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Black Girls Deserve To Be Girls: A Comparison Of School-Based Social And Emotional Practices On The Impact Of Discipline Rates Of African American Middle School Girls

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BLACK GIRLS DESERVE TO BE GIRLS: A COMPARISON OF SCHOOL-BASED SOCIAL

AND EMOTIONAL PRACTICES ON THE IMPACT OF DISCIPLINE RATES OF AFRICAN

AMERICAN MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

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By

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2024

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BLACK GIRLS DESERVE TO BE GIRLS: A COMPARISON OF SCHOOL-BASED SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL PRACTICES ON THE IMPACT OF DISCIPLINE RATES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS

By

Kristi Morale, Ed.D.

Texas Southern University, 2024

Professor Holim Song, Advisor

Historically, Black women have been known as the backbone of education in their communities; however, Black Girls today still face significant barriers to educational achievement. Stereotypes placed on Black Girls at school have led to disproportionate reprimands and disciplinary infractions. The negative perspectives of those in authority create barriers to success for Black Girls in schools. This study sought to identify the effect of social and emotional learning on the impact of discipline rates of African-American middle school girls. A sequential exploratory mixed methods design was used in which the researcher analyzed the effect of social and emotional learning practices on Black Girls' discipline experiences using both quantitative and qualitative analysis sequentially. Qualitative data was engaged first to establish the girls' voices and opinions of their schools' support for their social and emotional well-being. The second objective was to determine any differences in discipline rates for middle school Black Girls on a campus that employs social and emotional learning practices. Results indicated that the girls feel that their social and emotional needs are being fostered on both campuses, while there are noticeable differences in structure from one campus to the other. On

the campus that uses social and emotional learning practices, it was evident that the personnel on the campus are making a concerted effort to support the social and emotional needs of the Black Girls. On the campus that does not utilize social and emotional learning practices, efforts to support the social and emotional needs of the girls are being made independently and not due to specific training or resources from the campus or the district. This shows up in the suspension data, where the girls on this campus are more likely to be subjected to in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and DAEP referrals than those at the campus that does use social and emotional learning practices.

Keywords: *social and emotional learning, Black Girls, middle school, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, DAEP*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

iii

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

VITA

2004-2008 .... Bachelor of Arts
Dillard University
New Orleans, LA

2010-2011 .... Master of Arts
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, Ca

Major Field.. Curriculum and Instruction

DEDICATION

For all the Black Girls with the

big smiles,

big hair,

big hearts,

big voices,

big personalities

and big ideas.

For Isabelle, Olivia, and Amelia

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On May 22, 1962, Malcolm X gave a speech in Los Angeles to and about Black women where he stated, "The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the Black woman. The most neglected person in America is the Black woman" (Alexander Street, 2014). Over 60 years later, this statement still rings true across the United States, including in U.S. schools where Black Girls are disrespected, unprotected, and neglected day after day.

Historically, Black women have been known as the backbone of education in their communities. Beginning in the 1700s, enslaved women recognized the importance of reading and writing while bringing back their knowledge to support others in their communities (Ricks, 2014). During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Black women such as Nannie Helen Burroughs, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Charlotte Hawkins Brown founded schools to educate Black children (Williams, 2007). Throughout history, Black Women and Girls have been considered critical architects in some of the most significant efforts to obtain access to quality education for all children (Smith-Evans et al., 2014).

During enslavement, education was seen as an act of resistance for enslaved Blacks. Knowledge was seen as a key that enslaved women used to push themselves and their families closer to freedom. In the book *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom,* Williams (2007) shared stories of women who worked inside the plantation owner's home, asking White children to share everything they had learned that day in school. The women would then share this information with other enslaved individuals, and some of these women also went on to teach school once enslavement

ended. Although it is unknown to many, dozens of Black women and girls were at the forefront of the Supreme Court case Brown v. Board of Education, outnumbering the Black male plaintiffs (Rhodes, 2020). In historian Rachel Devlin's book, *A Girl Stands at the Door: The Generation of Young Women Who Desegregated America's Schools* (2018), the author highlighted Black women and girls who were committed to the ideal of school desegregation. Following the landmark case, girls and young women continued work to ensure that desegregation was fulfilled (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). Early on, Black women realized that the benefit of education would make it more difficult for them to be consigned to a life of poverty and servitude (Morris, 2016). Despite this background, Black Girls' current obstacles in our country's schools have received little attention (Smith-Evans et al., 2014).

While historically, Black women have been at the forefront of education in the Black community, Black Girls today still face significant barriers to educational achievement. Each day, Black Girls face a variety of factors that heighten their risk of underachievement and detachment from school (Crenshaw et al., 2015). These factors contribute to Black Girls being criminalized by their schools, the very places that should help them thrive (Morris, 2016).

Since 2013, the rally cry #BlackGirlMagic has been echoed on social media and in popular culture to empower Black Women and Girls and share their brilliance with the world. While this cry has been heard loudly across the United States, each day in schools, Black Girls are not treated as magical beings or the beholders of brilliance but instead perceived as "loud, defiant, and precocious" (Morris, 2012, para. 5). The stereotypes placed on Black Girls have led to disproportionate reprimands and disciplinary

infractions in schools. These negative and deficit perspectives by those in authority create barriers to success for Black Girls in schools (Iruka, 2021). The consequences of these barriers could yield detrimental effects for Black Girls for years to come. Recently, the Common Application for colleges and universities stopped asking students to report whether they had been subject to disciplinary action due to the disproportionate discipline rates reported for Black Girls (Green et al., 2020). Actions like this support the notion that Black Girls are being disciplined more harshly in schools day after day, and this affects their futures.

While media perception and nationwide data suggest that Black Girls are doing well in school achievement, especially compared to their male counterparts with higher graduation rates and earning college degrees, Black Girls still struggle daily in our schools (Iruka, 2021). The disproportionate discipline rates for Black Girls show that Black Girls are not misbehaving more than their peers but instead being punished more harshly (Green et al., 2020). Dr. Morris, the author of the book *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* (Green et al., 2020), states, "We are in a battle for the souls of Black girls".

The lack of value placed on the intelligence of Black Women does not begin when they start their careers but starts early in their education journeys. Beginning as early as preschool, Black Girls are disciplined more harshly than girls of any other race or ethnicity (Iruka, 2021). In all grade levels of our public school system, Black Girls are under-protected and often get less attention than their male counterparts, "because they are perceived to be more socially mature and self-reliant" (Crenshaw et al., 2015, p. 10).

Considering Black women still earn $0.78 to $1.00 compared to White women, it is evident that Black women and girls are not treated equally in the U.S. (Iruka, 2021).

In 2018, the National Black Women's Justice Institute released a *Summary of Discipline Data for Girls in U.S. Public Schools* (Inniss-Thompson, 2018). This report revealed that Nationwide, Black female students were 7xs more likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions than their White counterparts. Of the fifteen most common infractions where students are suspended, Black Girls are most likely to be suspended for defiance, disruptive behavior, profanity, and fighting (Raffaele et al., 2003). The result of these patterns of disciplinary action leads to a disproportionate involvement of Black Girls in the juvenile justice system (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). Consequently, Black Girls are the fastest-growing population in confinement (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

Society tends not to see Black Girls as children but instead as having the mental capacities of adults (Morris, 2016). This theory, known as adultification, refers to "the perception of Black Girls as less innocent and more adult-like than White Girls of the same age—as well as its possible connection with negative outcomes across a diverse range of public systems, including education, juvenile justice, and child welfare" (Epstein et al., 2017, p. 1). Research from the study *Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood* found that adults perceive Black Girls as less innocent than White Girls, with the most significant differences in participants' perceptions being in the 10 to 14 age range or their time in middle school (Epstein et al., 2017). The stereotypes Black Girls face in schools contribute to the idea that they do not require social and emotional support during their time in school.

If Black Girls are considered fully developed adults, it is inferred that they do not require support to manage their emotions and behaviors. Black Girls not knowing how to manage their attitudes, behaviors, and relationships properly contributes to their disproportionate disciplinary rates. Social and emotional learning theory was selected for this study because social and emotional strategies are an avenue to support Black Girls in schools. Social and emotional learning is "developing the self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills vital for school, work, and life success" (Committee for Children, 2023). Harmony SEL states, "SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities" (CASEL, 2022, para. 2).

Social and emotional development is critical during the middle school years (Shaffer, 2021). Scholars are attempting to find their place in the world during this time. Positive interactions with adults are crucial to assist scholars with the difficult transitions from elementary school to middle school and again from middle school to high school. Research shows that the middle school years are "an amazing opportunity for learning new skills for behavioral health interventions to have maximal impact" (Paterson, 2019, para. 8). Scientists consider middle school a sensitive period for social and emotional learning and share that schools should create space to teach skills and mindsets that will set scholars up for future success. Social and emotional learning practices support the understanding of these skills.

While middle school is a difficult time for most students, for girls, it is the time "where they start to see how others see them and the importance of performing as the right kind of girl" (Hough, 2019, para. 13). The study *The confidence collapse and why it*

matters for the next-gen found that between ages 8 and 14, girls' confidence levels drop by 30% while more than half of teen girls feel pressure to be perfect (Shipman et al., 2018). Black Girls are struggling each day in schools across the United States. "Our girls really just don't feel that anyone in the school cares enough about them to listen to what they are saying and instead want them to just get over it, put on a smile, and do better" (Ferlazzo et al., 2019, para. 18).

