

2017

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## Recommended Citation

Miller, Randy Rakeem Sr. (2017) "Exclusionary Discipline In New Jersey: The Relationship Between Black Teachers And Black Students," *Journal of Educational Controversy*: Vol. 12 : No. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://cedar.wvu.edu/jec/vol12/iss1/7>

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# Exclusionary Discipline In New Jersey: The Relationship Between Black Teachers And Black Students

## **Cover Page Footnote**

Thank you to Autumn Miller, my wife, for her consistent love, encouragement, and support. Thank you to Stephen Danley for his guidance and advising through this process. All remaining errors are my own.

## **Exclusionary Discipline in New Jersey: The Relationship between African-American Teachers and African- American Students**

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### **Abstract**

There are a host of variables that affect the disciplinary outcomes of African-American students, for example, poverty rates and students with special needs. The variables of interest here are African-American teachers and/or teachers who have identified themselves on record as African-American and gender of those same race teachers. Race and gender impact both how students are instructed and disciplined. It is the intention of this paper to contribute to the empirical scholarship on the impact teacher race has on the education of Black students in New Jersey Public Schools. More specifically, this paper will investigate the relationship between Black public school teachers and Black public school students who've received a suspension as a disciplinary consequence in New Jersey public schools. A possible relationship between African-American teachers and suspension referrals of African-American students can provide educational practitioners with insight for the necessity of hiring more African American teachers to meet the various challenges of school districts as it relates to the relationship between the growing number of students of color and a primarily White teaching workforce.

### **1. Introduction**

Throughout the United States, Black students are more likely to be removed from classrooms for what teachers deem poor conduct (Lindsay & Hart, 2016): as early as pre-school, Black children are suspended from school at higher rates (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2016). According the U.S. Department of Education, Black students in grades kindergarten through twelve (K-12) are 3.8 times as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions as white students. 6% of all K-12 students received one or more out-of-school suspensions. Of the percentage of all K-12 students received one or more out-of-school suspensions, 18% of those students were Black males and 10% were Black females. (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2016). According to the U.S. Department of Education, Black students are expelled from schools at disproportionately higher rates: Black students are 1.9 times as likely to be expelled

from school without educational services as white students.<sup>1</sup> Latino and Asian students are not disproportionately expelled without educational services from schools (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2016).<sup>2</sup> These disparities have led to widespread concern about a potential “school-to-prison pipeline,” in which detentions, suspensions, and expulsions ultimately lead to the overrepresentation of people of color in the nation’s prisons (Lindsay & Hart, 2016). According to a UCLA Center for Civil Rights Remedies study, the fiscal penalties incurred by taxpayers associated with the effects of the school-to-prison pipeline are estimated to be \$35 billion.<sup>3</sup>

## **2. Review of the Literature**

Exclusionary discipline is utilized in schools as a method to correct student misbehavior. Of concern is the link between exclusionary discipline and a variety of unfavorable student outcomes (e.g., Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Losen & Skiba, 2010; McLoughlin & Noltemeyer, 2010; Rausch & Skiba, 2004). Of note is the demographics of the teacher population versus the student population. America’s public school students grow more and more diverse along racial/ethnic lines. The same is not true for the teaching population. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the collective majority of minority schoolchildren was projected to be 50.3% for the 2014-2015 school year, driven largely by dramatic growth in the Latino population and a decline in the white population. Black growth has been mostly flat (Maxwell, 2014). Today, of the more than 6 million teachers in the United States, nearly 80 percent are White and 80 percent are women – 62% of all teachers are White and female (Toldson, 2012). In schools where minority students are in the majority, two-thirds of the teachers are White (Saffold & Longwell-Grice, 2007). Previously conducted research identified factors that contribute to the disproportionality of exclusionary discipline for Black students. Variables such as administrator philosophy, school setting, school typology, and poverty, have all been identified as factors that impact the use and overuse of exclusionary discipline (McLoughlin & Noltemeyer, 2010). Additionally, a hypothesis to explain the disproportionate use of exclusionary

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<sup>1</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, Black male students represent 8% of all students, but 19% of students expelled without educational services; Black female students represent 8% of all students, but 9% of students expelled without educational services.

<sup>2</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, Latino students represent 25% of all students, but 15% of students expelled without educational services. Asian students represent 5% of all students, but 1% of students expelled without educational services

<sup>3</sup> According to the authors of the study, people without a high school diploma earn less, have more health problems, and are more likely to get into trouble with the law meaning, less tax revenue and higher health care and criminal justice costs for all citizens.

discipline for Black students is that students of color may learn and exhibit behavioral styles so different from mainstream expectations in school settings as to put them at risk for increased disciplinary contact (Skiba, et al., 2011). However, investigations of race, discipline, and student behavior, have consistently failed to produce evidence of differences in either the frequency or intensity of Black students' school behavior sufficient to account for differences in rates of school discipline (Skiba, et al., 2011). With a nationwide teaching force that is predominately White and female (Toldson, 2012), the possibility of cultural mismatch or racial stereotyping as contributing factors in disproportionate office referral cannot be discounted or ignored (Skiba, et al., 2011).

