared that a school resource officer was used once, by the school, when she was being disciplined. In middle school, the school resource officer came to the principal’s office because she was being disciplined for bullying. When asked what she thought when the officer walked into the room, she said, “Sometimes she [officer]

has her suit [uniform] on and sometimes she don't. I'm like man I'm going to jail.”

Another time while in the eighth grade, the student states she got caught stealing from a store and the police were called and she was released to her mother.

The results from this study are similar to those found in Fabelo, Thompson, Plotkin, Carmichael, Marchbanks, and Booth's (2011) work resulting from their six year study of nearly 1 million Texas public secondary school students discipline experiences. They included in a summary of their findings that almost half of the students who were expelled or suspended, at least 11 times, were involved in the juvenile justice system; almost 97% of all disciplinary suspensions or expulsions were discretionary and not mandated by state law; Black students were disproportionately disciplined for discretionary infractions; and, 75% of students who received special education services were suspended or expelled at least once between seventh and twelfth grade. Additionally, they argued that schools have significant influence over suspension and expulsion decisions. It is apparent that many of the same characteristics existed between my study and Fabelo et al.'s (2011) study. Students in my study were involved in the juvenile and/or adult justice systems, all had been suspended or expelled from their home campuses, and several were identified as receiving special education services.

### **Chapter Summary**

The use of qualitative data collection to analyze the combined findings from semi-structured interviews and from school documents allowed for similarities to manifest from participants' lived experiences. Saturation of common themes emerged regarding the perceptions of Black high school students' experiences prior to being

assigned to a DAEP. The three themes discussed manifested based on perceptions of being heard, understood, and respected; feelings of racism and stereotyping; and, involvement in the criminal justice system. There were such rich and thickly described themes evolving throughout this study that it became impractical to deconstruct each one. I will simply state, based on my study, that more can be analyzed regarding the similar experiences of my participants related to gang involvement, the family dynamics, specifically, the role of the mother and grandmother in the family, generational differences, and/or similarities or dis-similarities of experiences impacting perceptions between authority figures and Black students regardless of the race of the authority figure, and what I consider a huge theme – the fact that six out of seven students had been dismissed from an extra-curricular school team such as football, basketball, track, and/or choir based on discipline and/or grades. There appears to have been a notable downhill spiral after a student's belonging to a team was severed. Also, of importance was the repeated disclosure by at least six of the seven participants in this study of the use of marijuana to self-medicate. Participants shared, throughout the interviews, a need to be calmed, issues with anxiety, and the benefits of marijuana to counter this need for a calm demeanor to assimilate into the school culture.

In this chapter, I shared the participants' perceptions of their lived experiences of being a high school student currently in a DAEP. Each participant's demographic profile was disclosed and similarities in their perceptions were documented. Following the revealing of the saturation of common themes expressed by the participants, I concluded with a summary of the findings.

Chapter V contains a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, implications for practice, recommendations for further research, and the conclusion.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **Introduction**

In Chapter IV, the data gathered from the research study were reported. In Chapter V, I provide a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, implications for practice, recommendations for further research, conclusions, and an epilogue. The rationale for the concluding sections is to elaborate on the specific concepts that developed as a result of the study as well as to understand the possibilities for impacting principals' practices. Additionally, the concluding sections allow for discussion of the possibilities for further research that might expound on the findings of this study. The results in this study have significant potential to positively impact the field of education and school leadership.

#### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological single case study was to understand the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to being placed in a DAEP, with the intent to positively inform principals' practices related to student discipline. This exploration occurred through the use of individual document analysis and individual semi-structured interviews combined with the use of the district's data exemplifying an historical practice with disproportionate representation of Black students in school discipline. This over-representation includes in-school suspensions, out-of school suspensions, and, of special interest for this study, overrepresentation in the district's DAEP. Current studies have maintained there is a relationship between

race and discipline as it pertains to disproportionality throughout the nation's school system. However, no empirical understanding of student perceptions regarding discipline consequences that lead to exclusionary practices such as DAEP assignments is present in the literature to make any significant change in principals' practices. Therefore, the intent of my study was to begin the process of understanding these perceptions from the lived experiences of Black students experiencing consequences of exclusionary school discipline.

My study was conducted through conceptual framework lenses of cultural difference theory (Gay, 2010; Heath, 1995) and labeling theory (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1951). My research was informed by cultural difference theorists' claims that institutional racism, deficit thinking of the established White culture in schools (Collier, 2007; Gay, 2010), and lack of cultural competence (Sample, 2009) have negatively influenced the school experiences of Black students. Of additional influence on my research, was the labeling theorists' claims that Black students are often labeled as deviant and aggressive due to cultural differences (Adams & Evans, 1996), and/or because of socially constructed views of misbehavior (Ferguson, 2000). In my research, the practice of labeling students as deviant was guided by the notion that labeled behaviors occurred in relation to how the behaviors deviated from socially constructed norms (Johnson, 1985).

Semi-structured interview questions were developed, using as a guide, Casteel's (2000) validated protocol. With active participation from my dissertation committee, we revised the interview questions that were initially written to explore perceptions of Black

seventh grade students' treatment received from their White teachers at a suburban Louisiana junior high school to reflect, instead, Black high school students' perceptions of experiences prior to being assigned to a DAEP. Rich and thick qualitative descriptive data emerged as most participants were interviewed twice for an average total of one and one-half hours each. The commonalities expressed among and between the participants as they shared their lived experiences were used in an attempt to understand relations between student experiences and school discipline in this school district.

Analyzed documents consisted of school records with specific interests in identified commonalities such as socioeconomic level, at-risk identifiers, special education services, and discipline histories. At a basic level, and of no new discovery, the analysis of this data revisited the district's exclusionary discipline practices for Black students that included the fact that Black students' suspension rates and episodes of removal from school drastically exceeded that of their White peers.

Specifically, seven volunteers who were recruited through purposive sampling from this district's pool of DAEP students participated in this study. Due to fact that only Black students were assigned to the district's DAEP during the recruiting period, all students in this study were Black. This phenomenon is of no new significance for the district as this is the typical practice of concern – most DAEP assignments are those of Black students. One female and six males participated in the study.

The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were color coded and categorized into main themes. Significant effort to represent accurate understandings throughout the interviews was taken through the use of member checks. Consequently,

new findings that have significant promise to positively impact principals' practices, in the district, occurred and expressively alluded to perceived treatment and experiences prior to and during school discipline.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

Former researchers (i.e., Aud, 2010; Butler, 2011; Skiba et al., 2012) have claimed that Black students are overrepresented in school discipline. Additionally, it has been noted that Black students disproportionately experience exclusionary practices during school discipline (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Losen & Gillespie, 2012). Regardless of the efforts to study the phenomenon of such findings, for close to 40 years, little improvement has been noted (Butler, 2011; Gregory, 1997; Fitzgerald, 2006).

Consequently, the purpose of my study was to understand the perceptions of Black high school students regarding their experiences prior to being placed in a DAEP, with the intent to positively inform principals' practices related to student discipline. This section discusses the findings obtained from the research question leading my study.

There was one major research question guiding this study -- What are the perceptions of Black high school students' experiences prior to being assigned to a DAEP? Exploring the perceptions of students currently assigned to a DAEP allowed for common beliefs, opinions, and views to manifest regarding both negative and positive interactions with school authority figures. Specifically, evidence arose that the students made significant behavioral choices based on their perception of being cared for by school authorities. Explicitly, this theme became apparent in the form of perceptions of being heard, understood, and respected. Another theme to emerge from the shared

perceptions of the participants was the belief that racism and stereotyping played a pertinent role in the discipline decisions of school authorities. The third most prevalent theme to surface was the amount of experiences the participants collectively had in relation to interactions with the criminal justice system; and of interest here, was the young age in which these interactions began.

### **Heard, Understood, and Respected**

Weiland (2012) found through her research of highly effective DAEPs, as claimed to be by TEA (2007), that the level of perceived care for the students who have been assigned to what some have termed “dumping grounds for at-risk students” (Kim & Taylor, 2008) was paramount for student success. As a result of Weiland’s (2012) findings regarding positive student care in successful DAEPs, she argued that those same qualities of care must be practiced in the regular home campuses of at-risk students. Specifically, she claimed:

In conjunction with Nodding’s (2005) work on care, other scholars have indicated that at-risk students’ sense of belonging, academic motivation, and identity development toward school learning are positively influenced by their perceptions of being cared for by the adults in schools. (p. 152) ...The practices of caring leadership are universal practices that can be employed in a variety of school settings. Yet it appears that the value system driven by a belief in students, rather than the pursuit of school improvement or high test scores, may be required to implement the caring leadership practices in the way that exhibits true care and meet the needs of this particular group of students. (p. 157)

Though Weiland (2012) labeled aspects of caring with different words than the participants in my study articulated, the overreaching concepts are consistent. Weiland used the words building relationships, show of empathy, need for reciprocal teaching and learning between adults and students, and high expectations for behaviors and academic achievement in her findings for the need of care. As shared in detail in Chapter IV, my participants used words such as “care for me,”; “hear me,”; “listen to me,”; “try to understand me,”; “include me in discussions,”; and “respect me.”

### **Racism and Stereotyping**

The students’ perceptions of school discipline based on their race were evident in this study as it has been in many others. For instance, Labuda (2011) claimed current racism is prevalent through inequitable discipline practices in schools. In my study, there were perceptions explained based on specific lived experiences where students of different racial backgrounds who were involved in the same infraction at the same time received different disciplinary consequences. Intriguing, were the claims made by the Black students in Labuda’ (2011) study were also the claims found true in my 2014 study; Black students’ consequences were more exclusionary than those of their White peers. This form of inequity must change. I maintain change will begin to occur when meaningful understanding and acceptance of racial differences occur.

Kunjufu (2005) suggested Black students have tendencies to be more physical than his or her White peers and this aspect of culture could be acknowledged and used to positively solve problems. Cultural understanding of Black students will allow educators increased success with Black students instead of stereotyping and categorizing

(Ishii-Jordan, 2000; Patton & Townsend, 2001). Consequently, students in my study shared perceptions of feeling stereotyped as aggressive and violent. One student articulated his belief that the media endorsed this perception through the constant way Black people are betrayed as criminals or deviants. Hosp and Hosp (2001) claimed that many Black students have naturally high levels of energy and that schools discourage this level of energy and respond punitively toward innately high energy levels resulting in Black students being punished, medicated, suspended, expelled, or referred to lower academically challenging opportunities – thus continuing the cycle of segregation, racism, and disproportionate achievement and discipline gaps.

Interestingly, I found in my study a disclosure by my participants of over-reliance on the use of marijuana as a coping mechanism to calm themselves. Many shared that they self-medicated to decrease their energy and anxiety levels. When I reflect on the first finding shared in this study, the need for the Black student to be cared for by being heard and respected, as it co-exists with this second shared finding of perceptions of racism and of being stereotyped based on culture, there is much to be deconstructed. There appears to be a cycle that is perpetuated on perceptions, or facts, that a certain group of students are judged without due process. This lack of due process leaves the students feeling unheard and mistreated, therefore disrespected, which results in increased aggressive behaviors. Students in this study, in an attempt to be calmer and handle the White world of school more effectively, resorted to self-medicating with marijuana.

The lack of attention to culturally relevant differences can be considered a form of blind and hidden racism and can be considered neglect. When students are emotionally neglected they tend to respond with self-defense strategies. These strategies come in the form of flight, submission, or aggression (Gilligan, 2003), and I add, possibly in the form of self-medicating. Without a clear understanding of racial perceptions within the discipline system, the cycle is likely to be perpetuated.

### **Involvement in the Criminal Justice System**

The analyses of the data derived from my study were of particular interest as it was discovered that each participant in this study had experienced some level of involvement with law enforcement. Some participants more than others, never-the-less, each participant shared their experiences and interactions whether the experiences had been with police officers on the streets, police officers in the schools, court appearances, judges, probation officers, fines, community service, or a mixture of these experiences. Some similarities arose between the students' perceptions of not being heard or respected by the people within the justice system; however, that perception was not mentioned with the frequency or detail as it was with school authorities. The literature is clear in regards to claims that students who experience increased levels of exclusionary practices as part of school discipline also experience increased involvement with the criminal justice system (Malone, 2011; Sarmiento-Brooks, 2008; Tuzzolo & Hewitt, 2006). Based on my findings, I concur with those claims, and argue this agreement as evidenced by such occurrences being present in each participant's lived experiences who participated in my research.

Some researchers have suggested that school communities that have positive and effective means of working with Black students and those schools that break this cycle of inequity also positively impact the racial disparity in the criminal system (Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009). The impact of a culturally relevant practice within the school setting has implications beyond the school walls. When students are excluded from school as a result of behaviors they perceive as unjust, their perceptions of authority figures are tarnished and those authority figures within the criminal justice system are not immune. Viewing the implications of culturally relevant principal practice, in relation to this phenomenon, especially through the lenses of cultural difference theory and labeling theory, and the impacts on students' lives, it becomes inherently important that attention be given to eradicating the disproportionate discipline practices facing Black youth in school. I agree with Trotter (2007) as he argued that principals need knowledge of the skills and insights required to influence the success of Black students at school (p. 1).

Black students' perceptions of dignity and respect through actions that exhibited care and validation from the principals were present throughout this study as an indicator of subsequent behaviors on the part of the student. Whether the perceptions were positive or negative, the perceptions manifested through the belief of being heard, or not, and by being given a chance to contribute to the conversation, or not, during discipline experiences. Also of importance were the positive and/or negative experiences between students and principals at times outside of the discipline cycle as indicated in Figure 4.