Statement of the Problem

Black women have traditionally led the way in advancing educational equity in the Black community. However, Black Girls still face substantial obstacles to achieving in the classroom today. While there is abundant research on the discipline disparities facing Black Boys in the public school system, Black Girls are missing from these conversations. The little known about Black Girls' experience with school discipline and the school-to-prison pipeline is indeed disheartening (Annamma et al., 2016). The talents and intelligence of Black Women and Girls are not valued beginning in their first years of life, and the effects are long-lasting (Iruka, 2021). Early in life, Black Girls get messages about their worth, value, and beauty compared to the normative standard (Iruka, 2021). These messages leave a lasting impact on Black Girls and affect their behavior and achievement in school.

During the 2015-2016 school year, Black middle school girls were over seven times more likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions, five times more likely to be arrested, over four times more likely to receive corporal punishment; four times more likely to receive one or more in-school suspensions; and four times more likely to be referred to law enforcement in comparison to White female students (Inniss-

Thompson, 2018). This data proves that Black middle school girls are being pushed out of schools through exclusionary discipline practices. The purpose of this study is to explore the use of social and emotional strategies to support Black middle school girls and decrease exclusionary discipline practices.

The reality for Black Girls in schools is that most teachers are White and female, so the idea of White femininity is centered in schools (Ferlazzo et al., 2019). The framework of White feminism seeks to delete the existence of the cultural differences that Black Girls come to school with; this results in Black Girls facing exclusionary discipline practices from subjective actions, including being too loud, too aggressive, and too assertive. Black Girls are often punished for racial and gender biases that have more to do with who they are than what they do (Patrick et al., 2020). Many girls across the country are missing out on valuable class time due to punishments for how they dress and the type of makeup they wear. These dress codes do nothing to protect girls or their classmates' learning but instead, needlessly interrupt their education and affect their self-esteem (Brodsky et al., 2018).

The lack of academic literature on the plight of Black Girls in schools leads to the assumption that the futures of Black Girls are not at risk (Crenshaw et al., 2015). To fully understand how educators can address the issue of providing Black Girls with equitable and fair chances in education, more research must be done on practices to support the emotional well-being of Black Girls in schools. Black Girls occupy a unique space, being both Black and female. This intersectionality causes Black Girls to have very different experiences at the intersection of these identities. The plethora of research on the plight of Black Boys in schools sheds light on their significant needs while also causing the

needs of Black Girls to be ignored. This leaves educators under the impression that Black Girls are doing just fine. The stereotypes Black Girls are plagued with also cause harsher disciplinary action and negatively impact girls' social and emotional well-being (Iruka, 2021).

This study focused on Black Girls' experiences in middle schools. According to research, suspension at the middle school level may have significant long-term repercussions on scholars (Losen et al., 2010). Middle school is an important time to create interventions to prevent dropout and involvement in the juvenile justice system (Mathies et al., 2020). Research on the effects of these intervention strategies will increase the research bank on how schools can support the girls they serve. Previous studies showed that Black Girls have had the highest suspension rates of all students in the last decade (Losen et al., 2010). Although research shows the impact of alternative discipline practices on student outcomes, schools continue to respond to crises with fear rather than love (Morris, 2019).

Programs that foster positive character in Black Girls must be supported so they can thrive in school and beyond. We can no longer afford to leave girls of color out of the conversation concerning the achievement gap, the dropout crisis, and the school-to-prison pipeline (Morris, 2012). "We need to understand the unique experiences of Black Girls and Black Women so we can better support and empower them" (Meadows, 2020, p. 116). Educators and those responsible for the systems in which girls are educated must embrace a commitment to facilitating learning spaces that are healing-centered, joyful, and accountable (Morris, 2022).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of social and emotional practices on discipline rates of Black middle school girls. This dissertation builds on the work of scholars who study Black Girls' experiences in schools. "When it comes to quality education and justice - let's not only hear it for the boys" (Morris, 2012, p. 12). This research seeks to be an agent to speak for the girls.

While overall, girls graduate from high school at higher rates than boys, graduation rates for girls of color are much lower than both White Girls and boys (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). Black Girls face a variety of historical, institutional, and social factors that heighten their risk of underachievement and detachment from school, rendering them vulnerable to the lifelong consequences of dropping out (Crenshaw et al., 2015). It has been shown that failure to complete high school leads girls to a life of low wages, unemployment, and possible incarceration (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Each day, Black Girls in schools are perceived negatively, rendered invisible, and criminalized for their behavior (Evans, 2019). These perceptions cause Black Girls to create self-defense mechanisms to protect themselves when at school. These mechanisms often result in punitive disciplinary responses (Evans, 2019). Previous studies have failed to show how interventions can support the discipline disparities facing Black Girls in schools. In the article "African American Girls and the school-to-prison Pipeline: Who are our sisters' keepers?" the author recommends "implementing programs and interventions that address girls in the context of their families, peers, schools, and neighborhoods" as a means to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline (Goff, 2016, para. 14). This study will

explore how social and emotional learning practices can serve as an intervention for Black Girls in middle school to support the decrease of discipline rates.

There is a gap in research on interventions to support the discipline crisis plaguing Black Girls. The amount of research in a field is crucial because research translates into evidence that can be used to create evidence-based policy to support the researched demographic (Morris, 2012). This study contributes to the research on the social and emotional well-being of Black Girls by giving them a voice to share how they are doing in our schools and how they believe we can better support their needs.

The research questions asked in this study can yield important insights into the effect of social and emotional learning practices, such as (1) whether the use of these practices lessens the suspension rates of Black middle school girls and (2) the impact of social and emotional learning practices on the emotional well-being of Black middle school girls (emotions, moods, thoughts, and feelings).

Justification for the Study

Within education circles, there is a continual conversation on how Black Boys are affected by the school-to-prison pipeline. Educators and advocates have worked to create programming to support the plight of Black Boys. In 2014, President Barack Obama launched the My Brother's Keeper initiative to address the continual opportunity gaps boys and young men of color face (Obama.org, 2022). The initiative was designed to address and improve issues, including low achievement and a lack of mentoring for young Black and Brown men. While the plight of Black Boys is a serious issue, the plight of Black Girls cannot be overlooked (Morris, 2012). Although funding for these programs is greatly needed for Black Boys, Black Girls are being left behind in this

conversation. The report *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected* states that "over 100 million philanthropic dollars have been spent in the last decade creating mentoring and educational initiatives for Black and Brown Boys"; however, less than a million dollars has been given to the study of Black and Brown Girls (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

Although Black Boys continue to be at the forefront of research and funding, Black Girls are eight times more likely to receive out-of-school suspension than their White counterparts. At the same time, Black Boys are only three times more likely to be suspended than their non-minority counterparts (Inniss-Thompson, 2018). This data suggests that although Black Boys and Black Girls share a racialized risk of punishment in schools, Black Girls have a greater chance of being suspended or expelled than other students of the same gender. The disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of Black Girls reflect an overlooked crisis that affects their life chances and the well-being of their families, communities, and society (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

Research Questions

To assess the impact of social and emotional practices on the discipline rates of Middle school girls, the following questions were sought:

RQ1: Are there any differences between middle schools that utilize social and emotional learning practices and middle schools that do not use social and emotional learning practices on in-school suspension rates among Black Girls?

RQ2: Are there any differences between middle schools that utilize social and emotional learning practices and middle schools that do not use social and emotional learning practices on out-of-school suspension rates among Black Girls?

RQ3: Are there any differences between middle schools that utilize social and emotional learning practices and middle schools that do not use social and emotional learning practices on DAEP rates among Black Girls?

RQ4: In what ways do social and emotional learning practices affect the emotional well-being of middle school Black Girls?

Null Hypothesis

H1: There is no statistically significant difference between middle schools that utilize social and emotional learning practices and middle schools that do not use social and emotional learning practices on in-school suspension rates among Black Girls.

H2: There is no statistically significant difference between middle schools that utilize social and emotional learning practices and middle schools that do not use social and emotional learning practices on out-of-school suspension rates among Black Girls.

H3: There is no statistically significant difference between middle schools that utilize social and emotional learning practices and middle schools that do not use social and emotional learning practices on DAEP rates among Black Girls.

Definition of Terms

Adultification: Adultification refers to the perception of Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like than White girls of the same age (Epstein et al., 2017).

Black Girls: Girls who trace their origin to the Black racial groups of Africa (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Black Girlhood: Ruth Nicole Brown (2009) defines Black girlhood as "representations, memories, and lived experiences of being and becoming a body marked as youthful, Black, and female" (p. 1).

Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs: A disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) is defined as an educational and self-discipline alternative instructional program adopted by local policy for students in elementary through high school grades who are removed from their regular classes for mandatory or discretionary disciplinary reasons (Texas Education Association, 2018).

Exclusionary Discipline: Exclusionary discipline is any school disciplinary action that removes or excludes students from their usual educational setting (Committee for Children, 2018).

In-School Suspension: A discipline consequence where a student reports to a room outside of the classroom to complete their schoolwork for the duration of the suspension.

Middle School: A school that usually includes grades six to eight.

Out-of-School Suspension: A discipline consequence where a student cannot attend school or any school-sponsored events during the duration of their suspension.

School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Practices: learning practices that help students better comprehend their emotions, feel those emotions fully, and demonstrate empathy for others. These learned behaviors are then used to help students make positive, responsible decisions, create frameworks to achieve their goals, and build positive relationships with others (National University, 2023).

The school-to-prison "pipeline": The link between citations or arrests in school and subsequent contact with the justice system as a function of exclusionary discipline, dropping out, and/or future participation in underground economies (Morris, 2012).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of social and emotional practices on discipline rates of Black middle school girls. This chapter is organized with prior scholarly research by reviewing research in three main areas: (1) misconceptions about Black Girls, (2) discipline disparities facing Black Girls, and (3) social and emotional learning specifically as it relates to Black Girls.