Teacher perception of student behavior is a factor in school discipline, which is a reason cultural mismatch cannot be ignored. Evidence suggest that White teachers struggle to understand the role that race plays in their interactions with students of color (Gere, Buehler, Dallavis, & Haviland, 2009). White teachers often espouse a color-blind approach to teaching, failing to recognize the long-term effects of oppression and racism in the United States on student performance (Howard, 2010; Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011).<sup>4</sup> Without awareness of the history of oppression and institutional racism, White teachers may adopt a belief in meritocracy, that success is based solely on hard work (Howard, 2010). For example, the unfamiliarity of White teachers with the interactional patterns that characterize many Black males may cause these teachers to interpret impassioned or emotive interactions as combative or argumentative (Townsend, 2000). In an urban elementary school, a process was documented which indicated that racial stereotypes may contribute to higher rates of school punishment for young Black males (Ferguson, 2001). Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest found that students who engaged in a "stroll" style of walking, more often associated with Black movement style, were more likely to be judged by teachers as being more aggressive or lower achieving academically, whether the student was Black or White. The makeup of the student body also plays a role: regardless of levels of misbehavior and delinquency, schools with higher Black enrollment have been found to be more likely to use higher rates of exclusionary discipline, court action, and zero tolerance policies, and to use fewer mild disciplinary practices (Payne & Welch, 2010; Welch & Payne, 2010).

Schools with more diverse and representative teaching forces have been found to exhibit lower rates of racial disparity in school discipline (McLoughlin & Noltemeyer, 2010). Numerous studies have shown that Black and Latino students are less likely to receive exclusionary discipline in schools with higher

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<sup>4</sup> Color-blindness is defined as a "belief that one should treat all persons equally, without regard to their race" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

concentrations of Black and Latino teachers (Lindsay & Hart, 2016). Black teachers' culturally relevant pedagogies have been associated with approaches to discipline that reflect insight into Black culture and culturally rooted modes of care for Black children (Brockenbrough, 2015). Monroe (2009) found that Black teachers, unlike their White counterparts, enacted disciplinary styles modeled by their own Black family members, and Monroe and Obidah (2004) found that Black teachers used culturally familiar forms of humor and displays of emotion to manage student behavior. Both studies underscored the culturally mediated nature of Black teachers' disciplinary styles. In gendered analyses of culturally relevant pedagogy, Dixson (2003) and Irvine have described the "other mothering" pedagogical modes through which Black women teachers express care and establish discipline for Black students, and Lynn (2006) has characterized one Black male teacher's culturally relevant pedagogy as an "other fathering" mix of "tough love, discipline, and caring" for Black students.

According to Wright, when a Black student has a Black teacher, that teacher is much, much less likely to see behavioral problems than when the same Black student has a White teacher. Wright shows that the more times a Black student is matched with a Black teacher, the less likely that student is to be suspended, estimating that if the exposure of Black students to Black teachers were doubled, the Black-White suspension gap would fall by half (Startz, 2016). Scholars have argued that positive student-teacher race matching effects may be explained in part by students having more favorable perceptions of teachers of color. Teachers of color in particular may be perceived more favorably by students of color because they can serve as role models and are particularly sensitive to the cultural needs of their students (Cherng, 2016). Cherng findings suggested that Black and Latino students preferred teachers who looked like them because Black and Latino educators better understood the challenges that come with being a racial minority; the same student teacher connection is also said to be linked to teacher perception and expectations of students (Kenney, 2016).

In a recent study, Lindsay and Hart (2016) found that students were less likely to face exclusionary discipline when taught by a teacher who looked like them. Lindsay and Hart looked at teacher demographic and student discipline data for North Carolina elementary school students from 2008 to 2013. Included were certain identifiers that allowed them to match a student's discipline records with the race of the classroom teachers, allowing them to compare the discipline records of individual students as they progressed throughout elementary school (Klein, 2016). Overall, Lindsay and Hart found that students matched to a same-race teacher were about 1 percentage point less likely to be expelled, suspended, or assigned detention than students being taught by a different-race teacher (Blad,

2016). Lindsay and Hart also isolated Black and White teachers and students according to gender. They found that both Black male and female students, when isolated according to gender, were less likely to face exclusionary discipline when being taught by a Black teacher versus a White teacher, and even less likely if matched with a Black teacher of the same gender. According to the study, both Black and White students experienced less exclusionary discipline when taught by a Black teacher versus a White teacher. Black female teachers referred all students in the study to exclusionary discipline less than any other category of teachers, with the exception of Black male students when taught by a Black male teacher.

These results concerning Black male and female teachers were statistically significant. The impact of having a same-race teacher on Black students' discipline rates is consistently negative across all of the outcomes examined, including detention, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and the overall number of disciplinary incidents; for each outcome, the effect tends to be larger for Black boys than for Black girls (Lindsay & Hart, 2016).