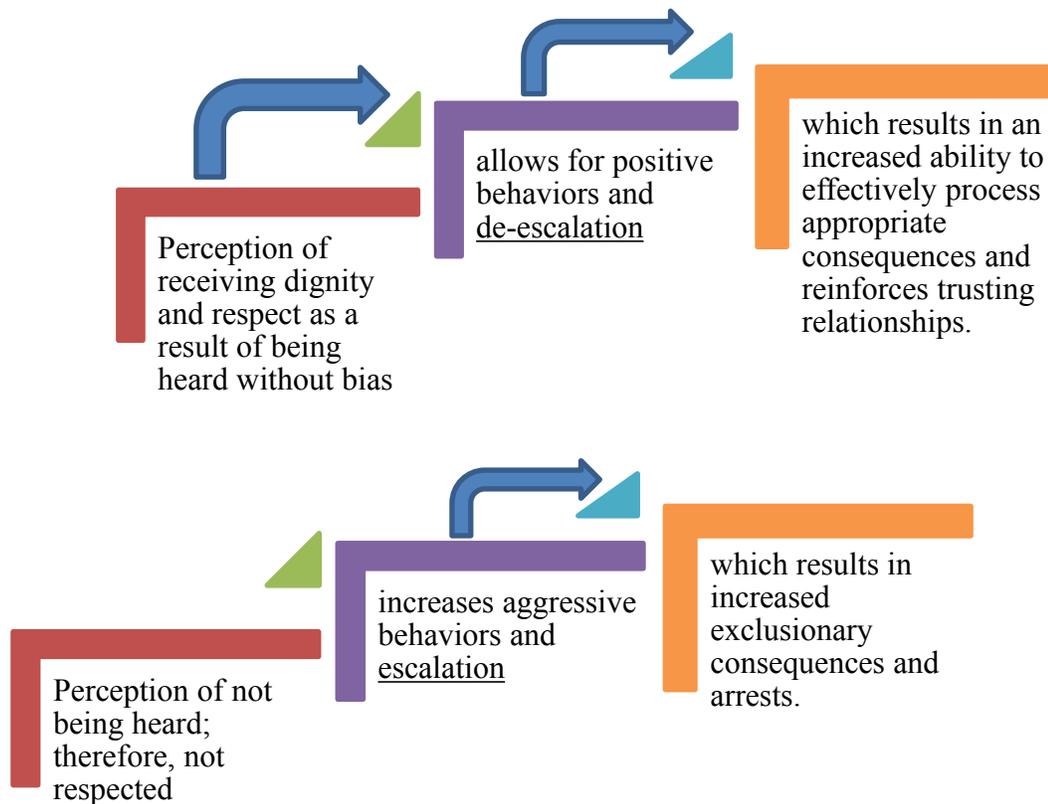


Figure 4. Positive or Negative Perceptions, Resulting Behaviors, and Implications for Discipline

### Implications for Practice

While the results from my study are considered to have limitations of only being transferable to this school district, or to others that hold similar demographics, information did emerge that lends credence to the perceptions of Black students' treatment by school officials and their behavioral responses in general. School principals, regardless of where they are in the nation, should be alerted to the potential for escalated or de-escalated student behaviors based on correlating perceptions of treatment. This belief is grounded in the findings being expressed relating to the

importance of certain levels of perceived respect in the students' minds from those who are in charge. Everyone could benefit from a deeper understanding of the reactions, thoughts, and behaviors that manifest when someone feels treated as less than. Less than perceptions commonly come in the form of perceiving being disrespected. Being a teenager is a difficult time in the human life cycle without added pressures that could be rectified with effort.

It is not the intent of sharing these findings to further stereotype Black students or assume all Black students respond in the same way to authority figures involved in school discipline. It is the intent, though, to influence principals' practices in light of the similar findings of student decisions being made in response to perceptions of being respected or disrespected by school authority figures.

Based on this study, I argue the need for the upmost importance being given to building positive principal-student relationships prior to and during the discipline cycle. For the students in this study, negative relationships with principals or other authority personnel resulted in increased aggressively negative behaviors, which in turn only proved to increase the negative consequences for the student. Those increased negative consequences resulted in the removal from the academic setting whether being assigned to a DAEP or incarceration. An increased number of positive interactions could prevent misbehaviors or, at the very least, reduce the escalation of consequences (Guenther, 2008, p. 120).

The disproportionality of Black male students in the DAEP in this study were of significance as has been in many previous studies (i.e., Guenther, 2008; Kokkinos et

al., 2004; Monroe, 2005; Skiba et al., 2012; Utley et al., 2002). Further studies of single-group participants, such as those assigned to a DAEP, should be considered in an effort to provide empirical data relating the significant indicators that impact student decisions based on perceptions of treatment by the authority figure(s) prior to and during discipline. In light of the overwhelming amount of data consistent with the patterns of discipline consequences based on race, including the finding in this study, I argue a critical exploration of this phenomenon through a culturally relevant lens would be an asset to educators if causation such as perceptions of being respected manifest significantly. This significance holds the potential for expectations for principals' training and skills to be developed that include working with others, as erroneous and short-sighted approaches to managing social justice issues merely promote more harm.

Findings from this study were similar to Lewis' (2003), schools play a key role in reproduction of racial inequality. She contended that racial imbalance is not due to individual or collective factors; it is actually due to larger systemic, structural, and institutional processes that produce racial inequality in school. I found that from the perceptions of the participants in my study that school leaders are not culturally proficient when considering the needs of others. Also, there existed a perceived continuance of ascription practices as Black students shared their perceptions of being labeled and stereotyped based on their race and their past behaviors. As Lewis (2003) argued, so do I, we must begin this journey of cultural understanding and consider the perceptions of the oppressed – the Black students in the educational discipline system.

The findings from this study coupled with future studies of similar findings will pave the way for improving principal training programs to include meaningful levels of work in regards to culturally relevant student-principal relationships. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and school document analysis identified important triggers for escalated or de-escalated behaviors from students in trouble. I posit that this study has offered merit to understanding the foundation of unwanted school behavioral choices based on perceptions of treatment by school principals and other authority figures and more research should include further exploration of these findings. Effectively communicating through a means indicative of dignity and respect, as perceived by the student, is paramount for change of negative behaviors of Black students immersed in school discipline as shown in Figure 5.

Culturally Relevant Practices to Facilitate Positive Principal-Student Relations		
Make a conscience effort to increase positive interactions with Black students before there is a discipline issue.	Maintain a presence during mutual dialogue with Black students at all times and especially when dealing with a discipline issue.	Be sure to exhibit a presence with no preconceived notion of guilt, while providing due process, regardless of the adult who refers the student for discipline or the student's past disciplinary history.
Examples: Use before and after school duties and cafeteria duty to initiate conversations where the focus is on getting to know the student. When doing classroom observations, notice students and directly respond in a way they know that you care and are watching for their success. Discover student interests and use that information to engage in dialogue.	Examples: Always allow the student to share his/her side of the story. Listen and restate what you think you are hearing. Address the students' remarks of his/her preconceived notions of what they think that you think. For instance, if a student shares his/her belief that telling you his/her side is futile because you will listen to the adult in the situation over the student, stop and handle that misconception. Take time to make sure the student knows you will listen with intent to understand all sides.	Examples: Provide for due process, regardless. Very few times is it appropriate to remove a student and process the situation later. This does occur in times of extremely aggressive behaviors where safety must come first. For the most part, though, be mindful of the rights of the students to be afforded their time to explain their actions to you. Provide that time, free of preconceived biases regardless of the student's past discipline history.

Figure 5. Practical Culturally Relevant Principal Practices

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

Future researchers desiring to contribute to the work regarding disproportionality and overrepresentation of Black students throughout the nation's schools' exclusionary practices should hold importance to the methodology. The data retrieved from the small sample in this study were immense and at times overwhelming. A group of researchers working in tandem interviewing a larger number of participants from a variety of schools across the country and representative of a variety of demographics would support determining if common or overarching themes arise that allude to the findings of this study, specifically the role of the perception of disrespect and its impact on students' behavioral decisions.

The qualitative methodology for such an undertaking should include semi-structured individual interviews combined with focus groups. As evidenced by this research study, when the participants feel respected by the researcher and perceive a level of safety in confidence, the dialogue is thick and rich. Further studies that exhibit this level of confidence and rapport between researcher and participant should be considered. There was validity added to this research, and could be present in future studies with similar levels of researcher familiarity with the district and its population, as I maintain familiarity and confidence in knowledge of the district deterred attempts to gain sympathy, tout victimization, or displace blame for behaviors. It is important to determine, empirically, if the relationship between Black students' perceptions of being respected or disrespected by school authority figures manifests from a cultural misunderstanding or something much less complicated like student choice. This

empirical understanding holds great promise for positively impacting principals' practices.

Additionally, I believe merit can be found in the process of exploring these student perceptions from a variety of age groups not just the high school level. When working with younger students, there will be an obvious need to tweak the semi-structured questions to use language familiar to the younger student in order to enhance the level of comprehension. However, similar questions with similar meaning can be designed with the support of educators who have significant experience working with different age and grade levels. It would be valuable to understanding the entirety of the phenomenon of disproportionate disciplinary practices based on race over the grade levels.

This method should target trends and patterns from a variety of levels. Notwithstanding the potential to impact principals' practices across school levels, the importance of further exploration of this phenomenon as it relates to race is immense. In consideration of the changing racial demographics in Texas, for instance, as evidenced by the growth in the Hispanic population and stagnate rate of the Black population, as well as the decreasing White population, the perceived experiences of Hispanic students in discipline should be of importance to Texas administrators. Further research as a means to thwart the level of disproportionality of others in the form of Hispanic students from reaching the discrepancy levels as those of the Black students should be considered.

Guenthner (2008) studied sixth through eighth graders, from a Georgia middle school, as to the effects of their perceptions of school disciplinary practices on their behavioral choices with classroom teachers. Then, Guenthner shared, “The findings from this study indicate a positive relationship between positive perceptions and perceived levels of teacher fairness and consistency. Particularly for students with chronic behavior violations, the quality of teacher-student interaction influenced behavior decisions” (p. 116). This claim was evident in my study as well from Black high school students’ perceptions of principals and other authority figures in school and especially as it related to discipline.

In an attempt to authenticate my recommendation to extend this research to all grade levels, I share the August 2013 – February 2014 DAEP, first grade through twelfth grade data for this district in Appendix E. Refer to Appendix E for a summary of the grade level, age, gender, race, SPED qualifiers, reasons for placement, and at-risk indicators for the current 2013 - 2014 year’s DAEP assignments from August 2013 through February 2014. Keep in mind this is not the complete 2013 – 2014 DAEP data as this study ended before the school year was complete. However, the district’s historical and current trend of disproportionate assignments of Black students to the DAEP allows me to argue that the probability exists that pattern will continue for the remaining 3 months of the 2013 – 2014 school year.

### **Conclusions**

The research question guiding my study, what are the perceptions of Black high school students’ experiences prior to being assigned to a DAEP, essentially addressed

the complexities of student-school authority figure relationships. Even more specifically, this study approached the reasons for certain student behaviors, while being disciplined, as a direct result of the students' perceptions of the interactions with the school authority figure. Students who perceived a positive relationship with the principal who was working with them through the discipline cycle, one where the student perceived he was cared for by the principal, he was heard, he was understood, and he was respected rendered a completely different behavioral reaction than occurred with the opposite perception. The students who shared past and/or current positive relationships with principals, based on the perception of positive by the student – heard, understood, and respected - showed excitement in their body language, their voice influxes, their apparent excitement to talk about the authority figure and the respect they received. The complete opposite manifested when students discussed perceptions of being disrespected. When sharing those experiences, the students often used curse words to express their disdain, appeared angry and/or sad, and some cried.

Additionally, similar findings claimed by other researchers were found present in this study; specifically, Black students held the majority of placements in this district's DAEP (Butler, 2011; Skiba et al., 2012; Thorsen et al., 2011). During the recruiting of participants for this study, actually only Black high school students were assigned to the DAEP. Of those, most were boys. As reflected in this study, of the original ten volunteers, all were Black and only two were female. Once the actual interviews began, the participant pool consisted of 8 volunteers. Of those 8, there was only 1 female

participant. Guenthner (2008) argued after her study of the perceptions of students in middle school regarding their behavioral choices:

...the findings support previous research indicating an overrepresentation of minority and male students receiving administrative consequences. These findings do not answer the question of causation but create additional questions whose answers would add to the body of knowledge surrounding student perceptions and behavioral choices. (p. 118)

I contend that my study did accomplish, to some degree, reasons for inflated and aggressive behaviors during discipline. This research did in fact find causation between the perceived behaviors of authority figures toward the students and the students' behavioral choices.

My research findings provided important information that directly related to choices of school leaders, particularly principals who work directly with students. After analyses of the data, I confidently argue a correlation between students' perceptions of treatment by their principals as well as the type of student-principal relationships (positive or negative) impacting the students' responses to discipline consequences. There is no doubt that students' behavioral choices are impacted by their perceived relationships with their principals. When the student perceives there is a positive and mutually respectful relationship between himself and his principal, the student's response to discipline consequences are generally accepted in a calmer and more tolerant approach than if the relationship is perceived to be negative.

Almost 40 years of evidence of discipline gaps in American schools based on race has rendered no significant positive impact despite the last 10 years of extensive research from some of the best known scholars working on this phenomenological concern. Skiba et al., (2010) for instance found that Black students were twice as likely to be removed from school in the forms of suspensions, expulsions, and DAEP assignments. Kim, Losen, and Hewitt (2010) warned that zero tolerance practices employed by school administrators are continuing to remove students from the school setting and increased their susceptibility to criminal behaviors. I agree with Butler (2011) as she very clearly claimed a need for researchers to become more aggressive in their resolve for eradicating this historical racial disproportionality of exclusionary practices. Specifically, she claimed a need for the development of consciousness for advocacy.

### **Epilogue**

I would like to take this opportunity to share how this research has, in such a relatively short time, impacted my practice as a high school principal. I am proud of the fact that I am considered a leader in my district for social justice and equity for all. Due to my interest levels and choice of reading materials and learning opportunities, I believe I have a meaningful level of understanding regarding the issues surrounding the phenomenon of this national crisis of school discrimination in the form of exclusionary practices compared to many of my colleagues. That said, I learned from this study, and immediately put into practice the need for Black students to be heard and respected

when I interacted with them as an authority figure. I will close with a short story explaining this claim.

A 15-year-old Black male who was assigned to the DAEP, and who was not a participant in my research study, was brought to my office by the police officer assigned to my campus as a school resource officer. The officer is a Black male. He responded to the classroom as one of the teachers, an Hispanic male, had called for some assistance. The teacher's side of the story was that over the course of the morning, he had been asking the student to get to work. The student became frustrated and told the teacher to step outside with him as he was going to beat his ass. As the student entered my office, the police officer had him sit on the sofa just inside my office. The officer moved to the back of my office and sat away in a chair and advised me that there had been a disturbance in the class and needed to know what I wanted to do.