From the literature on misconceptions about Black Girls, this literature review highlights how, compared to White Girls, adults see Black Girls as less innocent and more adult-like, thus not requiring social and emotional support (Evans, 2019). Black Girls are "othered" long before they enter the classroom, where they are deemed "unteachable," "aggressive," "loud," or "ratchet" and often disciplined based upon these stereotypes (Ferlazzo et al., 2019). Studies show that the differences in Black Girls' suspensions compared to other demographics are a result of policies and adult biases and not a result of a difference in their behavior in school (Patrick et al., 2020).

From the literature on discipline disparities facing Black Girls, this chapter highlights how the reporting of Black Girls discipline in the literature appears to be done more to draw attention to the unequal discipline experiences of Black Boys than to show how disproportionate discipline practices may also have a negative influence on Black Girls' school experiences (Blake et al., 2011). During the 2015-2016 school year, Black Girls accounted for 8% of all students enrolled in school. However, Black Girls were 14% of all students suspended from school (Patrick et al., 2020). The discipline rates

affecting Black Girls is a nationwide crisis that must be addressed with research and advocacy.

Lastly, from the literature on social and emotional learning, this review focuses on how these strategies can create joyful learning spaces for Black Girls. The lack of social and emotional support given to Black Girls affects their school behavior, which in turn affects their academic achievement. In schools, Girls are expected to work hard, get along with others, and be sexually pure, while boys are given multiple chances to succeed, encouraged to be competitive, and given space to sow their wild oats (Ferlazzo et al., 2019). Social and emotional practices can ensure that the "education environment is a warm, nurturing, and affirming space for Black girls", helping them form positive racial and gender identity during their time in school (Iruka, 2021, para. 6).

Misconceptions About Black Girls

Each day in schools, Black Girls' needs go "overlooked by teachers, administrators, and policymakers" (Ricks, 2014, p. 10). According to research, Black Girls, even during their early academic careers, receive less attention than their male counterparts because they are seen as more independent and socially mature (Crenshaw et al., 2015). These implicit biases, or "the automatic and unconscious stereotypes that drive people to behave and make decisions in certain ways," affect teachers' perceptions of Black Girls in their classrooms (Gilliam et al., 2016, p. 3). Misperceptions of Black Girls' behavior cause educators to believe that they need more social corrective action, which results in more disciplinary referrals (Smith-Evans et al., 2014).

The Sapphire parody, which depicts Black Women as loud, aggressive, and angry, has been crucial in shaping White culture's perceptions of Black Women's attitudes

(Blake et al., 2011). When Black Girls voice strong or opposing ideas, they are perceived as questioning authority or having an attitude problem (Blake & Epstein, 2019). The angry identity placed upon Black Girls has been associated with a lack of sympathy and a belief that punishment is warranted (Morris, 2007). Black Girls receive the message that they should be less noticeable, toned down, and take up less space when efforts are made to ensure they adhere to traditional White ideals of Ladylike behavior (Blake & Epstein, 2019). Compared to their White counterparts, who are seen as more innocent and needing care and consolation, adults often feel less empathy for Black Girls (Blake & Epstein, 2019). These negative opinions of Black Girls are formed long before any interactions occur (Garvey, 2021). We must address the harmful effects of unconscious bias that have normalized racism in a field where we assert that children are at the center of everything we do (Garvey, 2021).

Although there is an abundance of research on American children and education, there is limited data broken down by race and gender together (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). This lack of data presents an incomplete picture of Black Girls' school barriers. Research on the plight of Black students in schools fails to "paint a nuanced picture that addresses the degree to which girls are vulnerable to many of the same factors faced by their male counterparts" (Crenshaw et al., 2015, p. 14). Crenshaw (2015) calls for increasing opportunities to ensure Black Girls are included in "policy research, advocacy, and programmatic interventions" (p. 15). Research has shown that Black Boys are seen as more adult-like than their peers, but limited research has assessed the effects of adultification on Black Girls (Epstein et al., 2017).

Black Girl Stereotypes

Black Girls are frequently stereotyped before they even set foot inside a classroom or school facility (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). The preconceptions applied to Black Girls in schools impact their self-esteem and self-worth, affecting their school behavior. Black Girls' disciplinary rates are significantly impacted by the intersections of racial and gender stereotypes, possibly partly because of bias among teachers and administrators when exercising discretion in assigning punishments (Smith-Evans et al., 2014).

The phrase intersectionality, first used by Professor Kimberle Crenshaw, defines how race, gender, class, sexual identity, ability, and other identities interact to diminish equal access to opportunity (Anderson, 2016). Black Girls find that to participate more fully in the educational system; they must repress their perceived racial traits by associating with the majority race (Evans, 2019). Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010) shared that Black Girls have learned to practice silence as a strategy for getting ahead in class (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Black Girls create a raceless identity as a coping strategy and protective mechanism against the stress brought on by how society perceives them (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010).

The assertiveness of some Black Girls, which generally has contributed to positive perceptions of Black Women in leadership capacities, conversely puts them at more risk for unjustified punishment in K-12 institutions (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). Day after day, Black Girls experience unfair treatment in schools, which has a negative impact on their academic and social achievements (Owens, 2016). Black Girls are forced to choose between two unfavorable options: either they conform to White, middle-class

ideas about how girls should behave and be quiet and passive, which ultimately hinders their efforts to pursue an education, or they speak up and risk punishment for defying those expectations and meeting educators' stereotyped expectations for them (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). Fewer opportunities for leadership and mentoring in schools often stem from the notion that Black Girls are more independent and need less care, nurturing, and support (Epstein et al., 2017). Without opportunities for mentoring, Black Girls often struggle with building positive relationships with each other and the adults in the school building.

Black people frequently face assumptions about who they are and what they are like based on racial stereotypes. Stereotypes are taken a step further for Black Girls as they are stereotyped for their race and gender. These stereotypes then influence school policy, specifically dress code policies that target Black Girls (Brodsky et al., 2018). Dress code policies in schools nationwide are rooted in sex stereotypes or notions about how people should act based on gender. Black Girls are often disciplined harshly when they do not conform to these notions (Brodsky et al., 2018).

The fact that Black Girls are more frequently disciplined for physical fights may also be due to their refusal to conform to gender standards, as losing control and violently or overtly displaying anger goes against expectations of what is ladylike (Blake et al., 2015). Black Girls experience racial profiling equivalent to that experienced by adults. This profiling can potentially change their destinies as these unconscious prejudices influence decision-makers' perceptions and thus affect policy (Morris, 2012). Recent cases that provoked controversy around the country demonstrate this propensity to judge and condemn Black Girls, including a 16-year-old expelled for a science experiment gone

wrong, a 15-year-old tossed and pinned to the ground during an altercation at a pool party, and a 16-year-old dragged from her seat over a cell phone in a classroom (Anderson, 2016). While negative racial and gender stereotyping and perceptions are not the sole reasons for poor educational outcomes, they unquestionably impose significant barriers to academic achievement for Black Girls. In a 2019 study, participants with teaching backgrounds saw that their colleagues frequently approached Black Girls in school settings in a developmentally inappropriate manner (Blake & Epstein, 2019). The negative stereotypes associated with Black Girls severely affect their social, emotional, and academic lives (Morris, 2016).

The Adultification of Black Girls

Beginning with enslavement, Black kids were rarely seen as deserving of fun and were severely punished for simply acting like kids (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). The adultification of Black children has continued throughout history. Through adultification, Black children are stripped of their innocence, which distinguishes childhood from all other developmental phases (Blake et al., 2017). For Black Girls, adultification describes the perception of them as less innocent and more adult-like than White Girls of the same age (Epstein et al., 2017). Because of stereotypes, Black Girls' transgressions are often seen as intentional and malicious instead of resulting from immature decision-making—a key characteristic of childhood.

Throughout the last decade, media outlets have shared numerous stories of young Black Girls being harshly disciplined for behavior that could be considered child-like, including temper tantrums. In April 2012, a six-year-old Black Girl in Georgia had a temper tantrum in a kindergarten class. The young lady reportedly tore down wall

hangings and tossed toys, books, and a shelf that hit the teacher. The school contacted the police, and the girl was suspended for the remainder of the year (D'Arcy, 2012). In September 2019, 6-year-old Kaia Rolle kicked a staff member while throwing a tantrum in class. Kaia was handcuffed, placed in a police cruiser, and driven to a juvenile detention facility. Kaia was then fingerprinted and had her mugshot taken. When Meralyn Kirkland, Kaia's grandmother, tried to explain that her granddaughter was exhausted from sleep apnea, the family was trying to get treated; the arresting officer responded that he has sleep apnea and does not behave that way, comparing a 6-year-old child's behavior to that of an adult (Darby, 2019). Research shows that Black Girls are penalized more frequently, even under the age of six (Meadows, 2020).

"Adultification even shows up in how we (the Black community) criticize Black Girls' clothing by calling our girls 'fast' or suggesting they 'want to be grown' and deserve whatever consequences they face for their choices; this practice ages them and robs them of their innocence" (Meadows, 2020, para. 15). Adultification bias is a general assumption made about Black Girls rather than a maturity assessment based on observation of a specific girl's behavior (Blake & Epstein, 2019). Data from the study "Adults' Perceptions of Black Girlhood" revealed that participants viewed Black Girls as generally more mature than White Girls (Blake et al., 2017). Participants in the survey believed that Black Girls required less care and nurturing than White Girls. They also believed that Black Girls knew more about adult subjects than their White counterparts, with one of the significant age brackets being the 10-14 group (Blake et al., 2017). In mid-childhood and early adolescence - crucial years for a child's healthy identity

formation - adults appear to hold specific ideas and expectations about Black Girls that

portray them as developmentally older than their White peers (Blake et al., 2017).