### **3. Purpose and Impetus**

The purpose of this study is to establish whether a strong association can be found between the percentage of Black teachers and the percentage of Black students within a school district referred to exclusionary discipline in the state of New Jersey. Specifically, this study will test whether having more Black teachers in a school district lowers the exclusionary discipline experienced by Black students within that school district. The foundation for conducting this investigation is the Lindsay and Hart North Carolina study. The reason for using New Jersey public schools for this study is the lack of research conducted on Black teachers, Black students, and exclusionary discipline in New Jersey. Lindsay and Hart focused on North Carolina because the state reflected the current teacher workforce trends nationally. In North Carolina, the number of Black or Latino teachers declined from 16 to 15 percent, while the percentage of Black or Latino students rose from 37 to 41 percent from 2001 to 2013 (Lindsay & Hart, 2016). According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the amount of Black and Latino teachers rose from 11.2 to 12.7 percent and the percentage of Black students and Latino students rose from 33 to 39 percent from 2000 to 2012. The percentage of Black teachers declined in New Jersey from 8.5% to 6.4% from 2000 to 2016. The percentage of Black students declined in New Jersey from 18.1% to 15.7% from 2000 to 2016.

The Lindsay and Hart study analyzed teacher and student demographics and discipline data from North Carolina elementary schools to examine whether being matched to a same-race teacher affects the rate at which students received

detentions, are suspended, or are expelled. The data followed individual students over several years. Lindsay and Hart were able to compare disciplinary outcomes of students in years when they had a same-race teacher and in years when they did not (Lindsay & Hart, 2016). Lindsay and Hart found consistent evidence that North Carolina students are less likely to be removed from school as punishment when they and their teachers are the same race. This effect is driven almost entirely by Black students, especially Black male students, who are markedly less likely to be subjected to exclusionary discipline when taught by Black teachers (Lindsay & Hart, 2016). This study will attempt to find a similar result in New Jersey public schools with a focus on Black students. This study will use New Jersey school district data on discipline and teacher population for Black students and teachers during the 2013-2014 school year.

This study can serve as a compliment to the North Carolina study. While both studies look for the same relationship, each has different paths to reach the same destination. Lindsay and Hart took a wide micro-level approach, focusing on data over the course of five years (2008-2013) from a subset of grade levels (elementary), and focusing on student and teacher relationships in the classroom. This study will take a narrow macro-level approach, focusing on district wide data from one school year (2013-2014) in all analysis. Also, while there are numerous studies that look at disproportionality in school discipline where Blacks are concerned, some studies investigate using national data (e.g. Farmer, 1999; Skiba, et al., 2011; Wright, 2015), while others examine individual or a grouping of schools that fit a specific school typology profile (e.g. Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; McLoughlin & Noltemeyer, 2010; Lindsay & Hart, 2016). This study will examine school districts of each typology throughout an entire state using state data gathered from both state and national databases. The approach of this study, and its findings, can serve as the foundation for a more expansive study, looking at the same observations and using the same data over a period of years.

#### **4. Methods**

##### **Data**

The desire of this study is to test for a strong relationship. To achieve that end, quantitative data was used to begin to qualify the relationship between Black teachers and Black students who received exclusionary discipline as a punishment. Data for this study came from two main sources: (1) the 2013-14 Civil Rights Data Collection and (2) the New Jersey Department of Education.

The 2013-14 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) is a survey of all public schools and school districts in the United States (U.S. Department of Education



Office of Civil Rights, 2016).<sup>5</sup> While the CRDC measures a number of student data points, the focus of this study will be the CRDC's data on school discipline: other variables gathered from CRDC's data will serve as controls when examining the relationship between Black teachers and Black students who receive exclusionary discipline. The CRDC's data on school discipline provides information that answers the following question: compared to overall enrollment, what is the race/ethnicity of students receiving in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, or expulsions? Due to the underwhelming reporting of student expulsions by the vast majority of New Jersey public school districts, the metrics of use in this study are in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions. Of focus in those metrics are the percentages of Black students in New Jersey who received in-school suspensions (BLKISS) and Black students in New Jersey who received out-of-school suspensions (BLKOSS). Other metrics used from the CRDC was (1) the percent population of Black students within a school district (BLKPOP), (2) the percentage of students in a school district who receive free or reduced lunch (FRPL), (3) the percentage of Black students who are chronically absent within a school district (BLKCA), (4) the percentage of first-year teachers within a school district (FIRYR), (5) the percentage of students with either an IEP or 504 plan within a school district (DIS), and the percentage of Black students who are enrolled in a school district's gifted and talented program.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) provides data about New Jersey's public and charter schools. NJDOE data reports are extensive.<sup>6</sup> The NJDOE requires all school districts to provide statistics on the individuals within their districts. The NJDOE then disaggregates the data according to race/ethnicity and gender. The focus of this study will be the NJDOE's data on the percentage of full-time Black classroom teachers; male (BLKMAN), female (BLKFEM), and total (BLKTEA). Another metric used from the NJDOE was taken from the NJ School Performance Report<sup>7</sup> data set: the percentage of students to one teacher within a school district (RATIO).

## **Samples and Methods**

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<sup>5</sup> "The purpose of the CRDC is to obtain data related to the obligation of public school districts and of elementary and secondary schools to provide equal educational opportunity. For more information about the CRDC, please visit <http://crdc.ed.gov>" (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> For more information, see <http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/fact.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> The New Jersey Department of Education School Performance Reports can be found at <https://homerom5.doe.state.nj.us/pr/>.