As I talked with this student, my recent research findings were shouting in my head, "Make sure he perceives he is heard. Listen to him!" I paid extra attention to this claimed need from my participants. As the conversation progressed, the student made comments like, "What difference does it make what I say? You are going to take the teacher's side. Principals' always take the teachers' side." I took time to explain to the student that was not an accurate statement about me and that I did listen to students. All humans make mistakes, including the adults in the classroom, and that I made no assumptions. I needed, though, to hear his side.

I put extra effort into having him tell me his story, and I paid special attention to listening. What emerged was powerful. Allegedly, the teacher had been asking him to

get to work. The student responded in frustration that he was going to call his attorney because the teacher was harassing him. In response to that, the teacher stated that he did not care who the student called. He could call his mom, his dad, his uncle, etc. It did not matter to the teacher; he would tell everyone the same thing - the student must get to work. This caused the student to lose it. He became angry and perceived the teacher's comment as a means of calling out his mom. He said that no one disrespects his mom like that. I had to listen, restate, give examples of my interpretation of what the teacher was actually saying, and then I had to listen some more.

What I learned was the student perceived that comment as a threat. He perceived the teacher saying bring your mom up here... I will handle her, too. The teacher's meaning behind the statement was simply that he did not care who the student decided to call, the expectation was going to be the same. The student must get to work. After listening to this student and talking him through the different lenses from which the statement had occurred and processing the situation with him, he began to take ownership of his explosive and disrespectful remarks toward the teacher.

I explained to him that I needed to understand how he perceived this situation. I needed to understand these types of student-teacher interactions and whether an interaction comes from racial or generational differences or from something else. Also, I needed to explain the other side of this situation to him. To my surprise, tears welled in his eyes and rolled down his cheeks. He accepted ownership of his part, and we talked through more appropriate ways of responding when we feel disrespected.

Guess what? My office did not get trashed. He was not emergency removed from school for the day. He did not receive a suspension. He did not go to jail. The student went back to class and was successful.

The point of this shared breakthrough, in my practice, was to introduce a current example of the significance of this research and the importance of future similar research. Imagine if a principal who works diligently to understand each student as an individual, impacted by his life experiences of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, criminal history, academic history, etc., makes the effort to implement additional small steps toward her quest for a culturally proficient practice, and in return has her practice positively impacted; the possibilities for change are limitless. That limitlessness is especially possible when that same level of implementation is taken by the more novice culturally proficient practitioner. Imagine what positive impacts will occur systemically if principals from all walks of life, with different levels of culturally relevant tools in their toolboxes of strategies, when working with students from many different lived experiences, attempt even the most simple research based strategy such as actively listening.

Do I believe that the educators in this district purposely practice exclusionary choices based on a student's race? Absolutely not! I found no evidence of such. I do believe; though, based on my findings, that there is not consistent consideration of cultural and racial differences when working through difficult situations with many Black students who get in trouble at school. Consequently, the lack of attention for the cultural needs of Black students often unnecessarily perpetuates aggressive student

behaviors. What I can and do argue is evidence that a lack of culturally relevant practice consistently occurs when disciplining Black high school students in this school district. Therefore, attention to developing cultural competencies in this school district's leaders is a must.

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## APPENDIX A

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview protocol to be used to guide the conversations:

1. Tell me about yourself. What three things should I know about who you are?
2. Think about your last visit with the principal who assigned you to the DAEP. What comes to mind?
3. After being notified to report to the office, what were you feeling or thinking as you were taking that walk to the principal's office?
4. What do you think your punishment should have been for the behavior that resulted in you being placed in the DAEP? Why do you think that?
5. What do you miss the most by not being allowed to be at your home campus?
6. What do you miss the least by not being allowed to be at your home campus?
7. How has your placement at the DAEP affected your grades?
8. What do you think or feel about the discipline situation you are currently experiencing?
9. Why do you believe you were assigned to the DAEP?
10. If you were to misbehave, do you feel that you will be disciplined fairly? Explain why?
11. Share examples of interactions with your principal where you have felt he/she cared, understood you, or related to you in a positive way?
12. If you could write a letter to yourself right now, that you would read before you were sent to the DAEP, what would you tell yourself?
13. Please share your goals and aspirations for after high school.
14. What would you like for your principal to do differently when disciplining you?
15. If you could share anything with your principal, what would it be?

*Note.* Adapted, with permission, from Casteel, 2000

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

1. My name is Margie Martinez. I am a doctoral candidate from Texas A&M University.
2. I am asking you to take part in a research study because I am trying to learn more about the perceptions of high school students regarding their experiences prior to a DAEP placement.
3. To help me make your voices heard, I am requesting your participation, which involves 2 individual audio-taped interviews with me (*approximately 1 hour each*). Your contributions in the interviews will be kept confidential and your identity will not be revealed in my research findings. During the process of the research, your contributions will be kept either securely locked or in my presence. After completion of the study, all identifiable resources will be destroyed.
4. The only identifying information that I would need to release is the same information I would otherwise be required by law to report. Some examples of such information include any information you share with me that suggests you are in danger due to abuse, neglect, or hurting yourself.
5. Please note that your participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
6. Your parent/guardian has given permission for you to take part in this study. Even though your parent/guardian said “yes,” you may still decide not to do this.
7. If you do not desire to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Remember, being in this study is up to you and no one will be upset if you do not want to participate or if you change your mind later and would like to stop.

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8. You may ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you did not think of now, you may let your teacher know that you would like to see me. I will come to you and address your questions or concerns.
9. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. You and your parent/guardian will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it.

**You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, and possible benefits. You have been notified that there are no known risks associated with this study. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you may ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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**APPENDIX C**  
**INFORMED CONSENT**

Dear Parent or Guardian of Participant,

My name is Margie Martinez. I am a doctoral candidate in the department of educational administration and human resource development at Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas. I am conducting my dissertation study for the purpose of obtaining the perspectives of high school students prior to their placement in the DAEP. Specifically, my research will be conducted using participants from the discipline alternative education placement, DAEP. The knowledge gained from this study may contribute to the understanding, from the students' perspectives, of the experiences of the students prior to placement in the DAEP. I am requesting permission for your child to participate.

This study consists of 2 audio-taped individual interviews with me (*approximately 1 hour each*). I will also review student school records. School records might include discipline history, attendance, and academic success for example. The purpose of the review of school records will be to explore any commonalities among participants' experiences. The research study will be explained in terms that your child can understand, as much time as needed will be given to your child to explain the details of the interview process until your child demonstrates an understanding, and your child will participate only if he or she is willing. Only I will have access to information from your child. The only exception to this promise of confidentiality is in regards to information that I am otherwise required by law to report, for example abuse, neglect, or suicidal ideations. At the conclusion of the study, all data will be reported anonymously. Great care will be taken to keep the identity of your student confidential. Students will be assigned a code in place of their name or in place of any other identifying information.

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Participation in the study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect the services normally provided to your child by the DAEP or by the school district. Your child's participation in this study will not lead to the loss of any benefits to which he or she is otherwise entitled. Even if you give your permission for your child to participate, your child is free to refuse to participate. If your child agrees to participate, he or she is free to end participation at any time. You and your child are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your child's participation in this research study.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. During the process of the research, your student's contributions will be kept securely locked or in my presence. After completion of the study, all identifiable resources will be destroyed.

If you should have any questions or desire further information, please call me or email me at [REDACTED] and margiemartinez@neo.tamu.edu. You may also contact my supervising professor, Dr. Beverly Irby, at (979) 862-2092, or at beverly.irby@tamu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Office of the Vice President for Research, 3104 Interdisciplinary Life Sciences Building, 1112 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843-1112, by phone at (979) 458-4067, or by e-mail irb@tamu.edu.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this research study, please indicate so by checking the statement below, signing your name, and returning the form now. Sign both copies and keep one for your records. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

IRB NUMBER: IRB2013-0755F IRB APPROVAL DATE: 01/06/2014 IRB EXPIRATION DATE: 11/01/2014

Margie Martinez, M.Ed.,  
TAMU Doctoral Candidate

\_\_\_\_\_ I grant permission for my child to participate in Margie Martinez' study of the perceptions of high school students regarding their experiences prior to a DAEP placement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Parent/Guardian Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

IRB NUMBER: IRB2013-0755F IRB APPROVAL DATE: 01/06/2014 IRB EXPIRATION DATE: 11/01/2014

## APPENDIX D

### SAMPLE DISCUSSION RENDERED FROM USE OF THE SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

January 8, 2014

Participant #1BMJC

Martinez: Thank you for doing this. Is there any part of the consent you have questions about?

Subject: No

Martinez: I just want you to tell me about yourself. For instance what three things should I know to know who you are?

Subject: I'm a diverse individual. I like sports. I have a hard time in school.

Martinez: You have a hard time in school. You're diverse. You like sports. You have a hard time in school. Okay. So tell me some more about that. What kind of sports do you like?

Subject: I like basketball. Football. Interested in soccer. But I don't think I have a cardio for that yet. Um. I like rugby a little bit because it's like football without the pads. That's pretty much it on all the sports I'm interested in.

Martinez: Do you play any of those like in your neighborhood? Do you play street ball?

Subject: Not currently. It's too cold outside. Yes.

Martinez: Whenever you say you are diverse, what does that mean to you?

Subject: Like, I fit in no matter where I go. I'm me no regardless and people love me for that. I'm just. I don't know. I'm a different individual. I don't know. I listen to different genres of music, not just what people expect me to because of my ethnic group.

Martinez: What would you think they expect you to listen to?

Subject: Hip-hop, rap, stuff that talk about drugs and violence, and stuff like that.

Martinez: So do I hear you saying you enjoy that music but there's more to you than just that?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: What other kind of music do you like also?

Subject: I like dub step.

Martinez: Like what?

Subject: Dub step.

Martinez: Dub step. What is that?

Subject: It's like, it's good noise to me. Like you just have to listen to it some.

Martinez: I am. I am going to look it up. Dub step. So it's not like country music?

Subject: No. It's just like techno, electro. Stuff like that.

Martinez: Oh okay. Do you like country music?

Subject: Certain country songs. Yes.

Martinez: Jazz?

Subject: Eh.

Martinez: Not so much?

Subject: Not so much. I more like the just basic. I listen to metal. I listen to screamo.

Martinez: Do you ever rave, or do that stuff where in the pit or the people pound their heads?

Subject: Oh the mosh pit, no.

Martinez: Oh, none of that?

Subject: None of that.

Martinez: I want you to think about your last visit, you can take as much time as you need, just think about your last visit to the principal who assigned you to the DAEP. Your last visit with that person. Think about that. Then I want you just to talk about what comes to mind when you think about that.

Subject: Betrayal. Like, no justice whatsoever. I guess I can't say that for all but for this one in particular case is just how I feel.

Martinez: This one particular time that you got in trouble, is it always the same principal? The same assistant principal?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: So it's not that you feel that person betrays you but you felt betrayed in this particular situation?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: Sometimes the punishment you get you deserve?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: Okay. The principal who sent you here - male or female?

Subject: Female.

Martinez: Black or White?

Subject: White.

Martinez: White female. And so when you are working with her through this why do you feel like there was betrayal?

Subject: In a way she knows that I didn't do anything to harm that female and yet she feels the need to like over exaggerate on how I was aggressive and all this other stuff and ignored the fact that for one she hit me several times. Even after I was hit, I still didn't punch her or what the kids call it post up with her and I was just in the like. Yes, well if I was to ever go to court for, like, this they would say, did you put your hands on her physically? Yes, and of course I will have to say yes. But it was more of a restraint - physical than, like, you know just gone all predator mode.

Martinez: Um huh.

Subject: And that's why I feel betrayed because I felt like she knows what I could've do and how by me making that decision was the right decision. And I just felt like she just was just like whatever he's been there before we'll send him back.

Martinez: You've been to the DAE P before just send him back?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Why did you go to the DAE P before?

Subject: For smoking on the back of the bus. Which I take full responsibility for because it was my decision.

Martinez: Okay. So when you were sent here for that it was okay? You didn't feel betrayed?

Subject: Yeah I didn't feel the I felt like if anything I was lucky to be there. To be here, instead of jail or whatever.

Martinez: Yeah. Did you get to tell your principal your side of the story from the bus fight that got you here this time?

Subject: I did but they just like they just like telling me I was physical. I was physical and I was physical. They never they never really gave me anything more than that. You know.

Martinez: Did they have witnesses that said that you were?

Subject: No. I didn't hit that girl. Like I didn't punch her. The most I did was hold her arms. That was to stop her from hitting me. Push her away from me. That was just to be like go ahead, go about your business. Leave me alone. I don't want to fight you. Like for the first time in my life I actually act like a coward and it gets me nowhere. And then, so like when people tell me make the right decisions, it's kind of hard. When I'm trying to do the right thing and then somehow, like, it doesn't go as, the way people tell me it should be.

Martinez: So you think you made the right decision this time by just restraining her to prevent her from hitting you anymore? But that didn't make any difference because you got punished the same as you would have got punished if you did hit her? Is that what you're saying?

Subject: In a way yes but in a way no. Because if I was actually get into a fight with that girl, she would be very hurt. And that's one thing I was thinking about and I'm like a real sketchy. Like I don't really hit, rarely hit females like I don't. Because, like my mom, she had like, she was in a relationship and it was abusive and I didn't like it. I used to sit and like, cry because I couldn't do anything because I wasn't strong enough and it was like I always felt weak. So, basically I'm a mama's boy and I'm not going to disrespect no female like that.

Martinez: That's good to know. So some of your past history, watching what your mom had to go through when you were smaller and unable to prevent or help her, you have that in your head and that helps you not want to continue that cycle with the female? If

that were to happen today to your mom or in a relationship and someone was hitting her what do you think would happen?

Subject: I would be in jail.

Martinez: You would be in jail?

Subject: Would be in jail and she would be all right.