According to research, adultification may be responsible for Black Girls'

disproportionately high discipline rates in school (Blake et al., 2017). Society's

expectations of Black Girls which have historically been influenced by racism and

patriarchy - have led to a ritual where Black Girls are frequently mischaracterized and

mislabeled because of how they look, dress, speak, and act (Anderson, 2016). In

"Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood," the authors share data

showing that adults view Black Girls as less innocent and more adult-like than their

White peers, especially in the age range of 5–14 (Epstein et al., 2017).

Instead of interacting with Black Girls as children and teenagers, who may be

held accountable for their mistakes using non-punitive restorative methods, we observe

them being criminalized (Anderson, 2016). In the report *Listening to Black Women and

Girls: Lived Experiences of Adultification Bias*, a participant shared a story of being

handcuffed and fingerprinted during a traffic stop because the officer did not believe that

she was only 15 years old and thought she should have been carrying an id (Blake &

Epstein, 2019). The perception of Black Girls as older and in less need of protection

possibly plays a role in the high-profile incidents involving police use of force against

this demographic (Lockhart, 2019).

The term you know better could be used as a euphemism for higher expectations

of Black Girls (Blake & Epstein, 2019). Black Girls are often expected by their teachers

and parents to take on more responsibility than is reasonable for their age (Meadows,

2020). Epstein states, "Those in [positions of] authority over black girls' lives need to treat girls based on their developmental age, not their race" (Lockhart, 2019, para. 33).

The Effect of Public Perception on Black Girl's Self-Esteem

Conducted in the 1940s, the Doll Test discovered that Black children's perceptions of themselves and their self-worth were severely impacted by racial segregation. For a long time, American ideals of femininity have directly opposed the physical and behavioral traits commonly associated with Black Girls and Black Women. Historically, the culturally ubiquitous representation of gender is one of White femininity. Black Girls have been taught to develop the skills necessary to guard their happiness, identity, worth, and life's potential from an early age to truly succeed in society. In the book "Pushout," a teacher interviewed asserts that Black Girls' most significant obstacle is self-esteem and that if their self-esteem were higher, they would not have made the decisions they did (Morris, 2016, p. 62). She continues by stating that Black Girls are often overlooked and will act out to garner more attention, which frequently has a negative outcome (Morris, 2016, p. 63).

Black Girl's Experiences with School Discipline

From suspension to corporal punishment to expulsion to arrest and referral to law enforcement, Black Girls experience adverse outcomes at every phase of the discipline continuum (Morris, 2019). Girls of color are more likely to be suspended for subjective infractions such as violations of rules like dress codes and failing to follow directions. These types of offenses leave space for personal biases to affect the disciplinary outcome for Black Girls. Often, school disciplinary measures reflect the idea that "children should be forced into acceptable behavior by intimidation, suppression, isolation, or arrest"

(Morris, 2019, para. 18). Often, girls of color are not given the option to participate in suspension alternatives because they are not seen as willing participants in restorative practices (Morris, 2019).

Although it is commonly recognized that there is a significant racial disparity in school punishment, research and advocacy on school accomplishment have not consistently highlighted the higher racial inequality that Black Girls experience (Crenshaw et al., 2015). One study found that teachers occasionally used disciplinary measures against Black Girls to persuade them to adopt more acceptable qualities of femininity (Blake et al., 2011). Researchers have tried to measure the notion that because Black Girls are viewed as loud and disruptive, they may be subject to harsher disciplinary measures (Crenshaw et al., 2015). In every disciplinary category for which the U.S. Office of Civil Rights gathers data for the Department of Education, Black Girls are the only overrepresented group (Anderson, 2016). More data on the disciplinary experiences of Black Girls is required to properly comprehend how unequal discipline practices affect the achievement and social adjustment results of Black children overall (Blake et al., 2011, p. 91).

The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools

Compared to Black Boys, Black Girls have received less attention in the literature on school discipline (Blake et al., 2011, p. 91). According to a report by the National Black Women's Justice Institute, Black Girls are seven times more likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions, four times more likely to be arrested, and four times more likely to receive one or more in-school suspensions in comparison to White female students (Inniss-Thompson, 2018). When Black Girls engage in behaviors seen as ghetto

or a departure from the social standards that specify what constitutes a White middle-class definition of femininity, they are viewed as nonconforming and frequently subject to criminalizing responses (Blake et al., 2011).

In many cases, negative perceptions, informed by stereotypes, lead teachers to assume Black Girls require more significant social correction, leading to increased disciplinary referrals (George & Smith-Evans, 2014). The qualities considered positive in the board room, including assertiveness, often cause our girls to end up in the principal's office or worse. Thus, too many Black Girls are in a no-win situation: they either conform to notions of how girls should behave and be quiet and passive, or they can speak up and be disciplined for defying those expectations and conforming to educators' stereotyped expectations for them (George & Smith-Evans, 2014). Even though there have been established racial inequities in school discipline since the 1970s, disparate punishment practices' effects on Black Girls have only recently been studied (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). According to data from 2006–2007, Black Girls in urban middle schools experienced the most significant rate of suspension growth of any demographic (Losen et al., 2010).

Disobedience or disruptive behavior, the most subjective and ambiguous category of offenses, was one area where Black Girls were disproportionately disciplined, according to data on Black Girls in Ohio (Blake et al., 2015). Tragically, the responses of the juvenile justice and educational systems to Black Girls' purportedly defiant or poor attitudes fail to consider Black Girls' actual experiences and the underlying causes of the behavior in question, such as exposure to trauma, violence, abuse, or other toxic stress (Morris, 2012). It is plausible that, even though they are still children, authorities in

public systems would punish Black Girls more harshly if they believed that they were less innocent, less in need of care, and overall more adult-like (Blake et al., 2017). Black Girls are more likely to underachieve and become disengaged from school due to several historical, institutional, and social problems, making them more susceptible to the long-term effects of dropping out (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

Black Boys were disciplined more than three times as often as their White counterparts during the 2011–2012 school year, while Black Girls were suspended six times as frequently as White Girls (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Compared to 12 percent of Black Girls, only 2 percent of White Girls experienced exclusionary suspensions (Crenshaw et al., 2015). The relative risk of suspension is higher for Black Girls compared to White Girls than for Black Boys compared to White Boys, indicating that race may play a more significant role for girls than boys (Crenshaw et al., 2015). While Black Boys and Black Girls both suffer a racialized risk of punishment at school, Black Girls statistically have a higher risk of suspension and expulsion than other pupils of the same gender (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Stakeholders noted in the report *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected* that girls notice a gender gap in how teachers react to inappropriate behavior in the classroom, stating that if a girl does the same thing as a boy, she is immediately sent to the office and misses out on whatever was going on in that class one young lady stated "I think that teachers come down harder on girls because they are just trying to prevent this behavior in them …" (Crenshaw et al., 2015, p. 31). Resource limitations also compromise the schools' ability to satisfy their pupils' emotional and developmental needs in the current climate where discipline and testing are stressed (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Catherine E. Lhamon, the assistant secretary

for civil rights at the Department of Education, said, "The message we send when we suspend or expel any student is that that student is not worthy of being in the school …; that is a pretty ugly message to internalize and very, very difficult to get past as part of an educational career" (Vega, 2014, para. 23). More data on the disciplinary experiences of Black Girls is required to properly comprehend how unfair discipline practices affect the achievement and social adjustment results of Black children overall (Blake et al., 2011).

Black Girls and The School-To-Prison Pipeline

Black Girls in secure detention experienced the most significant growth in the juvenile population between 1985 and 1997 (Morris, 2012). This data shows that Black Girls are being systematically pushed out of schools and, in many cases, down the school-to-prison pipeline. Morris (2012) defines the "school-to-prison pipeline as a collection of policies, practices, conditions, and prevailing consciousness that facilitate both the criminalization within educational environments and the processes by which criminalization results in the incarceration of youth and young adults" (Morris, 2012, p. 2). In the report *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected* by the African American Policy Forum, it was reported that punitive, as opposed to restorative, approaches to conflict are a factor in Black Girls being expelled from school and having a disproportionate amount of contact with the juvenile justice system (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Participants in the research indicated they were punished for fighting in a class by being suspended, expelled, and even prosecuted. These conflicts could have been resolved more successfully through therapy or other conflict-resolution techniques (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Rather than receiving assistance and services, Black Girls are frequently expelled from school, re-victimized during disciplinary actions, and/or thrust

into the juvenile court system (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). According to previous research, prosecutors, on average, dismissed only three out of every ten cases involving Black Girls but seven out of ten cases involving White Girls (Taylor-Thompson, 2006). "Only by recognizing the phenomenon of adultification can we overcome the perception that '[i]nnocence, like freedom, is a privilege'" (Epstein et al., 2017, p. 14).

Social Emotional Needs of Black Girls

In environments in which discipline is prioritized over counseling, girls who seek help in response to traumatic experiences or who have other unmet needs may gain the attention of school personnel only when they "show their face" or act out in ways that prompt disciplinary intervention (Crenshaw, 2015, p. 36). When surveyed, participants believed that Black Girls need less protection, need to be supported less, need to be comforted less, and are more independent. This view translates into fewer school leadership and mentorship opportunities (Blake et al., 2017). Black Girls, more than any other group, aspire to be leaders, according to research from Girl Scouts of America (2013). For Black Girls to have a chance for success, they must have access to programs that boost their self-esteem and give them significant leadership opportunities (Smith-Evans et al., 2014).

There is proof that positive expressions and encouragement from parents and other influential adults, as well as peers, can promote the development of positive race and gender identities and help to lessen some of the impacts of racism (American Psychological Association, 2008). According to discipline recommendations released by the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education, successful school disciplinary procedures must lower misconduct and disruptive behavior, support and reinforce good behavior and

character development, and aid students in succeeding (U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Black Girls have a variety of experiences and abilities; these experiences should all be seen as strengths and enhanced throughout their school careers (Annamma et al., 2016).