Not all New Jersey school districts reported information to the CRDC regarding their suspension data: some schools offered statistics on in-school suspension, out-of-school suspensions, both, or neither. I sought to select school districts that reported both in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension statistics to the CRDC, whether or not Black students received either recourse of exclusionary discipline. Of the New Jersey school districts<sup>8</sup> who reported discipline data to the CRDC, I randomly sampled over 50% of districts who reported school discipline (percentage of students who received both in-school and out-of-school suspensions) data to the CRDC. Both BLKISS and BLKOSS served as the dependent variables in a series of regression tests.<sup>9</sup> The following metrics (BLKMAN, BLKFEM and BLKTEA) each served as independent variables in a series of regressions tests. In all, 6 individual regressions test were conducted to find if there was a strong association between Black teachers and Black students who received exclusion discipline.

For each regression test, I controlled for the following variables: BLKPOP, FRPL, BLKCA, FIRYR, RATIO, DIS and BLKGT. BLKPOP and FRPL are used because both high populations of Black students within a school and the levels of poverty in a school have an impact on the exclusionary discipline imparted on Black students (Skiba, et al., 2011; Skiba & Williams, 2014). Chronic absenteeism includes all absences, consecutive or not, excused or not, as they relate to a student's overall attendance (Henderson, Hill, & Norton, 2014). The National Center for Children in Poverty's defines chronic absenteeism as a particular student missing 10% or more of school days, which equals about a month, within a 180-day academic year (Henderson, Hill, & Norton, 2014). A recent study estimates as many as 7.5 million students nationally are chronically absent each year (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Chronic absenteeism is also associated with poverty. Children living in poverty are 25% more likely to miss three or more days of school per month compared to more students from higher economic backgrounds (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). Lower-income and students of color are at a greater risk for health problems and subsequent absenteeism (Henderson, Hill, & Norton, 2014). The disciplinary response to absenteeism too often includes loss of

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<sup>8</sup> According the NJDOE, the total number of public school districts in New Jersey, as of the 2015-2016 school year, are 599 (only 586 school districts are operating districts). This number does not include charter schools (there are 89 charter school district operating in New Jersey). Information on the total number of public school districts in New Jersey, as of 2013-2014 school year (the year data was collected for the sample), is not available. It is reasonably believed that the 2013-2014 number of districts do not stray far from the 2015-2016 number of districts. For more information, see <http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/fact.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> The randomly sampled schools who had both BLKISS and BLKOSS data also had data for all other metrics used during regressions tests.

course credits, detention, and suspension (National Forum on Education Statistics, 2009).

First year teachers face various challenge when they enter the classroom. 85% of teachers in New Jersey are White: it is plausible to assert that higher percentages of first year teachers entering New jersey classrooms will be White. They must negotiate a plethora of tasks simultaneously, even as they are acquiring the skills necessary to perform those tasks. Among these discreet challenges, first-year teachers regularly cite difficulties related to classroom management as the most trying aspect of teaching (Smart & Igo, 2010). Class size impacts disciplinary measures as well. Students display less disruptive behavior in small classes, and teachers spend less time on discipline, leaving more time for instruction. Specifically, teachers in smaller classes can diagnose and track student learning and differentiate instruction in response to student needs (National Council of Teachers of English, 2014). Students with disabilities face challenges with respect to being disciplined. According to the CRDC, students with disabilities in grades K-12 are disproportionately suspended from school. Black students who are in gifted and talented programs benefit. Teachers also benefit, with the ability to focus on students who remain after gifted students are pulled out for their program. Students appropriately placed into gifted programs are much less disruptive in the classroom as their minds remain occupied (Rochester Sage Supporting Advanced and Gifted Education, 2016). All of these metrics selected as variables, when controlled, will help isolate if a relationship exists between Black teachers and Black students receiving exclusionary discipline.

## **5. Results and Discussion**

Regression results are located in tables one through six. Tables one through three focus on the relationship of exclusionary discipline concerning in-school suspension and Black teachers, gender isolated and gender combined for teachers. Tables four through six focus on the same relationship concerning out-of-school suspensions. Like tables one through three, regression results are both gender isolated and gender combined. When we control all the other variables in the study, we see that having fewer Black teachers in a school district had a negative impact on the exclusionary discipline of Black students: Black students faced more exclusionary discipline in New Jersey school districts. All six regression tests conducted showed a relationship between Black teachers and the exclusionary discipline faced by Black students. Five of the six regression tests showed a relationship of statistical significance. All six tests that show that when a school district has fewer Black teachers, Black students faced more exclusionary discipline

within that school district.

In each of the regressions, there is a relationship of statistical significance: the higher the Black student population within a school district, the more Black students face exclusionary discipline, in the forms of in-school and out-of-school suspension. The literature explains why.<sup>10</sup> Other than those two variables, no other variables used in the regression analysis show a statistical relationship of any kind. The controlled variables show that the relationship between both in-school and out-of-school suspensions and BLKTEA, BLKMAN, & BLKFEM, are minimally impacted by other factors that do impact Black students receiving exclusionary discipline. They also indicate that the percentage of Black teachers has the greatest impact on the suspensions, or lack thereof, of Black students, if you exclude the Black student population as a variable.