Martinez: You're pretty big enough right now I think. So let's go back to the last time you came to the DAEP. Okay. You're thinking about that. After you are notified to report to the office, what were you feeling or thinking as you are taking that walk to the principal's office?

Subject: Well, I knew something was going to happen because like because the first time it happened we were on the back of the bus and they made us like we basically made a U-turn and took us all the way back to the school. And then they told them that they smelled it whatever. Then they came on the bus, and they interviewed me, and I was high when they interviewed me. And she couldn't tell. And she was just like are you? And I'm like no it wasn't me. It wasn't me. And then like tomorrow like I already knew. Like already knew that I was going to get in trouble for it but at the time I just really didn't care. It was more of a whatever.

Martinez: And that was for smoking on the bus?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: So what about the fight you had, this altercation on the bus. Did you get called to the office from your classroom or were you taken off the bus then also?

Subject: I don't know. I had talked to the lady [principal] about it because I had gotten into trouble for something else in ISS or whatever. And I was like look I'm really mad because I know it's still not an excuse to curse out an ISS teacher but and then I started explaining to her my situation. And she was like yeah I heard about that and she was like come in here and wait and let me talk to you. And then we started talking and then that's when she like just dropped the bomb. Just boom and blew up and there was nothing I could do about it.

Martinez: Okay so at the time that you got into this altercation on the bus you are in ISS like when you got to school you had to report ISS?

Subject: Yes ma'am.

Martinez: Okay why are you in ISS? Do you remember?

Subject: I think I had did something when I came back. But I'm not sure. Because sometimes they get like referrals, and my teachers write me up, and I don't even know that they write me up. I just hear [Subject] can you come to the main office please? I'm like okay. Yeah so so-and-so teacher wrote you up, this day, that day, this period, this time. I'm like okay what can I do so I honestly don't know.

Martinez: You are in ISS?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: You were agitated? I'm trying to make sure I understand what you are saying. You are agitated from the thing that happened on the bus, the conflict. And so did your ISS teacher say something to you - do something? What set you off to cuss her out?

Subject: Well, it was a him.

Martinez: Okay him, cuss him out?

Subject: And I guess like okay certain students get mistaken to be like the bad ones and they're really not. And some students like to pretend or how can I say this, I'm nodding off, what was the question again? I'm sorry.

Martinez: It's okay. What happened that made you start cussing the ISS teacher out?

Subject: It was like I was trying to, I guess I was trying to like do something, and the guy like he just kept like just bothering me and bothering me. And I'm like and I'm just ignoring it and biting my tongue and not saying anything. And I'm like dude you obviously see that I'm not trying to talk to nobody and you know I've got my back turned. He's hearing noises. There's people in front of me. He's thinking it's me. So I'm trying to tell him I'm not, and then I get two strikes for trying to tell him that I wasn't talking. He already wrote me up for talking because he assumed that I was talking because I had my back turned but I have to face forward So my back is automatically to him. There is no way I can turn around without getting a strike or him saying anything. So when he did that, from there like I just I lost it.

Martinez: So he's hearing noises? He's hearing talking? And he is saying to you stop talking whatever and then you are saying back it's not me?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: And so he says that's a strike for talking back?

Subject: Yes, it's just a strike for talking back. I think he set a strike for talking in general because you're not supposed to be talking. I was just trying to explain to him the whole time. Then he was like come with me to the office because once you get two strikes they bring you to the counselor. The counselor talks to you and sometimes they keep you in there. And just sit here and cool off a little bit before you go back to ISS which really is like better than them talking to us actually. When he talks to me is just like bleh.

Martinez: So, getting leaving the room and going to see the counselor or principal is better than the ISS teacher talking to you or sitting out there cooling-off is better?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Okay I got you. And so you started to say something, and I think you lost your train of thought, that you are talking about the assumption was you were making a noise and you are saying that some people like stereotype or believe that certain people are bad whether they are or not. Will you finish that thought? I guess my point is do you think that's what he thought about you or is that what you are trying to tell me?

Subject: I mean like, it's hard because they say judge of people on the actions and all this other stuff but at the end of the day we young. So like the stuff that may seem like unfun and unpleasant or unjust or whatever you want to call it, to y'all is like fun to us. So like I really don't know because I mean I don't do the most Christian holiest things like normal things but I still have a good amount of friends. People still love me for who I am and the way I am. And I just don't think that you should stereotype students more. Like they say treat people like the way you want to be treated but if you look at the way we treat y'all as teachers we give y'all the ultimate respect and all we ask is to be respected. For some reason for some teachers that's hard to do and it's like again it doesn't feel fair. You know it feels like if you want me to respect you and I am respecting you how hard is it for you to respect me? I'm not asking for the ultimate respect like how you make every student at [names school] give to any authority. I'm just like asking to I don't know.

Martinez: So what would be, what would be respect to you? What could that teacher or whoever do differently that would say to you that person is respecting me?

Subject: It's different because you have a lot of different teachers. Like I have sarcastic teachers who those are the ones who like.

Martinez: Sarcasm, you don't like sarcasm from an adult?

Subject: I don't. I mean if it's outside of school cool because obviously you don't have to do appropriate language. And more likely if you are being sarcastic with me outside of school we're cool and we're you know. But when we're in school and I'm trying to be serious or if I'm saying something and you just got like so much sarcasm to the point where like you try to cover it up, like I'm not being too sarcastic and blah blah blah. And I mean at the end of the day the principal is going to look at the student and be like automatically you are lying. You know that's just how they feel because so many people come in there with excuses but like sarcasm that's one of the main things that like I think pisses off students.

Martinez: What about when you were sitting there in ISS and you ended up cussing that teacher out. You said you felt that he assumed you were bad and he blamed you and it wasn't you and you are telling him that it wasn't you and he was giving you strikes. What would you have preferred him to do or say or how would he have shown you respect in that situation?

Subject: Well for one compared the voices. I mean like I have a distinctive voice and you have a distinctive voice and everyone has their own distinctive voice. I don't know how you can get like the two mixed up. I mean unless they have similar voices which.

Martinez: Unless they were whispering or something?

Subject: Yeah. Or and I know it wasn't no whispering because he's all the way in the back.

Martinez: Okay.

Subject: Or just come up to the student if that's what the student is telling you. And come up to them and pulled them to the side and who is it you know who's talking? Help me out you know cause I understand you have a job to do and it's hard.

Martinez: So it sounds like you would have rather he just had a conversation with you first or if he thought it was you. You said it wasn't you. You would have rather him to come over and say look either say dude I saw you do it or okay if it's not you then what's going on or some kind of conversation. Not in front of the whole group, but just less confrontational. Is that what you're saying because I don't want to put words in your mouth?

Subject: Well yeah. I would've liked him to talk to me, to have been like maybe pulled me in the hall way and been like who is it blah blah blah. I might would have told him. I mean it's ISS, it's not like snitching on your home boys or going to jail or something.

Martinez: It sounds like you want to be heard?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: You want to be listened to?

Subject: And that's something that we not.

Martinez: What?

Subject: Like not listened to sometimes.

Martinez: The adults don't listen to you?

Subject: Yeah, like okay for instance we'll be in the classroom. Student, not even a student, a teacher or a student teacher, or somebody who's of age would walk up to the teacher. The teacher would probably give them instructions tell them to do this blah blah blah blah. And the student teacher, or whoever and the teacher would engage in the conversation. Then all of a sudden you know it's like they forget they have a job to do. And I know this and I know they're not talking about anything work-related because if it's work-related you'll talk about it in a normal tone and maybe even loud. You don't really even care because it's not anything in your personal life or what you did outside of school. What you and your husband did and I just don't find that important because there are students like me who would say that they understand something and really don't just so we can just so just so we don't have to see it anymore. And all I've got to say is we just we got questions that need answering. I just think at times like that you need to look at what's more important, this conversation or his question, student's question.

Martinez: So they need to, you would prefer the teachers pay more attention to what's going on in the classroom with the students? And, I think what I'm hearing again in a nonthreatening way, in more of a private way check on you guys? In the group you're saying, I've got it, I understand, move on when you really don't? And, if they gave you that one-on-one or came over and visited with you, you would be more likely to say I want some help with this or they would be able to figure out that you didn't know it?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: Okay that's what I thought. Alright. That's good information for them to know. You may have already answered this but let's see if there's anything else to add to it. So let's talk about the last punishment and, the last time you were here, a confrontation on the bus, the fighting, you come here - the question is what do you think your punishment should have been for the behavior that resulted in you being placed at the DAAP at that time?

Subject: ISS. I wouldn't even care how many days they gave me just ISS.

Martinez: So, you think you should have gotten ISS for restraining her from hitting you? Why do you think that?

Subject: Well, one because I also cussed out a teacher. So I can understand if they want to keep me in there. So that's the reason why I said ISS. But if it was just that for restraining myself, I would have I would've been in class.

Martinez: So you're saying nothing for that?

Subject: Nothing.

Martinez: Okay. But for that part okay. You went to the office for cussing out the teacher; however, when you got there they went ahead and dealt with the other stuff also. So you find yourself only guilty of cussing out the teacher and you should have gotten some more ISS for that but nothing for what happened on the bus?

Subject: Nothing.

Martinez: The ISS teacher, I remember you said he was man. What's his race?

Subject: White.

Martinez: White male. Is he the only one in there?

Subject: No. There's him. Well they switch out you know during the periods and stuff like that. He's in there most of the time and it normally starts out with him and another lady. I think her name is [states name].

Martinez: Okay so is she white female?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: Okay so a white female and a white male are usually in there?

Subject: Mmm Hmmm.

Martinez: Tag teaming together kind of in the morning?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Letting the school going. And then he leaves?

Subject: Uhhh no. They stay in there and then I think after a period it switches to the gym teachers and stuff. Yeah Coach [mentions name] who comes no not Coach [mentions name], Coach [mentions name], and the female coach, and.

Martinez: Okay so the coaches come through. So you have at least another male coach and another female coach probably come through. Are they White or Black or Asian or Hispanic or what?

Subject: Different.

Martinez: Okay what are they? Tell me what's the man?

Subject: White and then there's a Black man that comes and then there's a Black female.

Martinez: So when those people are in the room, have you cussed any of those out?

Subject: No.

Martinez: Do you feel like the Black educators who enter that room treat you different than the White male at the beginning. Do they treat you differently?

Subject: Well I can say I'm less agitated with the Black like I'm less aggravated.

Martinez: When they tell you to do something or whatever?

Subject: No, not like, like, I don't know. It's just, like, me honestly as a person I just feel like regardless racism isn't going to go anywhere. So, you know it's like going to stay here. Me, I'm far from racist. I couldn't be racist if I tried. I'm like, I'm 50% Black, 25% White, 25% Puerto Rican. So like, in a way I feel like people want to help their own team. Whether that means your own race, your own actual team, company, whatever it is, people want to help their own so like.

Martinez: So when you see the Black teachers in the room, I think what you are saying is you identify with them in a way that you assume you are on the same team, cause you look alike, you have a similar skin color?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: And so you take their criticism or redirection or whatever a little differently than the White male or they actually do things differently between the two?

Subject: Like I don't know. I just see like cause I don't know. I told them they don't know what it's like to grow up in the hood.

Martinez: You tell who that? Or, you think that about whom?

Subject: The Black teachers.

Martinez: Black teachers don't know what it was like?

Subject: Like certain Black teachers who was raised in the good neighborhood, not saying that's a bad thing.

Martinez: Right.

Subject: I wish I was privileged enough to be raised in the good neighborhood. Maybe I wouldn't be as I am right now, but being that I am, I know what I come from. I know the struggle, and like that's why I say I am more of a diverse person. I can relate to somebody who's to the lowest of low and I could relate to somebody who is at the highest point in their life. So to me, I don't understand why everybody can't get on the level I am and just be like, I don't know, like world peace or something. If I had a wish, I would definitely take that because I don't know. I just, even though people say it don't exist, somebody could deny it to they go to the grave. I still feel like it's in the air. Like, it's around in the school. Students do it. We got country students that don't like Blacks. We got a couple of wanna be country students that don't like Blacks. We got Chinese students that don't like Blacks. I mean, there's some White people we're cool with.

Martinez: Who is it the Blacks don't like?

Subject: I have no idea because if you ask me that, like, I don't know. Like, like, [states his name] gets his own category. Like, people might say you're Black, you're this, but I'm just like look, I'm me. You got me, you got the Blacks. Then you got the Whites doing whatever it is they're doing. The blacks doing whatever it is they're doing. Now maybe we do have some Black people in the school that don't like White people. I would never know that because when I'm walking in the hall, I'm talking to a lot of different people. People that's out of my race, people that's in my race, like it really doesn't matter to me. So, I couldn't like, be correct on what I would tell you and I don't want to give you any false information.

Martinez: But you do have this sense that when you are at school there is racism all around you?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: That's what I picked up on, between the students. What do you think about the staff, the teachers any adult, do you think that's true for that also - there's just this racism in the air?

Subject: I don't know, as teachers like they like to uphold the perfect image or whatever, and I just, I just wish, like, I don't know what I was answering. I was going to go on about something.

Martinez: Yeah, well the teachers and the adults about the racism in the air - also like it is in the students and you are thinking that they have to uphold themselves. At least present like they're not, so I was listening very carefully to find out if you thought they were presenting that way or they really were not racist.

Subject: I mean I know for a fact there are some teachers that aren't racist because I got like two favorite White teachers.

Martinez: You have two favorite teachers and they're White and so you're saying they are not racist?

Subject: No, I'm not just pointing out them two. Like there's probably more but those two I know for sure.

Martinez: Are not.

Subject: Because I'm ME times 10 around them and they love it.

Martinez: Yeah, right.

Subject: And I love them just as much.

Martinez: Um hmmm. So do you think there are some that might be?

Subject: If not racist, then just down talking. Don't really expect much. Okay like their expectation level for the student might be this high but their expectation level for him might just-

Martinez: Lower than that?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: And, why you think that would be?

Subject: I don't know. Maybe it's for the effort things we put in. I mean, I guess it would be the only like teacher reason that I can like come up with. Aside from just looking at him or looking at his records and seeing, oh you've been to [DAEP] like four times now, dang, and he been in juvie, and just throw a piece of paper at him, give him a pencil, wait for him to turn them in.