Training on communicating with Black Girls can help de-escalate situations and minimize over-punishment (Blake & Epstein, 2019). In the report *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected*, many Black Girl participants rated their encounters with educators and counselors as unsatisfying and discouraging (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Black Girls have shared that their relationship with school is more favorable when they connect with a teacher and sense that person's true love and appreciation for their potential as scholars (Anderson, 2016).

> Women of color are more likely to push back on things, or they are going to talk a certain way, and you have to understand what they are saying. You have to know how to deal with and not be upset with or be offended by it. … [The girls] are going to question you. It is not that they are being disrespectful. It's they just want to know. (Crenshaw et al., 2015, p. 30)

If schools did a better job of encouraging girls to grow and achieve outside of academics, they would also [grow] academically, but schools have not made that connection yet (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

Historically, Black Girls have been seen as resilient and strong enough to survive harsh social conditions (Evans-Winters & Girls for Gender Equity, 2017). Girls' desires for affirmation often go unmet since they are not seen as problems or in need, which

might make them gravitate toward negative paths or cause them to slip between the cracks (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

> What I have seen is that when girls do well in school, it is kind of overlooked. Because despite everything [more is] still expected of them than the boys. [T]here is rarely anything done to celebrate them or to encourage them to keep going …]". (Crenshaw et al., 2015, p. 32)

"[I]f no one is celebrating [with] you, then you kind of fade, and then you have another alternative culture that is waiting for you where you will be celebrated …" (Crenshaw et al., 2015, p. 32). "It's important that we allow them to experience childhood and its related benefits for as long as possible. We owe it to Black Girls to challenge the obstacles in their way" (Meadows, 2020, para. 27).

When girls are in crisis, we must pull them closer, not push them away (Morris, 2019). In the book *Sing a Rhythm, Dance a Blues* (2019), Morris shares a model school that supports the social and emotional well-being of Black Girls—after researching the criminalization of Black Girls, Stephanie Patton, a middle school principal in Columbus, Ohio, decided that the campus would no longer punish students for bad attitudes. In place of exclusionary discipline practices, a plan was created that included social and emotional learning practices. Black Girls would participate in mentoring, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and restorative conferencing. Girls would begin the day with an advisory program that promoted girls' self-worth, communication skills, and goal-setting. The campus began to use suspensions only as a last resort.

Along with the new discipline plan, the campus also created a visually stimulating SEL environment with positive quotes around the building and calming spaces for girls to

regroup or reflect before or after a conflict. The campus used classroom space for a Positive Behavioral Intervention Support (PBIS) room filled with incentives. In-school suspension (ISS) rooms were set up for girls to complete academic, social, and emotional activities before returning to their classrooms. This changed ISS from a space where students usually only completed busy work until it was time to return to class. In this space, the students were held accountable for completing the task sent by their teacher. The principal reviewed student work. With these initiatives in place, campus attendance increased, and suspensions decreased. Zero students were expelled, and student ownership of conflict improved. Principal Patton shared that the campus motto was: "Real queens fix each other's crown" (Morris, 2019, p. 20).

In the article *#SayHerName: Supporting the social-emotional health of Black girls in the early years* Dr. Iruka calls for schools to take five actions to create learning environments where Black Girls feel nurtured and supported beginning in their preschool years (Iruka, 2021). The five steps include: 1) Check your biases; 2) Create a welcoming physical environment; 3) Provide nurturing and responsive experiences that promote engagement and develop relationships; 4) Engage in interactions that build positive racial and gender identity; 5) Use discipline practices that are fair and nonjudgmental (Iruka, 2021). Black Girls face bias daily in schools in this country due to the intersection of their two identities—their race and gender. Educators must begin to examine their biases and create environments that affirm Black Girls' race and gender and focus on their social and emotional well-being (Iruka, 2021).

The Effects of SEL on Discipline Rates

With many states implementing legislation to reduce school discipline rates, many districts have turned to social and emotional practices to support scholars with misbehavior. Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools became one of the first to hire a social and emotional learning director to drive SEL in 2012. The implementation of SEL in this district had a significant impact. A high school campus in the district saw a 33 percent reduction in disciplinary referrals after two years of implementation, while a middle school reduced suspensions by 60 percent after one year (James, 2017).

The article *Getting SEL-Informed Discipline Policies Right* reviewed data from three school districts: Syracuse, Denver, and Cleveland. All three districts have substantially reduced exclusionary discipline using social and emotional practices such as restorative interventions in place of exclusionary discipline practices. In 2014–2015, when Syracuse implemented its reforms, 54 percent fewer black students were suspended than in 2011–12, with the number of White students being suspended also reducing by 39 percent. In Denver, from 2006 to 2013, the district's overall suspension rate dropped by half, from 10.58 percent to 5.63 percent. In the Cleveland school district, suspensions dropped by 60 percent over three years (Gregory & Fergus, 2017).

Conceptual Framework

Social Emotional Learning

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is defined as

the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the

knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions

and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others,

establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring

decisions. (CASEL, 2022, para. 1)

Harvard Graduate School of Education professor Stephanie Jones defines SEL as

foundational skills that are a fundamental part of learning in any classroom environment.

For example, when students raise their hand instead of yelling out an answer, listen

carefully to a teacher's instructions, and work productively with a group of peers, these

are all SEL practices in action (Reilly, 2022).

History of Social and Emotional Learning. Although SEL was first popularized

in the 1990s, the roots of social and emotional learning can be traced back to ancient

Greece when Plato proposed a holistic curriculum that required "a balance of training in

physical education, the arts, math, science, character, and moral judgment" (Edutopia,

2011, para. 5). During the 1950s, psychologist Abraham Maslow shared a theory called

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The theory states that behavior is motivated by the human

need to fulfill basic needs before more complex ones can be addressed. Children must

feel safe and secure to trust, take risks, learn, achieve, and grow. From this came the idea

that students must feel safe and supported to reach their greatest potential (LaHayne,

2019). If students come to school without their basic needs being met, it will be

inherently more difficult for them to learn (Why SEL? - SEL4ED: SEL Resources for

Education, n.d.).

In modern times, Dr. James Comer led the movement for social and emotional

learning. Dr. Comer and his colleagues at Yale University's Child Study Center began

implementing a program to support the whole child. The program called the Comer

School Development Program was implemented into practice in two low-income, low-

achieving, predominately African American elementary schools in New Haven, Connecticut (Edutopia, 2011). By the early 1980s, the two schools saw a decline in behavior challenges and truancy and exceeded the national average in academic performance (CASEL, n.d.). With the success of this work, the superintendent of New Haven Public Schools, John Dow, Jr., called for a districtwide initiative focusing on social development. In 1987, the New Haven Social Development program was formed. The program, consisting of educators and researchers, was led by Timothy Shriver and Dr. Roger P. Weissberg and pioneered SEL strategies across K-12 classrooms (CASEL, n.d.).

Social and emotional learning became popular in 1994 when Daniel Goleman, author of *Social Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence*, came together with scholars from multiple fields, including emotional intelligence, child development, prevention science, bullying prevention, and public (CASEL, 2007). The scholars came together to identify competencies students need to navigate school and life successfully. The organization formed from this work was the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning, later known as the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Through this group, the term "social and emotional learning" was born (CASEL, n.d.).

The goal of CASEL was to establish high-quality, evidence-based SEL as an essential part of schooling from preschool through high school (CASEL, n.d.). A large body of research has demonstrated the effectiveness of SEL in supporting students' academic and long-term success over the past decades (CASEL, n.d.). This research has increased the demand for SEL among teachers, school leaders, district administrators,

policymakers, parents, employers, and students, causing an increase in the implementation of evidence-based SEL strategies to support students (CASEL, n.d.).

The Impact of Social and Emotional Learning. Research shows that SEL education has positively affected various outcomes, including academic performance, good relationships, mental wellness, and more (CASEL, 2022). Specifically, SEL instruction can lead to less emotional distress, fewer disciplinary incidents, increased school attendance, and improved test scores and grades (Clark, n.d.). Schools implementing SEL practices have a culture where students and teachers respect one another (Positive Action Staff, 2022). It can be evident when social and emotional skills are present or absent in students and schools (Aguilar & Bridges, 2023).

The CASEL Framework, also called the CASEL wheel, addresses five competencies of SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These five competencies can be taught and applied at various periods in life, from childhood to adulthood, and across diverse cultural contexts (CASEL, 2022). These competencies can teach the skills required to succeed in multiple areas of life, from achieving academic goals to becoming more confident in social interactions (Positive Action Staff, 2020). While these five competencies work together to support the emotional well-being of scholars, school districts and schools may prioritize different SEL competencies based on specific student needs or the district's profile of a graduate (Aguilar & Bridges, 2023).

Self-Awareness. Self-awareness is the ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and the effect they have on one's behavior. Self-aware students can identify their feelings, recognize their strengths, examine prejudice and bias, and exhibit

a growth mindset (Landmark Outreach, 2017). Research shows that students who understand their emotions perform better academically and have higher levels of well-being (Fredrick, n.d.). Self-aware students have positive relationships with teachers and other students and are less likely to participate in risky behaviors (Fredrick, n.d.). Strong self-awareness skills continue to benefit students into adulthood. Self-aware students are prepared to set, plan, and achieve short and long-term goals, which are critical for success in college and beyond (Fredrick, n.d.).

Students who know and understand themselves can use coping strategies when they are getting upset, advocate for themselves, and understand how their actions affect others to resolve conflicts better. People who are self-aware may ask questions, including:

- How am I feeling and why?
- When do I feel angry?
- What kind of person do I want to be today?
- What stresses me out (Aguilar & Bridges, 2023)?