When isolating Black students who faced in school suspensions within a school district, each regressions test shows that Black students face more exclusionary discipline where there are fewer Black teachers within a school district, whether gender isolated or not. However, it should be noted that the significance is stronger for Black women when compared to Black men. Black teachers, collectively, and Black women teachers, when isolated showed a strong association that is statistically significant. A study conducted by Ladson-Billings and Henry (1991) may offer an explanation for the strong associations connected to Black female teachers. Ladson-Billings and Henry examined the culturally relevant practices of Afro-Canadian and African American teachers, honored teachers as key informants on the educational success of Black children, emphasized the importance of relationships between teachers, Black parents, and students, and argued that further research on Black teachers can illuminate sound pedagogy beneficial for students across schooling contexts (Dixson & Dings, 2008). While Black female teachers only represent 7.7% of the teacher population (Toldson, 2012), retaining Black female teachers is supported by their ability to teach against the grain (Cochran-Smith, 1991), to reform teaching through the development of critical perspectives of larger historical, social, political, and economic structures that impact everyday school practices and teaching (Farinde, Allen, & Lewis, 2016).

The relationship nor significance level is as strong for Black men when compared to the remaining in-school suspension regression result. Nevertheless, the results show that fewer Black male teachers had a negative impact on the exclusionary discipline of Black students. As implied by its delineation, an in-school suspension is a consequence that is less reprehensible than an out-of-school

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<sup>10</sup> See Payne & Welch, 2010; Welch & Payne 2010.

suspension. An infraction that warrants an in-school suspension does not remove the student from the school building as would an infraction that would demand an out-of-school suspension. Thus, an in-school suspension would be given for a lesser infraction compared to an out-of-school suspension. While the results don't make a direct comparison with the impact of White teachers and Latino teachers concerning Black exclusionary discipline, the results can be plausibly explained by research provided in the literature review. School districts with fewer Black teachers are likely to have fewer teachers who implement the cultural pedagogy that responds differently to Black student behaviors in the classroom. Raising hands or talking in turns is an expectation in the Anglo-Saxon culture; in contrast, in the Black or Latino culture shouting out or speaking out of turn is culturally acceptable (James, 2013). In an Anglo-Saxon cultured classroom, this could be considered disruptive and inappropriate behavior and could result in being removed from the classroom (James, 2013).

When isolating Black students who faced out-of-school suspensions within a school district, each regressions test shows something different as it relates to significance. However, all relationships were evident. Blacks students experienced more exclusionary discipline in the form of out-of-school suspension in school districts where there were fewer in Black teachers within that district. The relationship is stronger when Black teachers were combined and strongest where Black women are isolated—the relationships for Black women teachers and Black teachers as a whole are statistically significant. However, while there is not a relationship of statistical significance between a lack of Black male teachers within a school district and Black students within a school district, a relationship still exists. As with the results concerning in-school suspensions, the higher the population of Black students in a district, the more exclusionary discipline Black students experience in the form of out-of-school suspensions within a school district.

Whereas in-school suspension indicates the consequence in which students are to remain in a specific room for the school day as a result of negative behaviors in school or the classroom, an out-of-school suspension refers to the consequence that removes students from the school building for a period of time (James, 2013). Behaviors that warrant an out-of-school suspension are more severe and disruptive than those that merit an in-school suspension. While Black teachers' disciplinary approaches were attributed to culturally relevant pedagogies that show an understanding of Black culture and care for Black youth, research has shown that Black male teachers have used a range of pedagogical performance, including a discipline –intensive “enforcer style” to less rigid alternatives (Brockenbrough, 2015). The lack of a statistical significance in the relationship between Black male

teachers and the out-of-school suspension of Black students warrants more study. However, when compared to the role of Black female teachers as expressed in the literature, this research could be used to explain why the regression results showed no statistical significance despite there being a relationship.

## **6. Limitations**

Unlike the North Carolina study, this study did not draw from access to student detention percentages disaggregated by race/ethnicity: such data was not included in the CRDC's dataset. Also, unlike the North Carolina study, this study did not have access to the unique subsets of data that Lindsay and Hart did to examine student discipline history according to the race of their teachers. Since 2008, North Carolina has collected detailed disciplinary records for all public-school students, including the type of offense and disciplinary consequence (Lindsay & Hart, 2016). In addition, the state collects demographic data from both students and teachers, and provides identifiers that allow researchers to link students to their classroom teachers (Lindsay & Hart, 2016). The CRDC nor the NJDOE collects such data regarding student discipline.

This study could not measure the relationship between Black teachers and Black students expelled from school districts. The majority of school districts used in the study did not report student expulsion statistics to the CRDC. Some school districts did report expulsion data to the department of education. However, the underwhelming number that did, if included in the dataset for this study, would not have had enough observations to provide a genuine measurement to help with research. The NJDOE allows for submitted data to be suppressed from public access to protect the confidentiality of students. Data suppression is not limited to disciplinary data. All data gathered for this study, data gathered from the CRDC and the NJDOE, was gathered through means of public access.