Martinez: I think I'm hearing what you are saying now because you mentioned a couple times that assumption, that putting you in categories. You said that. I mean it may not be your exact words but what you said is you know they assumed that certain people will amount to this much or put this much effort in, or will behave this way. So it has to be you making those noises because you fall in that category or because you have been in trouble. Have you actually really been to juvenile?

Subject: Um, yeah.

Martinez: What was that about?

Subject: I think it was tampering with the witness.

Martinez: Tampering with a witness.

Subject: Yeah, basically saying that I was just going to fight some boy because he had my friend locked up. And then, I end up being in there with him, my friend. And he had, when I was going in, he had got out before me, but he was already doing time. He already done like two months. And I was in there for like a week.

Martinez: Your friend - so you're talking about your friend. Your friend did something, went to jail or he went to juvenile.

Subject: Yeah he um, he beat up the boy, beat up his sister, and he took something. I can't remember what it was, but he stole something.

Martinez: And the boy who he beat up reported it?

Subject: Uh huh.

Martinez: Okay, and so then you came behind that and told that boy -

Subject: That I wanted but I wanted a one-on-one.

Martinez: You wanted a one-on-one moment with him, okay. So, then he reported you for threatening him.

Subject: Um hum and he was already in for what's that, protection, witness protection.

Martinez: He was under witness protection?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: Ok.

Subject: I was like protection witness?

Martinez: Yes, witness protection. How could he be under that? What are the police just keeping an eye on him or what?

Subject: Yeah or that thing where they just watch over you and you really can't mess with him.

Martinez: Was he still in his home? Or, they removed him from his home?

Subject: He was still in his home.

Martinez: Okay so they were keeping an eye on him.

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: And so you threatened him, is how it was ruled?

Subject: And then I was in school, and then they called me into the office. And I seen him, like when I was walking, because I could see inside the office. And I saw like police cars in the front, and I see one of my friends in the office. I see cuffs on his wrists, and then he looked at me and gave me the look like brother don't come in here you gonna be in these cuffs with me.

Martinez: That was the friend that you were protecting?

Subject: No, that was just another friend who was involved.

Martinez: He was involved in the same thing, though. Okay so, the police were there. So, did you know why you were being called to the office before you saw them?

Subject: No.

Martinez: So, you headed down to the office.

Subject: Yeah, they just said they wanted to talk to me.

Martinez: Okay and then when you saw them and you saw your friend, the light bulb clicked about what was probably gonna happen?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: And then so you go in. Did they talk to you any? Did they let you tell your side of the story? What happened?

Subject: No, they just slapped the cuffs on me.

Martinez: Did you walk into your principal's office or was it in the main hall?

Subject: I walked inside the office because I could see in the office.

Martinez: Okay so I guess they closed the door or whatever, I don't know or whatever, but as soon as you walked in they put handcuffs on you?

Subject: They like tapped my pockets, asked me what the stuff that they did feel, they were like what is that? I was like my phone, a lighter, blah blah blah. And they were like alright, turn around and put your hands behind your back, and then they cuffed me. And then they said what it was they cuffed me for and blah blah blah and, and those was in my, I hate sounding old.

Martinez: How old were you then?

Subject: Those were my young days.

Martinez: How old were you then?

Subject: Like 16, 15.

Martinez: So, it was high school?

Subject: Yeah, like that was in eighth grade.

Martinez: Eighth grade, so you weren't in high school, yet. Okay eighth-grade so then the police officers didn't explain to you anything, that's what I'm hearing? Or your principal, you walked in, they made sure everybody was safe, checked your pockets, made sure everybody was safe, put handcuffs on you right away, told you why you were under arrest. But there was no dialogue or conversation about it or you didn't get to say I did it or I didn't do it. They just took you away and then you did that part in the courts, I guess, right?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: With the judge and stuff. Okay, so than you went to JDC. How long were you there?

Subject: I think a week.

Martinez: And, what happened after that? Did you get probation? Did you have to pay a fine? Did you get found not guilty? What happened?

Subject: I think they just dropped it.

Martinez: And your friend, who did the initial beating and stealing and all that, what happened to him?

Subject: He got out before me.

Martinez: Is he on probation paying fines?

Subject: He paid the fines. He ain't got probation.

Martinez: How's he doing now? Have you heard from him?

Subject: I don't know. I haven't heard from him in a long time. Those was, those was the days I didn't think I was going to live to see 18.

Martinez: Why do you say that?

Subject: Because like what I was interested in. I mean I never really had a steady father figure. So, I mean I did at one point but when my mom went like on her solo missions, you know she's just like I'm tired of this, I'm tired of being treated like this, I'm leaving, boom. Left my stepdad. My stepdad, he might be my stepdad but I call my dad, not the one I have now, but the one I had, I called him, because I feel like it doesn't matter what you give birth to it or not, as long, as you there to be a actual father/mother figure. The kid needs to just like get over it. Me and as long as you make my mom happy you make me happy, you know?

Martinez: Was that the same stepdad though who was beating her?

Subject: Uh huh.

Martinez: Okay.

Subject: Oh wait, yes.

Martinez: It was but you still felt like he was a father to you.

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: Okay. So, you said you were into some things that weren't so good. What were those things? Remember, you're in a safe environment I'm not -

Subject: Like little cliques, you know. Like because I mean in New Jersey they have official gangs, like gang gangs, worldwide known gangs.

Martinez: In New Jersey, that's where you were?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: Oh, Okay.

Subject: But I was never a part of that. You know, but we had our little click. It was just us and people who, like, we were so bad. People used to think we were a gang like we came up with the name and like

Martinez: I was going to ask you, what did you call yourselves?

Subject: It was dove boys.

Martinez: Dove boys? You know what? I think I read about that.

Subject: What, no you didn't.

Martinez: Yes, I'm reading a book it's the autobiography of a recovering skinhead is what it's called. I do a lot of reading on race relations and so I'm on my second kind of White power racist skinhead book and I've learned a lot. And, when I go home tonight, I'm gonna look that up because they talk about New Jersey when they talk about different groups getting together. And the different names and I'm gonna tell you. But I could be wrong but that sounds like a familiar one.

Subject: If it's in there -

Martinez: I'm gonna let you know.

Subject: I'm go crazy on you like wow we made it in a book!

Martinez: Uh huh.

Subject: We was that bad to the point we made it in there.

Martinez: What was it, who did your group of boys and girls, I don't know. Well tell me about your group, were they are Black, were they all male, or were they all, what was the connection?

Subject: The connection was, that we are all hated something.

Martinez: Hated? White hating? Jewish hating? What?

Subject: We really didn't hate like no racist group. We just hated people who look down on us.

Martinez: Okay.

Subject: We looked at it as if you looking down on us I'm gonna break down your balcony, and then when you're on the same level as me let's see how you look at me.

Martinez: And what would be an example of looking down on you?

Subject: I mean just like people who think they know better and one of flaunt stereotype on us. And I mean we didn't make the smartest decisions but like I don't know.

Martinez: You had each other, and me and I'm hearing that same thought process from you, people looking down on you, even your Black educators in your current school who didn't come from where you came from, didn't live in poverty, or didn't live in, I forgot what you called it, in wherever you lived, that they started off somewhere else. And then, so what I think I'm hearing too again is that was your connection for that group. Were you all black? Were you all only male? Were there females? Okay.

Subject: There was Black females, Spanish females, White females. I think there was like three White females, a couple of White males, Blacks, but we all, we all acted hood. Like, we all, even the Whitest boy you would see, would be like oh my God he's just so hood with it. You know because in that day we call it swag.

Martinez: Right swag and hood because you saw it was more than you grew up in a similar environment.

Subject: Yeah and we mostly, at the end of the day even though we were in a gang, we was people who still played basketball. We still put on the beats and did a little freestyle. You know, I had some friends who skateboard and some who didn't. Mostly smoke, drink, had fun.

Martinez: Tell me the worst thing you did because you were in that gang? Did you ever just beat the snot out of someone just because? Did you, was its a drug thing, a drinking thing, I mean what's?

Subject: It was more so when I had to beat up my friend. Because there's this thing called discipline and everybody has a go through it. It's like if you make a mistake or you fuck up then they, you get in a circle, they say whatever it is they say. You get your time in, and they and we just start wailing on you until the time is done. And then that's, that's when I think it hit me. It was like damn it's fucked up because it could be me, and then I had his blood on my shirt too. Like on my shoulder cause when I had hit him like he like rubbed against it in a way from when I punched him. It like slid up and then right there. It was like, I, just for me that was the worst is not the worst thing that I've done but for me that's when it hit me.

Martinez: And that's what hurt your heart the most?

Subject: Yeah

Martinez: Do you recall what he did that got him in trouble?

Subject: I don't know, I think he had stole something some money or some weed.

Martinez: From somebody in the gang or Okay?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Who decides how much time you get beat on?

Subject: Well, being that it was called dove, dove to us meant 20.

Martinez: 20?

Subject: So it was 20 seconds.

Martinez: Does dove stand for anything, D O V E, was that like "disciples of" or does it mean anything other than dove meant 20?

Subject: It's just dove. That was it.

Martinez: And it wasn't 4:20 or anything like that?

Subject: And that's why I said we was more of a click then we were gang, but we was just wild, and always out. I mean some people who was in the click was in actual gangs. You know we had some bloods in our group, we had some crypts in our group. And like

that, that's what like made me really join it because them kids wasn't tripping over like the fact that you had a red flag and I had a blue flag. It was like you know what I'm saying we are family, you know? Like, I don't know.

Martinez: We come from this.....

Subject: Yeah, I mean we came from this, like, that's what I say. I mean if people understand what it's like to grow up in the hood, then they will understand, like, certain Black people. Because, like, it's like, it's scary, even for the toughest person in the hood and probably doing all the killing. It's scary for him, you know? It's like, I mean, wherever you live in is really different, but New Jersey for me was, a that's when I was thinking I'm not gonna live like.

Martinez: Now, was that eighth grade also? Did you say that?

Subject: It was eighth, ninth, ninth again, ninth again.

Martinez: You did ninth grade 3 times?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Have you caught up since you got here?

Subject: Yeah, I have my junior credits now.

Martinez: Do you think it's because it's a different environment you've been successful?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: What brought you to this environment and got you out of Jersey?

Subject: My stepdad. He had a job offering. See, where he lived in New Jersey was really nice and I was like you know it ain't the suburbs but it's close. And you know, and I was like it's cool, I don't mind staying here, but my mom wanted to come to Texas, so here I am.

Martinez: Well good. Well, I'm glad you came here and that way you're still alive and you're out of the gang. Oh my gosh. I'm going to ask you one more question because it is time for you to go home and then we'll pick up the rest hopefully tomorrow or the next day. So, you are here on this campus. You're in a discipline school. What do you miss the most about your home campus, your regular school here?

Subject: Sports.

Martinez: Sports.

Subject: I like the basketball team, the football team.

Martinez: You'd like to try out for those things and be on those teams?

Subject: I did football but I let my emotions get into and more than like my emotions toward the coaches and stuff like that. And like how I felt about them that's what kind of like threw me off.

Martinez: What do you mean? Coaches, Okay I'm just envisioning coaches yelling - run those laps, whatever, whatever, is that what you're talking about and then coming back at them?

Subject: Yeah, because like I was never used to that. I played sports but I never played for no team. It was more just like you on my team, you on my team, you on my team, we going against them, let's go, and we just played from there. So, when it came to like somebody really just yell, yell, yell. I was just like, I could barely deal with teachers and they don't even use half as loud as the volume you're using right now, but I mean I would try it again.

Martinez: So you would try again and try not to do that? Whenever they would come at you like that, what would, how did you respond? I guess it got you kicked off the team, right?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Because what? Tell me what you said back or did back or did you bow up to him.

Subject: Well Coach [said the name], I think it was either, no, I cursed out Coach [said the name] but somebody told me that I had to run halos because I didn't, I didn't go to practice. And what I was telling him that day is, I was like, look I told you that I don't have a ride to my house, and like if you can provide me with a ride to my house, I will stay for practice, and I'm new around here. I don't know how to walk home, you know, and I mean eventually I could find out the hang of it, and knew that I could walk home but I'm still new. So to me I'm like OK where do I go? I'm lost. I've never been to Texas before.

Martinez: And you told him those things?

Subject: Yeah, and I don't know what he had said, he was just like -

Martinez: Well you gotta run these halos because you missed practice.

Subject: Yeah, and I was like are you serious? Like, there, right there, I was just like, I was just like, done.

Martinez: Done?

Subject: And then I was going in there, in the weight room to grab a 45 weights when I was cursing like man this is some bull shit. And Coach... heard me, and he was like we don't use that kind of language. And I was like man fuck that and I walked in and opened the door and that's when he walked in behind me and started screaming and I started screaming back. And then he took me to the locker room, and change my stuff and he gave me my stuff and give me a pass, and I switched the class that day.

Martinez: And what would you have liked to have happened when you missed practice? What do you think should've happened?

Subject: I mean with me notifying him and not just not showing up I don't know anything but an extra work out.

Martinez: You notified him before you missed?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: You were new, that you didn't have a ride home yet, that you didn't, yeah okay.

Subject: And then after a while though I started to get comfortable with the teammates and they had a license. So, after a while it was smooth sailing.

Martinez: But you weren't there anymore. Like if you had been able to still be there, it would've been smooth sailing as you would've had a ride and stuff like that. How much time do you think you needed to get all that together before you got in trouble? How much time do you think you should have had?

Subject: Time for what?

Martinez: Like how much time do you think you should have had to get your ride together and learn where you are? And should you have missed, in your mind, was it okay to maybe miss a week of practice getting yourself together or maybe a day or what do you think you needed or do you know?

Subject: Three days because after three days like I kind of pretty much basically knew how to get to school. But it was only one sided. So it was like I know how to get home but we have to go this way but I don't know the back roads yet so three days.

Martinez: But you missed the one day and then that was it -

Subject: And that was it.

Martinez: Alright.

END OF RECORDING

January 9, 2014

Participant #1BMJC #2

Martinez: So, I just brought the book to show you. That is the second one I'm was reading. The first one, Life After Hate, I finished this one which was also about skinhead and White power games. But then I really looked through this book to find the word dove and I couldn't find it so I guess I was dreaming that. So I got on the Internet and I found this and it says dove clan but it's just like an anti-gang movement. Did you do dove signs with your hands?