Accurately identifying your emotions enables you to productively handle these emotions (Aguilar & Bridges, 2023). Recognizing your thoughts and feelings can impact your behavior, encourage you to make positive changes in your life, and provide a foundation to establish and maintain healthy relationships with others.
(Positive Action Staff, 2020).

Self-Management. Self-management is effectively managing one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors (CASEL, n.d.). Self-management also supports achieving goals and aspirations (Landmark Outreach, 2017). Once students have learned self-

management, they can manage stress, control impulses, and motivate themselves

(Landmark Outreach, 2017).

Improving self-management can enhance a student's academic performance,

ability to set and work towards goals, and ability to control emotionally driven behavior.

People who are able to self-manage may ask questions like:

- How am I feeling and why?

- When do I feel angry?

- What kind of person do I want to be today?

- What stresses me out (Aguilar & Bridges, 2023)?

Knowing strategies for self-management helps students to learn to manage other

resources like their time, energy, money, possessions, and talents, as well as to feel good

about themselves and feel like they have more control over what happens to them in

school and life (Aguilar & Bridges, 2023).

Social Awareness. Social awareness is the ability to understand the perspectives

of others and empathize with them, including people from different backgrounds,

cultures, and contexts. Being compassionate for others and understanding historical and

social norms for behavior are components of social awareness competency (CASEL,

n.d.). Perspective-taking, empathy, appreciating diversity, and showing respect for others

are all skills taught in the social awareness competency (CASEL, n.d.).

Social awareness strategies can help students establish and maintain healthy

relationships and social interactions throughout their lifetime (Aguilar & Bridges, 2023).

Students who are socially aware ask questions such as:

- I wonder how that made _____ feel?

- How would I feel if I were in that situation?

- They seem sad right now. Maybe I should _____.

- Thanks for sharing! My family does it this way (Aguilar & Bridges, 2023).

The social awareness competency relies on students' abilities to demonstrate other social and emotional competencies. To build social awareness, students must have self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills (Landmark School Outreach, 2018).

Relationship Skills. Relationship skills are establishing and maintaining healthy and supportive relationships and effectively navigating settings with diverse individuals and groups (CASEL, n.d.). Students with solid relationship skills can also communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, work collaboratively to solve problems and negotiate conflict constructively.

Students who can build positive relationships with those they learn and work with contribute to a more positive school or work environment (Positive Action Staff, 2020). Students that have relationship skills reflect on statements including:

- When you _____ it made me feel _____.

- Can you explain what you mean by that?

- I disagree with you because _____ (Aguilar & Bridges, 2023).

Relationship skills are essential for students at school with peers and teachers and into their adult lives in professional areas with colleagues and bosses.

Responsible Decision Making. Responsible decision-making is the ability of students to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. Considering all possible consequences of a decision before making it is a responsible decision-making skill (CASEL, n.d.). Responsible

decision-making also includes assessing ethical standards and safety concerns and evaluating the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being (Aguilar & Bridges, 2023). Responsible Decision-Making reflection may sound like:

- How will this impact others?

- Is it worth it?

- Why do I want to make this choice?

- Will this help me? (Aguilar & Bridges, 2023).

"To make the most appropriate behavioral choices, students need to learn how to evaluate a situation, analyze their options, and consider the potential consequences of each option for themselves and others" (Landmark School, 2022). The responsible decision-making competency gives students tools to consider the effects of different actions, understand their strengths and limitations, and know when to ask for more help when needed in making important decisions (Positive Action Staff, 2020).

"SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation" (CASEL et al., 2022). SEL can help address various forms of inequity while empowering youth and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities (CASEL et al., 2022). A 2011 study showed improved classroom behavior, an increased ability to manage stress and depression, and better attitudes about themselves, others, and school following the implementation of SEL (CASEL, 2022).

Black Girlhood Theory

Ruth Nicole Brown (2009) defines Black Girlhood as "the representations, memories, and lived experiences of being and becoming in a body marked as youthful Black, and female" (Brown, 2009, x). This definition of Black Girlhood is not dependent on any one identity. The vision for Black Girlhood is freedom for Black Girls. *Saving Our Lives Hear Our Truths* (SOLHOT) was created by Ruth Nicole Brown as a space for the collective thought of Black Women and Girls responding to the question: What does freedom of Black Girls look like? Seven questions guide the vision for SOLHOT (Brown, 2013, p. 2):

1. What is necessary to imagine Black girlhood as a space for freedom?

2. What would need to be abolished and created to enact such a vision of Black girlhood?

3. Who would commit to such an idea?

4. How do Black Girls experience affirmation, and how does it feel to them to be free?

5. How is this vision of Black Girlhood useful for Black Girls and women?

6. What is so specific about practicing Black girlhood that the process is able to lead to something beyond the world as we currently know it?

7. What does this vision of Black Girlhood look like in practice, and what new knowledge emerges that may then be useful for and benefit everyone?

The study of Girlhood focuses on the social and cultural experiences of Black Girls. This field has historically been rooted in the Eurocentric thought of what it means

to be a girl in a White-male patriarchal society (Girls for Gender Equity & Evans-Winters, 2017, p. 415). Girlhood studies have come under fire for failing to analyze and discuss girls of color adequately. Black Girlhood Studies, in contrast, emphasize how Black Girls bring valuable insights into the deficit-based narratives (Wright, 2016).

"Black Girlhood makes possible the affirmation of Black Girls' lives and, if necessary, their liberation" (Brown, 2013, p. 1). It is essential to investigate how Black Girls still enjoy and express childhood delight and creativity despite the oppressive institutions that they face (Epstein et al., 2017). Black girlhood can be a powerful weapon for Black Girls to establish safe places for themselves and each other despite how society views them (Brown, 2009, p. 2).

Summary of the Chapter and Research Gaps

In this chapter, I explored the literature on three major areas: 1) misconceptions and stereotypes about Black Girls, 2) discipline disparities facing Black Girls in schools, and 3) the benefits of social and emotional learning practices for Black Girls. The literature on stereotypes, adultification, self-esteem, discipline, criminalization, the school-to-prison pipeline, social and emotional learning, and Black Girlhood studies were reviewed to put these disciplines in discussion with one another. There are many misconceptions about Black Girls, including that they face different struggles in schools than Black Boys and that they are resilient and require less emotional support than their White counterparts. Literature exploring the school-to-prison pipeline primarily focuses on the plight of Black Boys and leaves Black Girls out of the conversation (Morris, 2016). It is crucial that research and policy frameworks go beyond the assumptions that all at-risk kids of color are male and that White Girls' concerns are identical to those of

girls of color to address the issues that Black and Brown Girls face (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

Due to the numerous barriers preventing their success in education, Black Girls are not graduating from high school prepared for college and careers on various academic achievement measures, including graduation rates, grade retention, proficiency in core courses, and access to and completion of post-secondary education. As a result, they and their families must deal with severe economic consequences (Smith-Evans et al., 2014). Despite the apparent link between schooling, future income level, and financial security, Black Girls' educational performance garners less attention (Smith-Evans et al., 2014).

Although all children have the right to an education, Black Girls continue to face numerous institutional disadvantages (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). Previous literature on the discipline disparities of Black Girls has not discussed ways that schools are engaging the emotional well-being of the girls they serve. "For students of color, schools are sites where their physical, psychological, and emotional safety and well-being are under constant assault; schools must become environments of joy for Black Girls" (McKinney, 2022).

As Fannie Lou Hamer reminds us, "Nobody's free until everybody's free" (Brooks & Houck, 2010). Black Girls deserve to be free. Black Girls deserve the opportunity to dream and hope for a better future. It's our responsibility to protect them and restore the innocence that is constantly being taken away (Meadows, 2020).
To close the achievement gaps that Black Girls face daily, research must be done on the interventions used to support Black Girls in schools. It cannot be assumed that the tools to reach Black Boys or White Girls will successfully support the needs of Black Girls. Researchers must begin to listen to Black Girls and create programs to meet their specific needs.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of social and emotional practices on discipline rates of Black middle school girls. This chapter describes the research design and methodology that was utilized to conduct this study.

Research Design

This study implemented a sequential exploratory mixed methods design in which the researcher analyzed the effect of social and emotional learning practices on Black Girls' discipline experiences using both quantitative and qualitative analysis sequentially. A mixed-methods design was selected for this study because of the central idea that the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches combined provides a better understanding of a research problem than either approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In a mixed methods research design, the researcher collects, analyzes, and mixes quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This type of research provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of each design independently.

In an exploratory research design, a two-phase approach is utilized. First, qualitative data is explored to understand a phenomenon and then builds to a second quantitative phase, as illustrated in Figure 1 (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The separate phases completed in this design make describing, implementing, and reporting the data straightforward (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 78).