Due to the method of data accumulation by the NJDOE, I did not have access to the disaggregate population of teachers by race/ethnicity and gender at each individual school surveyed in the study. NJDOE data on teacher populations is limited to district level information only. The CRDC allows viewers to research school discipline, and all their provided data, at both the district and individual school level. While the NJDOE does provide individual school level data, that data is limited to the school performance reports. NJDOE school performance reports offer data at both the district and individual school level. I only used one metric from the school performance reports as a controlled variable: student to teacher ratio (RATIO).

Concerning the statistical approach, there were some variables that could not be tested. Controlled data did not include any student achievement metrics. Student achievement metrics could have been applied to the dataset for this study. However, while the CRDC does include information within its data about early learning and college and career readiness pathways, it does not offer data on student achievement in the way of test scores. The NJDOE offers such data, but not at the district level, only at the individual school level. This study looks at districtwide data only. In addition, New Jersey school districts, as with school districts nationwide, are not universally K-12 districts. Some are, while others are K-5, K-6, 6-8, K-8, or 9-12 districts. To find a metric universal to New Jersey, they would have lowered the sample size of districts.

There were no such variables available to control for academic achievement; i.e. average grade point average (GPA) of Black students in a district, end of year (EOY) grade average according to content area, standardized proficiency score, etc. Also, there were no such variables available to control for parental involvement of Black parents; i.e. visits to school, parent-teacher conference attendance, PTA meeting attendance, etc. Last, there were no variables available for the percentage of Blacks who were suspended according to marking period. Any of these could threaten to validity of the findings. Any of the above mentioned prospective variables, when added to the statistical analysis, could shift the relationship of the results from a Black teacher relationship with Black students' exclusionary discipline to a relationship focused on student performance, parental involvement, or ancillary factors, i.e. time of year and/or holidays per marking period. A relationship found between any of these variables and the exclusionary discipline of Black students could potentially call into question the impact Black teachers have on the disciplining of Black students and disprove the hypothesis of this study.

Lastly, more school districts could have been used for this study. While the percentage of observations for both BLKISS and BLKOSS hover above 60% of New Jersey public school districts, all available school districts who submitted exclusionary discipline data on both in-school and out-of-school suspensions were not used in the study. While the absence of those school districts does not detract from the data results, the presence of those schools would add to the concreteness of the results found by the study.

## **7. Summary & Recommendations**

It is the intention of this investigation to contribute to the empirical scholarship on the impact same teacher race has on the public-school-administered

discipline of Black students in New Jersey Public Schools. The results of the data provide information that can offer insight into ways to strategically address the disproportionate amount of Black students who receive exclusionary discipline as punishment, as well as how to build the foundation for a more in-depth study using the CRDC and NJDOE data for this study by replicating and developing the investigation model. Another investigation into New Jersey school districts, or an investigation like this one, should isolate gender to explore the specific relationship between male and/or female Black teachers and Black students who receive exclusionary discipline as a punishment. Also, another investigation should replicate the same dataset from previous years using the CRDC and NJDOE data for the school years ending in 2012 and 2010 to be compared with the data compiled in this study (school year ending 2014).<sup>11</sup>

The results of this investigation lead to questions that can also serve as the impetus for a new study. One such question concerns the results of a non-statistically significant relationship between Black male teachers and Black students who received exclusionary discipline as a punishment. There was a statistically significant relationship for Black female teachers and Black teachers total: a logical question would be, why not for Black male teachers in New Jersey? There is research that contradicts this finding (Lindsay & Hart, 2016). Another question worth exploring further has to do with the impact of Black female teachers on exclusionary discipline reporting and their discipline strategies where Black students are concerned.

Another question concerns poverty's role in the over-representation of Black students who receive exclusionary discipline. Students who qualify for free lunch, according to New Jersey income guidelines,<sup>12</sup> are students whose family has an income no more than 23% above the U.S. poverty guidelines.<sup>13</sup> Students who qualify for reduced lunch, according to New Jersey income guidelines, are students whose family has an income no more than 46% above the U.S. poverty guidelines. Studies have found that low-income students are consistently overrepresented in the use of out-of-school suspension (Brantlinger, 1991; Noltemeyer & McLoughlin, 2010; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). However, when FRPL is controlled during each regressions test, the

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<sup>11</sup> The CRDC only has data for the years 2009-2010, 2011-2012 and 2013-2014. They will release data for 2015-2016 upon their next reporting.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/fn/pdf/form127.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> U.S. poverty guideline used to calculate students who qualify for free or reduced lunch in New Jersey is according to the lower 48 states. Alaska and Hawaii have their own poverty guidelines. For more information, see [http://familiesusa.org/sites/default/files/product\\_documents/federal-register-poverty-limits.pdf](http://familiesusa.org/sites/default/files/product_documents/federal-register-poverty-limits.pdf).



association with Black students who received exclusionary discipline was weak and not statistically significant. With that result, it is fair to question the role poverty plays within the exclusionary discipline punishment of Black students.