Subject: It was like this and it was like that.

Martinez: Okay. And how does that make a dove somehow?

Subject: No, it's not really dove. It's DUBBZ.

Martinez: Ooooooh. DUBBZ. Oh well, no wonder I couldn't find it. Do you remember what that's stood for?

Subject: No.

Martinez: Alright. My notes tell me that we stopped on question five last time.

Subject: Yeah, I think you're right.

Martinez: So, let's just get going here. You have an appointment later?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: You can eat your peaches. You're okay. You're okay

Subject: Alright.

Martinez: Alright let's see. The last thing I asked you and we talked about was, what do you miss the most about not being allowed at your home campus? If I recall correctly, we talked about sports and things like that.

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: Okay. What do you miss the least by not being allowed to be at your home campus?

Subject: What do I miss least? I don't know.

Martinez: Is there something that you like about here that is not there maybe?

Subject: I mean, just the freedom, like I wish we had like, the freedom we have in the [DAEP] because it would be way much better.

Martinez: What kind of freedom do you have at [the DAEP]? Because it seems strict to me.

Subject: No, I said I wish we had -

Martinez: The freedom you have at [named campus] you wish you had in [DAEP] that's the only thing?

Subject: Yes, I really don't like - not miss anything.

Martinez: So, you miss everything?

Subject: Kind of. Yeah, no, like, I don't know that's a tough question.

Martinez: It is tough. Okay. It sounds like you just adapt to wherever you are.

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Kind of from what you are telling me last time. Okay. So how has your placement at [the DAEP] affected your grades?

Subject: It actually hasn't affected my grades. The last time I came here, I actually, when I went back to my school and got my report card my grades were actually very good.

Martinez: So, your grades were affected. It sounds like in a positive way?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: So, when you went back to your home campus, you were surprised your grades were good?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: So, that's how they were affected, affected positively. Awesome why do you think that is?

Subject: Because, like -

Martinez: What happened differently that made your grades rise?

Subject: Well, it was like, okay, I know [names two teachers] may not be like smart at like everything, but when I do ask for help they like try. You know if we got a go on YouTube, we go on you tube. If we got to grab some books, we'll grab some books. You know? In school it's really not like that. It's more like the teacher telling you stuff, giving you something and then it's like I'll come around to help you with it. Like I don't know. It's like in a way they help me learn it more.

Martinez: So, your learning style is a little different for you here because you are using a variety of ways to get the information versus the teacher just standing up and telling you?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: And you're thinking that's impacting it. Do you think being in a smaller group or just more one-on-one or -

Subject: I like smaller groups like especially in [DAEP] because now that we have a lot of kids it's kind of like my attitude is kind of bipolar. One minute I'm like good and the next minute I'm like whatever blah blah blah. But never too crazy.

Martinez: You are impacted by the people who are around you?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: And too many or not enough or how they're behaving?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Okay. Well, I'm glad your grades go up when you're here, at least that's a good thing that we can get done while working on the other behaviors and things. What do you think or feel about the discipline situation you are currently experiencing?

Subject: In a way it's fair but it's a little unfair.

Martinez: Kind of what we talked about before?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Maybe you thought some more about it. Is there anything you wanted to add? It's a little fair. Why is it a little fair?

Subject: Because in a way we kind of deserve this like you know how it's isolated away from the other school and stuff like that. You know it's like in your own area so in a way we kind of deserve it but I just wish again like there was a little more freedom because then people wouldn't be so tense. People wouldn't be so uptight. And like sometimes when they like when one person is bad than the whole [DAEP] will stay in for lunch and I don't like that because I mean at the end of the day we are still in high school and some students haven't matured yet. So, I know me, like when I was 16 and 15, and I used to go through that with my teachers. I would get into a lot of fights with the student who was causing the problem because it's just I don't know, in a way, it's like, unjust. And most of the time I got in fights because I was the kid the caused everybody to stay in so I know what it feels like to be -

Martinez: Like when you were little?

Subject: Yeah. Like, I just don't think that it's right.

Martinez: So in the discipline setting here, the whole group gets punished sometimes with lunch detentions for a few people's behaviors?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: And in a more, in a big school, in your homeschool, that's not even -

Subject: Possible.

Martinez: Possible or yeah to do something like that. So it's more individuals getting punished for individual behavior. Okay that makes sense. Tell me why, I just want you to think for a minute, just think deeply, why do you think you were assigned to the DAEP? Why is that your punishment?

Subject: Well, because I guess they just wanted to get rid of me. They just like boom, take all the students, we're not having it. I mean, I can't even answer the question because again, I just feel like they did me wrong and like I'm not supposed to be in here and like when I look at the people who is in there now like, it's crazy because we got a

lot of kids coming in. Like I always hear that it's like oh we got another intake, got another intake, we lose one, we get two. Like it doubles up and, honestly, I don't know, I really don't.

Martinez: The only thing I really heard you say that might be a reason why you were put here, is just to get rid of you, just to get you off the campus. Because get rid of the behavior?

Subject: Yes, just because I'm, I am bad.

Martinez: No you're not.

Subject: Well, I mean that's what they say like, they labeled me as bad just because, like, I tend to do things differently than other people. So, I don't know. I don't know if it's because I speak up for myself because sometimes I feel like there's nobody there to stand up for me, you know, and they always say well go to your parents and do this and do that and like, I do it that way but nothing doesn't get done so like at the end of the day like, what other option is there for me? Like, I don't know. I've tried to do things the good way and somehow it just turns bad.

Martinez: Okay. If you were to misbehave, do you feel that you will be disciplined fairly? Now I know how you feel about this one so let's just say in the future, or you know maybe in the past, or were we can just think about the future, from here on if you were to misbehave when you get back do you believe you're going to be disciplined fairly?

Subject: When I get back?

Martinez: Uh huh.

Subject: Um, I don't know, I still might have that label of oh he's a [DAEP] kid. You know. I think they do that, it's like here's our [names home school], and here's the [DAEP] kids. You know. We are put in our own category. So, I mean I don't know. I know there are a couple of teachers who know me and know my personality, and like I've cursed around them and like talked to them and they know me and they like me. So, I know they wouldn't treat me, but that's a very few out of like a lot of people.

Martinez: So, what about the principals who will be doing the discipline? Let's say you got a referral for something, you go to the office. Do you think the consequences are going to be fair in the future? Or, do you think, what do you think, is it going to be yes they're going to go by the book, or they are not, or just, what do you think will happen with your principal?

Subject: I don't think they would, well I just think it's like, after a while once they see how much trouble you get into, that they again put a label on you so they might not go on fair. I think they will for me because gonna be in here for damn near two months, so I mean-

Martinez: So you're thinking that you get a referral for something no matter how minor or large when you come in it will be -

Subject: A little more extreme than what it's supposed to be, yeah.

Martinez: You've been to [DAEP] dude where you know you've got to behave and it might be a little more strict. Okay. Share examples of interactions with your principal, the principal at your school where you have felt he or she cared, understood you, or related to you in a positive way.

Subject: Man, last year with [names principal], who now works in Dallas, my, like, that is my hero, and he's totally opposite. He's White, and I'm like full-fledged White, and I'm like nowhere near that and me and him just boom like, that's my home dog, "Laugh."

Martinez: So, what did he do? What did he do that you appreciated, that was positive?

Subject: He actually listened to what I had to say. He gave me feedback. He told me where I was wrong and how I could've went about it but he also told me you are right but the way you go about situations makes it wrong.

Martinez: Okay.

Subject: And I was just like, "ummm," and then from there if I had a problem, I would walk, talk to him. He's basically the only person like, hands down I would like give 150% respect to because he's just, I don't know, he's just an amazing person.

Martinez: So, what you cared about, what you appreciated about him is he listened. He gave you positive feedback. He told you where you were wrong.

Subject: Uh huh.

Martinez: And explain to you how you could have done it differently to react in a positive way in a school setting.

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: Okay, so, how, it sounds like he showed you where maybe the situation escalated because of perceptions of the way you reacted.

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: And you appreciated that positive feedback. Did you ever feel like he was, when he was doing that, that he was demeaning you or degrading you or making you feel less than?

Subject: No because I feel honesty is the most important thing in any kind of relationship, friendship, a relationship, a marriage. Like honesty is very important, and I just wish that things wouldn't get sugarcoated you know, and I just like that he didn't sugarcoat things. Like, he gave me positive and negative. The negative, when he told me the negatives, it was actually, kind of, turned into a positive because I started to change. I started to mature since the first time I met him. When I a first met him I was like whatever, blah blah blah, disrespected him.

Martinez: I've heard all this before?

Subject: Yeah. And then after I started coming there for a while, then he started to see my side, and then I started to see his in a way and then after that it was just like -

Martinez: Did he ever have to give you a consequence? Did he ever have to punish you?

Subject: Um he did but it was never like really very bad cause he understood where I was coming from, so it was like more like I'm giving you three days ISS. It was never [the DAEP]. It was never suspension. You know. Rarely detention. Or, I would tell him sometimes just give me a detention I'm not going to ISS and like -

Martinez: He'd work with you that way.

Subject: Yeah, he'll be like I'll schedule it for next Thursday. He's an amazing person. Amazing assistant principal. He should have his own school. He should be the principal of his own school one day.

Martinez: Do you feel like with all the principals you've dealt with over the years, including this year, is he your only principal who you perceive dealing with you positively?

Subject: Well no, I mean, there was a couple of principals in New Jersey. [named two different high schools] that I got along with, but that was so long ago that I can't even remember.

Martinez: Yeah, so, he is somebody who sticks currently in your mind.

Subject: Yeah. But like it was crazy in [mentions two high schools] in New Jersey, the people that I got along with was Black, like the administrators and some of the principals and stuff like that, but like [this principal] was White, and I like connected with him more than I did with any of my other principals.

Martinez: I can see, even you telling me the story right now, I can tell by your expressions you still don't understand how that happened. It's still a shock to you that you trusted a White administrator to the level that you did. It sounds like you didn't at first you know but you opened your mind and you allowed that relationship to build and so that was your first. What I'm seeing, and hearing, and watching your expressions, is that was your first probably true crossing over I guess, and trusting a White person in authority, and you're still kind of baffled about how that happened. So, I don't know that there's been a lot of those relationships since that one, but that one was a good one. So, you do know that they can happen.

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: That's good. If you could write a letter to yourself right now, that you would read before you were sent to the DAEP, what would you tell yourself? So, what that means is think about when you got in trouble, before you did any of that, before you had that walk to the principal's office, before you got here, if you wrote a letter to yourself, about the situation that was about to happen, what would you tell yourself?

Subject: Don't come back "laugh."

Martinez: "Laugh."

Subject: What would I tell myself? Because I mean, like I talk to myself, but it's mostly in my head, but it's about certain things like, "hmm, how could I get \$20?"

Martinez: \$20, "laugh."

Subject: Or how could I get that shirt or how could I do this, how could I do that?

Martinez: You want to give yourself some advice before the whole incident, read into the future, you know it's coming, so you're going to have to tell yourself something, what would be?

Subject: I would be like man you might as well just stay here.

Martinez: Stay where?

Subject: Here.

Martinez: At [the DAEP]?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: From the last time you were here?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Oh.

Subject: You might as well, I mean. I actually, I actually want to go to [named a different school in the district], really bad. Like, I went when I first got back from serving my time, I went back, I tried to apply, they was feeding me all this stuff about how I can't go, I need this, and I need that, and then, I mean -

Martinez: Okay, so, you went back to school talked to your counselors, and they told you that you wouldn't qualify for [names the school], which is a school of choice that you have to apply for. Do you remember why they told you, you wouldn't?

Subject: I don't know, they said something about a credit. Or, whatever. I should have it now.

Martinez: Did you have 10 credits?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: You did? Okay. That's one thing [names school] looks at - credits, behavior, attendance, a variety of things so I would encourage you to reapply then if you got the 10 credits. Okay, so, I heard you say that you would have told yourself to just stay at [the DAEP] because you're coming right back. Is that what you mean?

Subject: It's either that or this is as close as I'll ever get to [names the school he'd like to attend], so.

Martinez: Okay. Because they're right next door to each other so you can like... Okay. Do you think you would tell yourself to have chosen a different behavior?

Subject: I mean if I had actually did something wrong besides cussing the teacher out, yeah I would.

Martinez: So you're adamant you did nothing wrong on the bus. So, let's talk about the cussing the teacher part out. What would you tell yourself then, if you could tell yourself something before cussing the teacher out, what would you tell yourself?

Subject: Just say he's not worth it because at the end of the day, it's just words, and it'll never be nothing more. And even if we do fight, most likely all I'm gonna do is end up in jail, and all he's gonna do is end up really hurt. So, what do I get out of this besides releasing my anger?

Martinez: Maybe you would tell yourself to find a better way to release anger?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: Go running. Would you share please, your goals and aspirations for after high school? What do you want to do?

Subject: I don't know. My mom asked me that same thing. And I have yet failed to tell her. I told her I can do acting or boxing. I really want to do boxing because shoot, I've been left back a lot of times for fighting. Some of them was out of my jurisdiction, but still I've got to defend myself. And some of them was just like back in my bully days. After my father first-taught me how to fight, he like, because I used to be like a big punk, like, like, I'm talking about when I was in kindergarten I looked like I was almost 10 years old.

Martinez: Yeah, you are a big man. That's for sure.

Subject: They used to look at me and like, but I was really nice though, like, I was, like, that big teddy bear, that big ass teddy bear you see, and you want to buy it, but you gotta make like six shots before you can get it at like a carnival or something. I was just like nice and then I started to get to a point where I was getting bullied and at some point I was just like I can't do this. I can't keep living my life like this, and suicide was actually a thought in my mind for a second at that young age.

Martinez: At kindergarten, or what?