Figure 1

The Exploratory Research Design

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┌─────────────┐      ┌─────────────┐      ┌───────────────────────────┐
│             │      │             │      │  Interpretation based on  │
│    QUAL     │ ───▶ │    QUAN     │ ───▶ │      QUAL ──▶             │
│             │      │             │      │      QUAN results         │
└─────────────┘      └─────────────┘      └───────────────────────────┘
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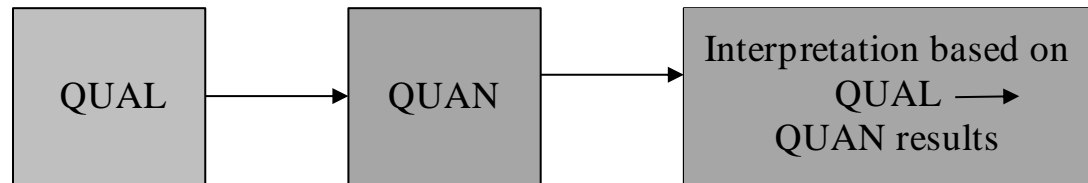
In this research design, the researcher attempted to establish a cause-effect relationship between variables. The research objective in this study contained three components. The initial objective was to identify and describe the effect of social and emotional practices on the emotional well-being of middle school Black Girls. Data to measure the discipline rates of the participants on both campuses came from the campus discipline report, an existing data set. Data to measure the effect of social and emotional practices on the well-being of the participants was measured using student interviews. Qualitative data was engaged first to establish the girls' voices and opinions of their schools' support for their social and emotional well-being. A semi-structured interview was conducted with middle school Black Girls on the two participating campuses. Interviews gave the participants more opportunity to elaborate on their responses.

The second objective was to determine any differences in discipline rates (in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and DAEP rates) for middle school Black Girls on a campus that employs social and emotional learning practices. After the interviews were examined, quantitative data was collected from a pre-existing data set of the discipline rates from the two campuses. The final component was linking the two data sets to establish a relationship. Merging the quantitative and qualitative data results

provided a better understanding of the reasons for differences in suspension rates of girls on the two campuses.

Qualitative Participants

The qualitative sample comprised nine self-identified Black Girls who attended two different middle schools in the Houston, TX, area. The grade range of the girls was sixth to eighth, with two girls in 6th grade, four in 7th grade, and three in 8th grade. Convenience sampling was used for the recruitment of interview participants. Convenience sampling or availability sampling relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in the study. Possible participants were identified by the counselor at one campus and the principal at the other. Potential participants were then given a consent and assent form giving permission from both the parent and the child for the girl to participate in the study. Participants who returned both the consent and assent forms were able to participate in the study. Four girls from Malcolm Middle School submitted consent and assent forms, while five from Sampson Middle School submitted both documents, permitting them to participate in the study.

Qualitative Instrument

An interview was conducted to assess the social and emotional well-being of the participants. The thirteen-question questionnaire included ten open-ended questions, one yes or no question, and two Likert scale questions with answer choices being always, very frequently, occasionally, rarely, very rarely, and never. The survey questions came from the five social and emotional learning competencies from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (see Appendix B). During the interview, girls were asked questions based on the five competencies of social and

emotional learning. Participants shared their perspectives on the social and emotional practices implemented on campus and how educators and administrators supported their social and emotional well-being. They also addressed areas of improvement for their school community.

Qualitative Data Collection

A group of girls from two of the campuses were interviewed. Four girls were interviewed from a campus that utilizes social and emotional learning practices and five from a campus that does not. Girls were interviewed individually in a private office, and the interviews lasted approximately 10 minutes. The responses were audio recorded. Only the researcher had access to recorded materials and digital notes. Notes were stored online in a private folder only accessible to the researcher. The .mp3 recordings were stored in a passkey-protected computer in a private folder only accessible to the researcher.

The interviews were audio recorded during the data collection process to facilitate transcription. In addition, the researcher took notes during the data collection to assist in the analysis process. During the qualitative analysis, the researcher used an inductive approach to investigate the differences in experiences of Black Girls on the two campuses. The discussions examined their current support in school, the tools and strategies shared with them, and what could be improved on the campus to meet their needs better.

The semi-structured interview protocol for individual interviews was created to explore the participant's feelings regarding their social and emotional well-being on campus. The questions from the survey were open-ended questions, with the expectation

that the participants would guide the conversation. The researcher ensured that every participant could share as much as they wanted regarding their campus and social and emotional health. After posing the specific questions to the participants, the researcher asked: Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your social and emotional needs or school? This question allowed the participants to consider any changes they would make to their campus if allowed to advocate for themselves and other girls.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The interview audio recordings were transcribed using the Otter Transcription Tool and then transcribed again by the researcher. During the transcription process, all participant names were replaced with pseudonyms. Following transcription, the researcher analyzed the interviews and identified common themes from the interviews. Once the common themes were identified, the researcher summarized the results to determine the effects of social and emotional learning practices on the emotional well-being of the girls.

Quantitative Population

For the quantitative part of the research study, pre-existing discipline data was used from the two participating campuses. The data set included the in-school suspension rates, out-of-school suspension rates, and DAEP rates for the Black Girls attending the campuses.

The first campus in the study is Sampson Middle School. Sampson Middle School is a public school in a large suburban setting. Data from the campus shows that the student population of Sampson Middle is 797, and the school serves sixth to eighth

grades. The school's minority student enrollment is 96%. The total student population is made up of 50% female students and 50% male students. The school enrolls 72% economically disadvantaged students. The student diversity demographics of the campus are as follows: 3.6% of the student population is White; 46.7% of the population is Hispanic or Latino; 42.2% of the population is Black or African American; 4.9% Of the population is Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander; 1.9% of the population is Two or more races; 0.4% of the population is American Indian or Alaska Native; 0.4% of the population is Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The campus employs two full-time counselors.

As the campus principal shared, Sampson Middle School does not employ any specific social and emotional learning practices. However, campus counselors are available upon request from students and teachers to support the students' mental health.

The second campus in the study is Malcolm Middle School. Malcolm Middle School is a magnet school located in a large city setting. Data from the campus shows that the student population of Malcolm Middle is 682, and the school serves sixth to eighth grades. The school's minority student enrollment is 99%. The student population comprises 49% female students and 51% male students. The school enrolls 96% economically disadvantaged students. The student diversity demographics of the campus are as follows: 1.5% of the population is White; 83.6% of the population is Hispanic or Latino; 14.5% of the population is Black or African American; 0.3% of the population is Two or more races; and 0.1% of the population is American Indian or Alaska Native. The campus employs two full-time counselors and one full-time social worker. This campus

also has the support of a district Teacher Behavior Specialist who supports the campus as the Social Emotional Learning Coordinator.

Malcolm Middle School has a customized social and emotional learning program for scholars on campus. The campus counselors are available upon request from students and teachers to support the students' mental health. The practices utilized on the campus include Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 student behavior support. For Tier 1 support, the campus counselors support classrooms weekly with social and emotional lessons from the five Social and Emotional Learning Competencies. For Tier 2 and Tier 3 support, campus counselors support students using Rethink Ed lessons for targeted intervention. Rethink Ed is a fully digital social and emotional learning platform that teaches skills including stress management, resilience, and empathy. The campus also has a Thinkery room to support scholars as needed. A Thinkery is a therapeutic, supportive, calming space that assists students in their self-calming efforts by offering them an opportunity to relax and reset. Inside a Thinkery, students can participate in silent reflection, yoga, journaling, meditation, physical movement, and sensory activities (HISD SEL Dept - SEL Thinkery, 2022).

Quantitative Instrument

Each campus provided data used for the quantitative analysis. The requested data only included entries for girls on each campus who experienced school discipline. Raw data included girls of all races but was split to allow for the interrogation of only Black Girls' discipline occurrences from the 2021-2022 school year. The data set included in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and DAEP rates for Black Girls on the campuses and the discipline code for each occurrence.

Quantitative Data Collection

The two participating campuses provided the datasets used in the quantitative analysis. The data shared represented the discipline rates, including in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and DAEP rates for all girls on the campus. Each report includes the student's grade level, race, and sex. While this dataset is not necessarily representative of every school in the state because of the small sample size, the data does provide a good representation of the school discipline for similar schools in the area.

Quantitative Data Analysis

A t-test was used to compare the discipline rates from the two campuses' discipline summary reports. The t-test compared the mean of the two groups to determine whether the campus that employs social and emotional learning practices has a higher, lower, or the same discipline rate as the campus that does not implement social and emotional learning practices.

The data provided required manipulation before the researcher could analyze it for this study's specific purpose. The data was cleaned by segregating the discipline rates for Black Girls using the race code on each report because it was impossible to pull data for just the Black Girls in each school. Once the data was separated by race code, each discipline type's total number of occurrences was drawn to compare.

Limitations and Delimitations

Although this study yielded significant findings, it is important to note factors that may have influenced the interpretation of the results. One limitation of this study is that it used a sample of only Black Girls in middle schools on the two selected campuses. The use of a convenience sample was a limitation of the study. A convenience sample was

used by selecting girls identified by the school administration who returned the consent and assent forms. This study focused only on the voices of Black Girls in middle school. This being the case, school administrators, teachers, and parents were not interviewed. In the future, research, including the voices of these stakeholders, could add to the bank of research on this topic.

This study's focus was entirely on Black middle school girls. This study purposefully narrowed its focus on female girls as previous research and literature have overwhelmingly concentrated on Black boys' school discipline rates. Since school administrators are not rewarded for reporting discipline occurrences accurately, caution should be exercised while dealing with the actual discipline records. Furthermore, there are no accountability mechanisms or assessments to confirm the validity of reported instances of student disciplinary actions. Although school discipline records are the best indicator of a student's behavior, they are not always accurate due to human error.

Summary of the Chapter

Recent developments in educational research are starting to explore Black girls' school experiences. More data on the disciplinary experiences of Black Girls is required to properly comprehend how unfair discipline practices affect the achievement and social adjustment results of Black children overall (Blake et al., 2011). Inadequate progress has been made in addressing the issue of providing Black Girls with equitable and fair chances in education (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Continued research should focus on how schools respond to Black Girls' needs. The study aimed to show how Black girls respond to practices in the five core social and emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. To

understand the effect of SEL practices on the discipline rates of Black Girls.