The results of this study indicate that there is a relationship of statistical significance between Black students receiving exclusionary discipline and Black teachers; in particular, Black female teachers. I propose that the existing evidence of disproportionate school discipline according to race and the evidence gathered from this study demand that school districts immediately move to remedy the disproportionate school discipline of Black students. Based on these findings, the following are brief recommendations to move forward:

- School districts should hire more Black teachers.
- School district leadership should seek out their Black teachers, specifically Black female teachers, for their classroom and student management style and tactics they employ with their Black students that account for the reduced numbers of students referred for exclusionary discipline.
- School districts should engage current faculty in cultural competency training to help teachers, specifically White teachers, understand the role that race plays in their relations with Black students, and provide guidance as to how to confront racial issues that arise in the classroom (Peters, Margolin, Fragnoli, & Bloom, 2016).
- School districts should begin collecting more detailed school discipline data at the school level—reported by faculty and the administrator(s) in charge of discipline, at least on a monthly basis, to (1) gain an awareness of discipline referral and punishing tendencies and to (2) develop culturally responsive policies aimed at creating restorative practices.

All students are deserving of access to a quality education. To provide a student with a quality education requires the collective efforts of educators and educator support staff to put the student first, above presuppositions and implicit biases. Black students are not assured access to a quality education when they receive greater access to exclusionary discipline. Race and its impact in the classroom among teachers and students must be acknowledged, taught, and understood. For the disproportionate representation of Blacks in school district suspension statistics to be reduced, or even prevented, leadership from all levels (school, district and state) must dedicate their efforts to changing current discipline patterns within schools in order to guarantee that the institution of the public school provides all of its students, regardless of race/ethnicity, access to a quality education.

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TABLE 1

*Means and Proportions on All Variables Used in Analysis*

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
BLKPOP	369	11.41355	14.13636	.5	90.7
FRPL	369	30.02566	23.78744	0	95.5
BLKCA	369	1.970732	5.678785	0	91
FIRYR	369	5.389973	3.710426	0	22.7
RATIO	369	14.78943	24.86489	4.3	415
DIS	369	18.94743	10.5964	0	100.8
BLKGT	369	5.637669	11.11203	0	84.3
BLKISS	350	22.91286	22.46258	0	100
BLKOSS	362	23.69945	22.931	0	100
BLKTEA	369	2.866125	6.326911	0	58.3
BLKMAN	369	.7802168	1.714188	0	13.1
BLKFEM	368	2.083696	4.811108	0	45.8

TABLE 2

*Regression Tests: Dependent and Independent Variables Tested*

	<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Independent Variable</b>
Test 1	BLKISS	BLKTEA
Test 2	BLKOSS	BLKTEA
Test 3	BLKISS	BLKMAN
Test 4	BLKOSS	BLKMAN
Test 5	BLKISS	BLKFEM
Test 6	BLKOSS	BLKFEM

TABLE 3

*Black Teachers & Black Students In-School Suspensions (350 Obs)*

	REG-1	REG-2	REG-3	REG-4	REG-5	REG-6	REG-7	REG-8
BLKISS	(2.02)	(-.445)	(-.448)	(-.458)	(-.471)	(-.472)	(-.551)	(-.551)
BLKTEA	.000***	.033*	.032*	.035*	.030*	.030*	.014*	.014*
		(1.36)	(1.35)	(1.35)	(1.35)	(1.35)	(1.38)	(1.45)
BLKPOP		.000***	.000***	.000***	.000**	.000***	.000**	.000***
			(.015)	(.014)	(.015)	(.016)	(.014)	(.013)
FRPL			.703	.720	.704	.700	.734	.750
				(.032)	(.042)	(.042)	(.071)	(.129)
BLKCA				.851	.804	.804	.679	.465
					(.232)	(.232)	(.167)	(.178)
FIRYR					.274	.274	.439	.410
						(.004)	(.005)	(.012)
RATIO						.941	.935	.842
							(-.160)	(-.179)
DIS							.123	.087
								(-.135)
BLKGT								.209
Constant	17.25	9.13	8.85	8.86	7.62	7.56	10.74	10.87

\*Coefficients in parenthesis; p Values underneath)

\*\* p<.05\* p<.01\*\* p<.001\*\*\*

TABLE 4

*Black Male Teachers & Black Students In-School Suspensions (350 Obs)*

	REG-1	REG-2	REG-3	REG-4	REG-5	REG-6	REG-7	REG-8
BLKISS	(6.69)	(-1.10)	(-1.10)	(-1.12)	(-1.22)	(-1.22)	(-1.36)	(-1.40)
BLKMAN	.000***	.101	.100	.110	.083	.084	.057	.050*
		(1.30)	(1.29)	(1.29)	(1.29)	(1.29)	(1.30)	(1.38)
BLKPOP		.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***
			(.015)	(.015)	(.015)	(.016)	(.014)	(.013)
FRPL			.710	.719	.701	.701	.729	.745
				(.014)	(.029)	(.029)	(.048)	(.114)
BLKCA				.936	.867	.867	.778	.525



					(.251)	(.251)	(.199)	(.212)
FIRYR					.240	.241	.359	.330
						(.002)	(.002)	(.010)
RATIO						.970	.972	.869
							(-.131)	(-.153)
DIS							.200	.140
								(-.144)
BLKGT								.183
Constant	17.9	9.38	9.1	9.11	7.78	7.74	10.39	10.52

\*Coefficients in parenthesis; p Values underneath)