Subject: No, not kindergarten, but like I would say from like first all the way to the seventh because my eighth grade year I was, I was fighting. But it started like after I had those suicidal thoughts, and I told my mom and stuff, when they were just like we can't let this happen, we got a toughen you up, you know. So my dad, he got two pairs of boxing gloves, and one day I was outside like, you know, just being friendly, running around, left it with my friends, playing basketball, riding bikes. And he had called everybody to the house, and in front of the house that I was in in New York was like this little, this like, like, there's a house, there's a house, and then in the middle it split because there's a house over here with the first and second floor, and then there's a house over here with the first and second floor. I lived on the first. My best friends lived upstairs. And then my mom's friends. And when you come out it's like two separate staircase, and if you make this right right here, there's this little gate area where you could just chill or whatever. It was in front of our house. So, he got everybody to go in there. He gave me a pair. And made me box all of my friends.

Martinez: Oh, my word.

Subject: All of them and you don't understand, I was a friendly person. "laughing" So, I had a lot of friends. I found out some things that day. I was like man I didn't know you could fight. Like my one friend Lewis, I can't believe I still remember his name, like, he was some skinny White boy. But, he was like, fast, like, really fast, like I was like oh my goodness I can't even dodge these punches. It was just - and then from that day on it was just like, but I didn't know how to control it. So, then when I found out how to control it, it was just like, okay, I'm done with that, I accomplished that. But I told my mom before when she asked me what you want to be, and what do you want to do, I was just like, I don't know, cause I never thought I would like, live to see 18, you know.

Martinez: But you have, you've grown up a lot, you've changed.

Subject: So, now I'm stuck. It's like, my goal was to just keep doing what I was doing while I was in New Jersey and then like I'm 18 now, didn't think I would make it, and yet I can't find a goal.

Martinez: So, you assumed you'd be dead by 18 because of your lifestyle. And now that you got moved out of there, and you're here, and those early times in your life when you were suicidal, I was trying to make sure I heard you, was it because, mostly because, you were picked on at that time?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: And then you turned into the bully?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: You have the size and all that. When your dad taught you how to stand up for yourself. The boxing skills -

Subject: I over did it.

Martinez: You over did it. I got you. Okay. Now, you have grown out of that, right?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: I think you have. I haven't seen that. Okay. So, now you have to start thinking about what you want to do. And you like the boxing.

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: And acting, you said.

Subject: Yes, I like acting because it's fun.

Martinez: You might be moving back to New York then, huh?

Subject: I hope.

Martinez: You like New York?

Subject: Yes. I prefer New York over New Jersey. Because in New Jersey there's this thing where there's no such thing as a fair one. And a fair one is what I want to fight. So, most likely if, it's like if you, if I want to fight you, and you've got your friends behind you, and if you from Jersey, your friends, all your friends, are going to beat up on me. You, your friends, so.

Martinez: There's no fair fights in Jersey, that's what you're saying?

Subject: Yeah. In New York, I love it. It's just so peaceful like, it really is, like, that same scenario could've gone on but, your friends would've just watched. They would have been like go ahead one-on-one. And it would've in fair rules, you know, don't beat up when you're on the ground, don't beat you up when you're on the ground. Let them stand up if he wants to keep fighting.

Martinez: He has to get up?

Subject: He gets up. And he'll be like I want to keep going.

Martinez: And that I think, the difference, you can correct me if I'm wrong, but the difference is back in New Jersey, it was more of a gang mentality, a clan mentality, or whatever you call it, a group mentality, where those behaviors were indicative of gang groups, like you were in DUBBZ?

Subject: Exactly.

Martinez: But in New York, your experiences were different because you weren't in gangs and stuff there. Alright. What would you like for your principal to do differently when disciplining you?

Subject: To do different?

Martinez: What would you like for that principal you have now to do differently?

Subject: I mean if we all had a choice, we wouldn't be disciplined all.

Martinez: I know. But when you come into her office -

Subject: I would say be fair, you know, like, like that, like, I don't know.

Martinez: What could she do differently to be more fair?

Subject: I just feel like there is no justice, and justice is just making sure somebody pays for the crime that's dealt regardless of whether they did it or not. I just wish like, people would look up the actual definition and know what it means, and like, actually go by the facts instead of just what they believed or they felt, like, how they felt I was aggressive and all this other stuff. I just want a fair trial.

Martinez: How could she have, what could she have done to have found the facts better for you then?

Subject: Just listen to me because I was telling the truth. I really wasn't. In like if anybody, if anybody sees the video, you would know that I did not, I can't say physically touched her, because technically I did, but if we're not getting technical, then I didn't do anything to her at all. Like, I didn't do anything wrong. I stopped her from hitting me, and I pushed her. And just because I'm aggressive with somebody doesn't mean anything because her face was not damaged from me, from my hands. Maybe [stated a student's name] hands, but not my hand. All I did was stop her from assaulting me, and just trying to get her in a calm state, like, look, it doesn't matter, just move, go away, go about your business, go sit in the front of the bus so I can go home. But

honestly if we didn't have a substitute that day, all of that would have never happened because she was supposed to get off, she was supposed to be like the, one of the, one of the second people to get off.

Martinez: The other girl?

Subject: Yeah. But the substitute bus driver had missed her stop. So, she was still on the bus, and I always think that that day, like, I could be in school if it wasn't for that sub.

Martinez: So, you would have preferred that your principal listened to what you said and then viewed the video from that perspective instead of the way she interpreted it the first time.

Subject: Yes. Instead of her saying that I'm aggressive. See why I was aggressive and how I was aggressive.

Martinez: To really just hear you. And since we're on that, I'll just tell you that I really did work pretty hard behind the scenes to see that video. I took it all the way central office level administrator and our attorneys said that because you are not a timber [named school] high school student, you're a [named school] student, different things, but they couldn't see why it would be okay to let me watch the film. So, I was pleading your argument, and I believed that if I saw the film, and I saw what you did, that I would be able to explain that to you, and it very much sounded like I was saying the things that you appreciated so much from [stated principal's name]. But I said I can view the video, I can see where he went wrong and I can teach him from that video, but I got shut down over and over, so what was suggested is that your mother file a grievance with central office to have your case looked at again, and that would be the next step. I do want you to know that I did try, and I was shocked because I didn't know that I wouldn't be able to see it. I don't think the attorney was right, I think the attorney was wrong, but it is what it is. Okay. And, so I just have one last question.

Subject: One more.

Martinez: One more real question. If you could share anything with your principal, what would it be? I mean you just want to tell her, what is it you want to tell her? What is it you want her to know?

Subject: I need, I want to tell her, listen. You need to go home, sit on the couch, just keep the house dark, make sure nobody's contacting you, smoke something, and watch a movie.

Martinez: “laugh” Why do you want to tell her that?

Subject: Because they just need to relax, like, they just so intense about everything. It’s just like man, am I really that bad?

Martinez: So, you want to tell your principal to relax, chill out.

Subject: Relax. However you relax. If smoking something is not how you relax, relax that way. Relax however you relax. If you need to go to Hawaii to relax go to Hawaii. Relax. Just chill out.

Martinez: And then put your behaviors into perspective?

Subject: Yes, and look at the facts, and not just the skin color, or whatever it is that you focused on. You know. Because I’m really not supposed to be here. I’m supposed to be at [named home campus], trying to get my [named school he’d like to attend] credits, because as soon as they told me I had enough credits to go to [named school], I was just like, goodbye [named current school], I was going to come straight here. I was just going to end up like [named a successful student] and everybody else who came here.

Martinez: You said skin color a minute ago. Do you think your skin color had anything to do with you and your discipline?

Subject: No. [named a Black principal]. No I guess.

Martinez: Did [named the Black principal] send you here?

Subject: Oh then again no you are right. [Named the White principal who sent him to the DAEP] did. [named the White principal again] is stubborn. She even said it.

Martinez: Did she? “laugh”

Subject: Yeah, she was like, because one day this boy had threatened my life. And I still didn’t tell her who it was. And she was like, she was like oh, why won’t you tell me? What was he wearing blah blah blah blah? And, I’m like man just let me go. Just let me go back to class. I’m not causing any trouble. It’s my life. What are you worried about it for? And she was just like we got a make sure blah blah blah blah nothing happens on our school campus. I’m like, that’s all you care about. You don’t care about whether I live or die. You just care about what happens on your campus or not. Because I could die in my apartment and it wouldn’t mean you cared. Just oh thank God it wasn’t on school grounds.

Martinez: That’s how you interpreted what she was saying?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Not about you. Just keeping the school calm.

Subject: Yeah and then she was like, I'm stubborn. I'll get to the bottom of it. And then she came back and she told me the boy's name, and I was like -

Martinez: How did you find that out?

Subject: You know. You must be really that stubborn. I wonder how your relationships going?

Martinez: So, that's another thing you might want to tell her. You would like for her to consider you as an individual instead of the whole entire environment when she's dealing with you.

Subject: I just think like, like, Blacks are looked at so violent. I mean, it is, I mean in a way some of us are. But not all of us. I just think it's more now because it's like, on the news and it's everywhere, and on YouTube. Like, we fighting and all this other stuff so. I know why people watch it. And I know they must look at it and in a way kind of feel like ashamed, well not so much ashamed, like, more of like, just kind of like ashamed. Just like when you've got to share a room with somebody you really don't like. That's how I kind of think it is. It's like they sharing the world with us but they really don't like us. You know. Some people do. Some people don't. It just sucks.

Martinez: It just sucks? Being Black?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Because you think you're being judged by White people all the time?

Subject: Like, I know even when I'm walking in somewhere, I can just see it, you know, like, I see things that people don't see. I hear things that people don't hear. And what I mean by hear things people don't hear is like, what somebody would tell you, I know that they want to tell you, you know, it's like -

Martinez: Can you give me an example?

Subject: It's kind of hard.

Martinez: You're walking in the store -

Subject: Like one time I went into this convenience store. And this Arab was in there. And I went to the store and I was like, where's the, I forget what I was asking for, I just asking where is it, you know, just went up to him and ask where was it, and he like started laughing. And I was like, he's like it's over there, I went up and I paid for it. I was like what's up man? And he was like, nothing man. Like, after a while I forgot what I said to him but I pushed it out of him, and he was like why does Black people always just come in here and ask where it's at rather than just looking first? I kind of laughed it off and was like boom whatever because as people we did do that. I'm not even gonna lie.

Martinez: That's interesting. Okay. So he was laughing about that. You said you feel funny sometimes, see people looking at you or whatever when you enter stores, what do you think they're thinking? Why are they looking at you funny?

Subject: I guess they are trying to stereotype, which is like just look at me, get a feel for me, hear what I have to say, hear my conversations that I have with my peers, whoever's around me, with me, just to like feel me out, to see is he a bad Black guy, or is he a good Black guy, or is he okay Black guy.

Martinez: What would a bad Black guy be doing? What are they looking for in a bad Black guy?

Subject: I don't know. You can answer that question better than me. I don't know what y'all call a bad Black. Well I mean, I guess somebody who does a lot of killing, a lot of, I mean, of course they gonna be afraid of the dark skinned guy with a lot of tattoos, jewelry, probably assume he's a drug dealer.

Martinez: Okay so you're thinking they are thinking more of the violent side?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: See in my mind I was thinking, you were thinking they were watching you when you walk in the store to see if you are going to steal or not.

Subject: Oh, that too.

Martinez: Oh that too. Okay. But mostly you think they're watching you to see how aggressive you are going to be?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: If you're going to hurt them, fight them, rob them, whatever. Okay. Got you.

Subject: But then it's like, like, when, I think White people get mad at me when I speak up, when I feel like something isn't right, and even if I am right, you know, it's like, because I see White people like, White people mostly quiet when situations go down. You know they're more like, it's okay, I'm independent, whatever blah blah blah, and you know Black people, we're used to being disrespected, and we're used to being stereotyped, and all that so I mean honestly, when it comes down to being treated fair, we don't care. We'll speak up if we have to. You know.

Martinez: Because you're going to be treated unfair most of the time anyway, so you just stand up for yourselves?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Okay, in situations -

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: I was trying to put your thoughts together, and you have the belief that you're sharing the world with White people, and they would prefer not to have to do that. Do you think that that connects with when you stand up for yourself with a White person? Are they bothered by that because they're just tolerating you anyway, or are you testing their power, or I mean what is it you think they don't like about you standing up for yourself?

Subject: I think it's the fact that some like, it's, like school, with teachers, and how a teacher will treat you wrong in front of the classroom, and maybe just scream at you in front of the classroom, and you are trying to tell her that's not appropriate. You shouldn't, you know, and then when it like happens in front of the classroom it sort of like a power struggle so I think that's kind of what it is.

Martinez: Okay. Power struggle.

Subject: Yeah, like who's more dominant and stuff like that, and like, I don't even think we, as Black people, look at it that way. We just look at it as that's not fair, but when a White person hears it, it's more like what, are you trying to question my authority. You know, blah blah blah, so on and so forth.

Martinez: So, in the classroom that authority structure, where the teacher is the authority figure, and so the student is a more submissive role, so then there's the Black student and the White authority, I totally get what you're saying there and that issue. So, I want to make sure I'm understanding, that's an example of out in the world, outside of school, a Black person and a White person, regardless of age or whatever, if the Black person is

to confront the White person with a different belief, you think that the White person is upset because you're questioning their authority?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Over you as a black person? Okay, gotcha, gotcha. They are similar. That just breaks my heart. Do you believe that White people are in authority over you out in the public?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: Why?

Subject: Just because like, (breaks down)

Martinez: This is what we need to know, this is good.

Subject: It's just that like, like, you can go anywhere and like, just be welcomed with open arms, you know. It's like, it's like, generations and generations we've been fighting just for a piece, you know what I'm saying? And like, even when they read the history to me in the school and they be like, I don't understand how anybody can be so like, power, like they just want, I'm just like, man.

Martinez: I understand that I have privilege based totally on the color of my skin. I get that because this is what I do, I study race relations. I am fascinated by it. I have no understanding of why things are this way for me and different for you. And I see it as an inequity. And I see it as my life's mission to change it. I don't think it's right. That's why I do this work. That's why I try to understand it so that I can help other White people understand the perspectives that our Black friends have. So, from my study I totally get that my skin tone alone gets me privilege and then probably on top of that the fact that I'm fair skinned, blonde haired, you know, that is another level, I am really, I get that. And, then I also know that the White male is even more privileged than the female because then you've got the gender. So I do get from what I studied exactly what you're saying. Could I ever feel that, understand it at that level? No, because I don't experience it. But I know it's real and I know it's not okay. And it's my mission to change that. So, I do get what you're saying and then I can also tell you, no you tell me. Do you think it's different, your skin color is one thing, so you're a male. But say you have a Black female. What about that? Is there a difference between the Black male and the Black female and how White people perceive them?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: What? Tell me.