\*\* p<.05\* p<.01\*\* p<.001\*\*\*

TABLE 5

*Black Female Teachers & Black Students In-School Suspensions (349 Obs)*

BLKISS	REG-1	REG-2	REG-3	REG-4	REG-5	REG-6	REG-7	REG-8
	(2.67)	(-.592)	(-.595)	(-.604)	(-.611)	(-.612)	(-.717)	(-.711)
BLKFEM	.000***	.031*	.031*	.033*	.031*	.032*	.014*	.015*
		(1.37)	(1.35)	(1.35)	(1.34)	(1.34)	(1.37)	(1.44)
BLKPOP		.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***
			(.018)	(.017)	(.018)	(.018)	(.017)	(.016)
FRPL			.655	.667	.654	.652	.686	.699
				(.021)	(.029)	(.029)	(.056)	(.112)
BLKCA				.899	.863	.863	.743	.522
					(.215)	(.215)	(.148)	(.158)
FIRYR					.311	.311	.495	.465
						(.003)	(.004)	(.010)
RATIO						.956	.951	.861
							(-.160)	(-.178)
DIS							.124	.089
								(-.133)
BLKGT								.219
Constant	17.48	9.11	8.77	8.77	7.64	7.59	10.77	10.89

\*Coefficients in parenthesis; p Values underneath)

\*\* p<.05\* p<.01\*\* p<.001\*\*\*

TABLE 6

*Black Teachers & Black Students Out-of-School Suspensions (362 Obs)*

BLKOSS	REG-1	REG-2	REG-3	REG-4	REG-5	REG-6	REG-7	REG-8
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	(1.88)	(-.497)	(-.501)	(-.554)	(-.558)	(-.539)	(-.599)	(-.605)
BLKTEA	.000***	.010**	.009**	.005**	.005**	.007**	.003**	.003**
		(1.39)	(1.37)	(1.36)	(1.35)	(1.35)	(1.37)	(1.40)
BLKPOP		.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***
			(.022)	(-.018)	(.018)	(.013)	(.010)	(.010)
FRPL			.583	.664	.651	.733	.804	.808
				(.181)	(.190)	(.185)	(.222)	(.238)
BLKCA				.269	.248	.260	.182	.168
					(.198)	(.197)	(.152)	(.155)
FIRYR					.350	.354	.479	.470
						(-.040)	(-.041)	(-.040)
RATIO						.204	.195	.201
							(-.104)	(-.110)
DIS							.181	.168
								(-.037)
BLKGT								.726
Constant	18.27	9.16	8.73	8.82	7.77	8.47	10.59	10.67

\*Coefficients in parenthesis; p Values underneath)

\*\* p<.05\* p<.01\*\* p<.001\*\*\*

TABLE 7

*Black Male Teachers & Black Students Out-of-School Suspensions (362 Obs)*

BLKOSS	REG-1	REG-2	REG-3	REG-4	REG-5	REG-6	REG-7	REG-8
	(6.80)	(-.595)	(-.606)	(-.759)	(-.821)	(-.805)	(-.893)	(-.911)
BLKMAN	.000***	.358	.350	.265	.230	.238	.196	.190
		(1.27)	(1.26)	(1.25)	(1.24)	(1.25)	(1.26)	(1.27)
BLKPOP		.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***
			(.019)	(.016)	(.017)	(.011)	(.009)	(.009)
FRPL			.640	.697	.683	.777	.826	.829
				(.126)	(.139)	(.137)	(.160)	(.171)
BLKCA				.453	.410	.417	.349	.334
					(.211)	(.208)	(.181)	(.184)
FIRYR					.327	.331	.404	.398
						(-.046)	(-.046)	(-.046)
RATIO						.150	.143	.147
							(-.068)	(-.073)
DIS							.378	.361
								(-.026)
BLKGT								.807
Constant	18.29	9.57	9.2	9.27	8.16	8.93	10.35	10.4

\*Coefficients in parenthesis; p Values underneath)

\*\* p<.05\* p<.01\*\* p<.001\*\*\*

TABLE 8

*Black Female Teachers & Black Students Out-of-School Suspensions (362 Obs)*

BLKOSS	REG-1	REG-2	REG-3	REG-4	REG-5	REG-6	REG-7	REG-8
	(2.40)	(-.747)	(-.755)	(-.808)	(-.806)	(-.780)	(-.863)	(-.869)
BLKFEM	.000***	.003**	.003**	.002**	.002**	.002**	.001***	.001***
		(1.41)	(1.39)	(1.38)	(1.37)	(1.36)	(1.40)	(1.41)
BLKPOP		.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***
			(.024)	(.020)	(.021)	(.016)	(.012)	(.012)
FRPL			.546	.621	.611	.688	.761	.763
				(.173)	(.180)	(.175)	(.213)	(.227)
BLKCA				.287	.270	.281	.196	.182
					(.179)	(.178)	(.128)	(.131)
FIRYR					.399	.401	.551	.542
						(-.037)	(-.039)	(-.038)
RATIO						.228	.220	.226
							(-.111)	(-.117)
DIS							.153	.142
								(-.035)
BLKGT								.737
Constant	18.67	9.04	8.56	8.65	7.72	8.38	10.65	10.73

\*Coefficients in parenthesis; p Values underneath)

\*\* p&lt;.05\* p&lt;.01\*\* p&lt;.001\*\*\*