Subject: I think it's definitely easier for any, I mean aside from White, any other female of any ethnic group to like, survive in this world. I mean, just because like, how and when, you say when it comes down to being a White man and a White woman, you know, the White man is gonna have the power over the White woman, you know. But in being treated respectfully and being privileged, the Black woman is more privileged in America than the Black man is.

Martinez: Do you know why? Do have an opinion on why that might be?

Subject: I don't know. Maybe on the love, the White man got a thing for the Black ladies. So, I mean, slave masters used to sleep with the slave females so.

Martinez: Yes, they did.

Subject: So, maybe there something attractive about them.

Martinez: But you know what the research shows is that the White male fears that same thing from the Black man. That the Black man really likes White women. Have you ever heard that?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: What do you think about that?

Subject: I think it's true.

Martinez: Think it's true.

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: So, if we're all attracted to each other, regardless of your skin color, in that way, I mean, why are we doing this? Why are we afraid of that?

Subject: Because, okay, I have a lot of White friends and a lot of Black friends, Spanish friends, Arab friends, Asian friends. And what it is is that like okay, certain females might like White males, they might stereotype the Black guy. Oh he's Black, he hits women blah blah. I explained to one of my friends, well I don't really consider a friend, just more like, she was crying at [names school] and I was talking to her, she was like oh my boyfriend's hitting me blah blah. I was like is he Black or White? She was like White. I don't date Black guys. I was like why? She was like oh because they hit women and I had to stop her right there, as soon as she said that. You are you know I

had to get on to her case and explain to her. I just like it doesn't matter what race you are there's always going to be. And this is what I call bitch nigger-- a man any man— Black, White, Asian, Chinese, purple, yellow. If you hit a female, you a bitch nigger. And that's how I see it.

Martinez: A bitch nigger if you hit a girl any color?

Subject: Yes, any color. Because it's like, like I was telling you yesterday, I watched my mom get abused. And there was like absolutely nothing I could do. You do not imagine the pain that I felt when I watched her and it happened right in front of me. And it wasn't just like a boom boom. It was like my mom had to go to the hospital. My mom had broken ribs. She had a black eye. She had to wear glasses. She has missing teeth. Like, my mom is to me a survivor and she would never understand that. If I lost her, I would lose me. Like, I'm already losing me. But I'm, there's a little piece of her that's holding me together and if I lose the glue that's holding me together and I'm gonna just fall apart. I just, like I want world peace, too. If I had a wish, that's what I'd wish for because once we get world peace everything will be better. There would be no thing called the struggle.

Martinez: We'd all just loved who we love.

Subject: Exactly . And live how we live.

Martinez: And judge you on other things, character.

Subject: Exactly.

Martinez: Choices.

Subject: A lot of people might think I'm ignorant and stuff like that, but I don't. They say you ignorant because you use, because you say nigger and you curse and blah blah blah. I'm like I'm not Samuel L. Jackson, I'm not cursing up a storm. I'm just from time to time put in that little just to let them know the struggle is real.

Martinez: The struggle is real.

Subject: The struggle is definitely real.

Martinez: That might need to be the name of my next book. The struggle is real.

Subject: What? I would read it. I don't read books like that but if I see Margie Martinez, by Margie Martinez, I will read it.

Martinez: You're gonna read it. Okay.

Subject: I will read it. And I will suggest it to all my friends. I'll be like look son the struggle is real.

Martinez: The struggle is real. That's awesome. We could go on for hours couldn't we?

Subject: We could. There was this, my friend, I think he used to go here [states name].

Martinez: [confirmed the name]

Subject: Yeah he was a little fat White boy. And see he was explaining to me, he was like, look, there's Black people and then there's niggers. And, I was like what's the difference? He was like niggers are ignorant. Black people are black people. And, that's his exact words. And, I was like Black people is Black people, and niggers are ignorant. I get the niggers are ignorant. But what is a nigga the with an a? And, he was like still ignorant. And, I was like no it's not. What nigga with the a stands for me is - never ignorant getting goals accomplished.

Martinez: Never ignorant getting goals accomplished.

Subject: And, that was told to me by one of my favorite rappers Tupac. Cause I watch him a lot you know cause him he was just so, he was Black, but he had skinheads who was like I need your autograph. You know, the most racist person in the world, coming up to this Black nigga from the hood. It's like can I have your autograph. Your music is great. Your music touches me blah blah blah blah. And like, when I first saw that you know, I just like that interested in him. And like, and away started to mimic him but like so much as his diversity. That's why I said I'm diverse. I can fit in here. I can fit in here. I can fit in here. A.k.a. I'm that nigga. I could go anywhere like, I go to the hood, I go to the White neighborhoods, you know, I know I might get a couple looks when I'm in there but -

Martinez: But once they get to know you you're saying it would work?

Subject: Yeah.

Martinez: So when, let me ask you something because I know you have an appointment to go to. When [he] was explaining to you the difference between Black and nigger, was the nigger only Black people though, or can other races it be a nigger?

Subject: I didn't ask him that.

Martinez: Okay. When you're talking - it was only Black people, dark skin? What do you think, can White people, Asian people, Arab, be niggers?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: Not the nigga, the nigger, the bad?

Subject: Yes.

Martinez: Can any of them be the nigga?

Subject: Yeah, anybody can.

Martinez: And, let me just ask you one thing that's not on here. Would you prefer that I refer to you as Black or African-American or does it matter?

Subject: Probably Black.

Martinez: Okay.

## APPENDIX D

### Summary of District's DAEP Assignments August 2013 through February 2014

Grade	Age	Race/ Gender	SPED	Reason for assignment and (at-risk qualifiers)
1	6	BM	No	Persistent misconduct (DAEP)
1	7	BM	No	Threatened student with knife on bus (expelled to DAEP)
1	7	BM	No	Persistent misconduct (DAEP)
1	7	WM	No	Persistent misconduct (DAEP)
2	7	BM	Other health impaired	Assaulted an employee (DAEP)
2	9	BF	No	Persistent misconduct (DAEP)
4	10	BM	No	Persistent misconduct (not promoted, failed STAAR, DAEP)
5	11	BF	No	Assaulted an employee (failed STAAR, DAEP)
5	12	BM	No	Assaulted a student (DAEP)
6	11	BM	No	Persistent misconduct (DAEP)
6	12	WM	No	Weapon on bus (expelled to the DAEP)
7	13	BM	No	Persistent misconduct, inappropriate touching (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, DAEP)
7	13	BF	No	Persistent misconduct (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, not promoted, failed TAKS, DAEP)
7	14	BF	Learning disability	Persistent misbehavior, disruption, bullying, fighting (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed EOC, DAEP)
7	12	HM	No	Persistent misbehavior (DAEP)
7	13	BM	Emotionally disturbed	Persistent misbehavior (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed EOC, DAEP)
7	13	BF	No	Persistent misbehavior, disruption of learning environment, fighting (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, not promoted, failed TAKS, DAEP)
7	14	BF	No	Persistent misbehavior (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, failed EOC, expelled, DAEP)
7	14	BF	No	Transfer from JDC (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, failed EOC, expelled, DAEP)
7	14	BF	No	Under the influence of marijuana (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, failed EOC, expelled, DAEP)
7	13	BF	No	Transfer from another district's DAEP (DAEP)
8	15	HM	Learning disability	Persistent misbehavior (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, not promoted, failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)
8	15	HM	No	Possession of alcohol & drugs (failed EOC, LEP, DAEP)
8	14	HM	No	Truancy (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed EOC, DAEP)
8	15	BF	No	Transfer from JDC (not promoted, failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)
8	14	BF	No	Persistent misbehavior (failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)
8	13	WM	No	Persistent misbehavior (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed EOC, DAEP)
8	14	BM	Learning disability	Drugs (DAEP)
8	15	HM	No	Truancy (failed EOC, LEP, DAEP)
8	14	WM	No	Possession of marijuana (DAEP)
8	14	WF	Emotionally disturbed, other health impaired	Persistent misbehavior (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)

Grade	Age	Race/ Gender	SPED	Reason for assignment and (at-risk qualifiers)
8	14	WF	Emotionally disturbed, other health impaired	Persistent misbehavior (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)
8	13	BM	Other health impaired	Persistent misbehavior (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, failed, EOC, DAEP)
8	14	BM	No	Possession of drugs (DAEP)
8	13	HM	No	Possession of drugs (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)
8	15	BM	Learning disability	Theft (DAEP)
8	14	WF	Emotionally disturbed, other health impaired	Persistent misbehavior (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)
8	15	BF	No	Transition from JDC (not promoted, failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)
9	16	WM	No	Persistent misconduct (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, not promoted, DAEP)
9	14	WF	No	Possession/influence of drugs (DAEP)
9	15	WM	No	Persistent misconduct, removal from ISS (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, DAEP)
9	16	WF	No	Under the influence of a controlled substance (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)
9	14	BF	No	Possession/influence of drugs (DAEP)
9	18	HM	No	Persistent misconduct ( failed EOC, DAEP)
9	16	HM	No	Persistent misbehavior (failed EOC, not promoted, DAEP)
9	14	HM	Learning disability	Insubordination (failed TAKS, failed EOC, LEP, DAEP)
9	17	HM	No	Under the influence of marijuana (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)
9	15	HM	No	Persistent misconduct (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, DAEP)
9	16	BM	No	Theft (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, DAEP)
9	16	HM	No	Possession of marijuana & over the counter drugs (failed TAKS, DAEP)
9	15	WF	No	Transition from JDC (not promoted, failed TAKS, probation, DAEP)
9	14	BF	No	Expelled from private school (DAEP)
9	14	BM	No	Transition from JDC (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)
9	15	HM	No	Persistent misconduct (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, DAEP)
9	16	HM	No	Removal from ISS (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, LEP, DAEP)
9	15	HM	No	Transition from JDC (failed TAKS, LEP, DAEP)
9	15	WF	No	Truancy (failed EOC, DAEP)
9	14	HF	No	Possession of alcohol (DAEP)
9	15	BM	Intellectually disabled	Transition from JDC (failed TAKS, DAEP)
9	17	BF	No	Assault against employee (DAEP)

Grade	Age	Race/ Gender	SPED	Reason for assignment and (at-risk qualifiers)
9	16	WM	Learning disability	Mandatory court supervision (failed TAKS, expelled, DAEP)
9	17	BM	No	Unruly behavior (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, DAEP)
9	16	BM	No	Transferred from another district's DAEP (DAEP)
9	16	WF	Yes	Truancy, persistent acts of misconduct (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed EOC, DAEP)
9	15	HF	No	Truancy, persistent acts of misconduct (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, DAEP)
9	15	HF	No	Theft (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, DAEP)
10	15	HM	No	Persistent misconduct (DAEP)
10	16	BM	No	Persistent misconduct, removal from ISS (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed EOC, DAEP)
10	16	WF	No	Persistent misconduct (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, DAEP)
10	16	BM	No	Persistent misbehavior (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)
10	16	BF	Emotionally disturbed, learning disability	Insubordination, cursing school personnel (failed TAKS, DAEP)
10	16	WM	No	Possession of drugs (not promoted, DAEP)
10	16	BM	No	Criminal mischief (failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)
10	15	BM	Other health impaired	Theft (failed EOC, DAEP)
10	17	BM	No	Persistent misconduct (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed EOC, DAEP)
10	17	BM	No	Title 5 felony (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed EOC, DAEP)
10	15	BM	Emotionally disturbed	Terroristic threat (failed TAKS, failed EOC, DAEP)
10	18	WM	No	Persistent misconduct (failed TAKS, probation, DAEP)
10	16	WM	Learning disability	Truancy (failed TAKS, probation, DAEP)
10	18	BM	No	Drug policy violation (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed EOC, DAEP)
10	15	BM	No	Drug policy violation (failed TAKS, DAEP)
10	16	HM	No	Transition from JDC (DAEP)
10	17	HM	No	Transferred from another school district's DAEP (not promoted, DAEP)
10	17	HM	No	Truancy (not promoted, DAEP)
10	17	BM	No	Transition from JDC (non-mastery of two or more subjects, failed EOC, DAEP)
10	15	HM	No	Continued insubordination (DAEP)
10	15	HM	No	Persistent misconduct in ISS (DAEP)
10	17	BM	No	Violation of code of conduct (failed EOC, DAEP)
10	16	BM	Emotionally disturbed, other health impaired	Possession and under the influence of marijuana (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, DAEP)

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Race/ Gender</b>	<b>SPED</b>	<b>Reason for assignment and (at-risk qualifiers)</b>
10	16	BF	Learning disability	Assault against another student, disruption of school setting (not promoted, failed TAKS, failed EOC)
10	16	BM	No	Transition from JDC (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, not promoted, failed EOC, expelled)
10	16	BM	Other health impaired, Learning disability	Possession of alcohol (not promoted, failed EOC, DAEP)
10	16	BM	No	Theft, computer misuse (not promoted, failed EOC, DAEP)
10	17	BM	No	Represent substance as a drug, provocation of a fight (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, DAEP)
11	17	WM	No	Transferred from another district's DAEP (DAEP)
11	17	WM	No	Truancy (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed EOC, DAEP)
11	18	WM	Learning disability	Truancy (DAEP)
11	17	BF	No	Failure to comply with lawful directive (DAEP)
11	17	BM	No	Smoking marijuana on the bus (failed EOC, DEAP)
12	18	BM	Other health impaired, Learning disability	Assault against employee (not promoted, DAEP)
12	18	BM	No	Fighting, profanity (non-mastery of 2 or more subjects, failed EOC, DAEP)
12	17	BF	Emotionally disturbed	Assault (DAEP)
12	19	HF	No	Threat against an administrator (not promoted, failed TAKS, DAEP)
12	17	WM	No	Possession of alcohol in car (DAEP)
12	17	WF	No	Possession of drugs (DAEP)