Policymakers must look for new and substantial research to develop evidence-based

programs that better support Black Girls in their academic experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of social and emotional practices on discipline rates of Black middle school girls. Chapter 4 presents findings for this study's quantitative and qualitative research inquiries. Given the realm of this study, it was essential first to understand the more significant problem of school discipline for Black Girls in the United States. The quantitative research investigated the differences in discipline rates for Black Girls attending a middle school that employs social and emotional learning practices and a school that does not utilize social and emotional practices. In addition, the qualitative methodology provided depth with the addition of interviews of Black Girls sharing their experiences, adding a level of understanding that could not have been accomplished with quantitative methods alone. Therefore, this study required both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Chapter 4 presents the qualitative methods first.

Qualitative Findings

The 13 interview questions (Appendix B) aligned with the five Social and Emotional Learning competencies from the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The questions from each competency were analyzed to identify the themes presented in the responses.

Questions number 1 and 2 were framed based on the relationship skills competencies. The first question asked: How have your teachers and other school personnel attempted to build a relationship with you? The themes represented in the participants' answers to these questions included offering help when needed and actively

listening to the girls when issues arise. Of the four girls interviewed from Malcolm Middle School, all four shared having positive experiences in this area, with one Marissa stating, "I feel like all the activities that they do for us with them like we build relationships with them, and just learning with them, we build relationships." when asked for an example she shared "Like today like the field day, okay, like we played together with the teacher, the teachers joined us and like, we're at the end of the school year, we have like field trips with our teacher." Of the five girls interviewed from Sampson Middle School, four girls expressed one or more of their teachers not attempting to build a relationship with them, with one Kaitlyn stating, "It's been kinda hard. Some of them, some of my teachers, I haven't built a relationship with them."

The second question asked: What strategies have you been taught for building relationships with others? Five of the nine girls interviewed shared a response that included using kindness as a strategy for building relationships with others. Two participants responded that they had been taught not to worry about what people have to say and to let things go or not hold grudges. The outliers for this question are one participant, Dionne (Malcolm Middle School), who shared that she has yet to be taught any relationship-building strategies, and one participant, Kaitlyn (Sampson Middle School), who has been taught to listen to her friends.

Questions 3, 4, 10, and 12 were framed based on the responsible decision-making competency. Question 3 asked: What conflict resolution techniques have you been taught this year? The themes presented in the responses included seeking assistance from an adult and discussing the issue with the other person. The outliers for this question were two participants from Sampson Middle School, Shancey and Kaitlyn, who had shared

that they had not been taught any conflict resolution techniques, and one participant from Malcolm, Marissa, who shared that she would ignore any conflict not to receive a punishment sharing,

> We know that if we like get in trouble. We're gonna get scratched off the list and can't go to prom. So, I know if somebody say something to me that I don't like, I just have to brush it off and just have to deal with that …

The next question asked: What problem-solving strategies have you been encouraged to use this year? Two themes were present in the responses to this question, with most participants sharing that they have been taught not to engage in the situation or to go to an adult for assistance. One participant, Dionne from Malcolm Middle School, shared that she had yet to be introduced to problem-solving strategies because she does not get into trouble. Shancey from Sampson shared that when presented with a problem, she should "just let everybody talk and know each side of the story."

Question number 10 asked: What steps do you take when you have to make a decision? In response to this question, all participants from both campuses shared a similar decision-making process of breaking down the decision and considering all possible outcomes before making a choice.

The last question in this competency asked: When conflict arises with you and another person, what steps do you take to diffuse the situation? In response to this question, seven out of the nine participants interviewed would walk away from a conflict. There were two outliers in the responses. Marissa from Malcolm Middle School stated, "I just be letting people say what they like to say. I'll argue back with you, but it's not gonna get to a point where I wanna fight you 'cause it's not that serious. It never gets that

serious." The second outlier response was from Lisa from Sampson Middle School, who stated, "I could just stop talking because like if I say similar stuff if I say what I feel what I feel in my head it's just gonna make the conflict worse or I could just not talk at all."

Questions 6, 8, and 9 were framed based on the self-awareness competency. Question number 6 asked: If you need someone to talk to, is there someone on campus that you trust? In response to this question, eight out of the nine participants stated that there is at least one adult on campus that they trust. The outlier to this question was one participant from Sampson Middle School, Lacey, who stated that she did not trust an adult on campus: "Because I feel that if I tell someone like a bunch of private stuff, they will go to the other teachers and everybody."

Question number 8 asked: How often do you feel emotionally safe at school? In response to this question, seven of the nine participants shared that they occasionally feel emotionally safe at school. In comparison, two participants, one from each campus, said they rarely feel emotionally safe at school.

The next Likert scale question asked: How often are you able to identify your emotions? The participants from Sampson Middle School responded to this question with occasionally three out of five participants and always two out of five participants. In response to this question, the participants from Malcolm Middle School selected very frequently, rarely, never, and very rarely.

Questions number 5 and 7 were framed based on the self-management competency. Question number 5 asked: Where can you go on campus if you need to take a break? In response to this question, all of the participants from Malcolm Middle School responded that they would either go to the counselor or the social worker's office. Of the

five participants from Sampson Middle School, one participant would go to the Assistant Principal's office, one to a teacher they had a relationship with, one to the counselor, and the last one would go to another staff member they had a relationship with. Other areas the participants from Sampson mentioned retreating to when they needed a break included the hallway, bathroom, and library.

The last question in this competency asked: What activities have you done this year to plan for the future? Five of the nine participants interviewed shared an experience researching college and careers either in a class or independently. Taye from Malcolm Middle School shared that in her business class, she had the opportunity to build a website for a hair and nail business she would like to have in the future. Two participants interviewed shared that they participated in athletics to prepare for the future. Two of the participants, one from each campus, stated that they had yet to do any activities to plan for the future.

Question number 11 was framed based on the social awareness competency. The question in this competency asked: How do you feel when you are around people that are different from you? Six of the nine participants stated that they have a generally normal feeling around those who are different from them, with Queen from Malcolm Middle School sharing, "Normal, because I really don't have a problem with people being different because everyone's different in their own way, so I don't mind." Two participants stated that they have awkward feelings around those different from them, with one participant being from each campus. One participant, Alexandria from Sampson Middle School, said,

I think, you know, depends on the person. Like nowadays, sometimes you can tell that people are, you know, no, you're different. And I couldn't hold that against you. And then other people, it's kind of like, you don't even notice.

The last question in the survey allowed the girls to share any other ideas about their social and emotional needs, asking: Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your social and emotional needs or your school? For the survey's final question, four participants shared things their campus could do better to support their social and emotional needs. Three girls attend Sampson Middle School, while one attends Malcolm Middle School. The girls' responses were as follows: Lacey stated that she believed the campus should make staffing changes and better staff training. She shared,

Like be more respectful? And sometimes kind of think about what you say, because a lot of teachers here don't think about what they're gonna say before they say it, and a lot of them they just jump to conclusions before asking questions.

Shancey stated she also believed the campus should make staffing changes when asked if she thought that her teachers were trained on how to support her social and emotional needs she replied, "Oh no, I think there's just more trying to just teach and give us a little care." Alexandria shared the following to this question:

I think they shouldn't pick and choose just by how someone acts or looks because here it's like I get the first impressions are a lot. And the minute someone starts to like act bad or act out, they really like don't want to deal with them or trust them. But sometimes people they go through it, and they all have their different struggles, and that like things that can stress them out at home and bring them into

school, which could also cause people to act out for like many different reasons, not just bad behavior. So, like, just trying to stop and see the person is okay, whether they act bad or talk a lot or that should always be an option because you don't know what someone else's going through, you don't know if they're scared, you don't know they're comfortable. And I think everyone should be able to come to school and like not have to watch out if someone that you know is about to come up behind you, or someone that you know is gonna hit you, or be able to come to school and just like feel at peace and not have to worry about what this person said about you, or what this person is doing is going to do to you you know.

When asked if there was anything else she would like to share, she stated:

I think many people, not only just me, but many people, my color, or just other races, struggle. I think many people, not only just me, but many people, my color, or just other races struggle to fit in because they always have this, you know, everyone thinks different of them because of, like, what they hear in the past or in history books about them. So it's like, oh, you're black girl. So you can have attitude gonna be loud, or you know, you're Mexican, so to speak in Spanish, or you're talking bad about me in a different language, like, that's kind of how it is here. And it's not always like that because we weren't always born in the hood; you not always born in the suburbs. So we all have, whether if we're black or not, we all have been born and raised in different environments. So, we're all going to act/be different. We're not all going to just like ready to fight, ready to pop off. Some of us actually are different, trying to be better. And some people just don't

understand that and don't get that. But from the color of our skin, we get judged on how we act when it's not always like that. It's a different time. It's a different century. And I think people are still still gonna pass on what we used to be and how we used to be. And, you know, I think we should all just be fair because now race is just a color nowadays. Like everyone tries to be different. Everyone does different things everyone is born different. To me, race is just a color cause we're all people. We're all humans. We all have emotions. So I think that nothing else should matter.

Taye from Malcolm Middle School shared,

I think we should have like more counselors to help. Because (our counselor), like she helps a lot of people. I don't think that all that stuff should be on her. I think they should have another counselor like her. So, like, they can split the work so she don't have to have sit down talks with people every five minutes.

When asked if the campus only has one counselor, she responded, "I think (social worker) is a counselor, but she's busy with events and stuff. I just feel better talking to (counselor) because she's like a calm person, and (social worker) is always busy."

Quantitative Findings

This study also investigated whether Black Girls attending a campus that employed social and emotional learning practices received more, less, or the same number of discipline referrals as Black Girls who did not attend a campus utilizing these practices.

Research Question 1

Are there any differences between middle schools that utilize social and emotional learning practices and middle schools that do not use social and emotional learning practices on in-school suspension rates among Black Girls?

Black Girls at Sampson Middle School received 47 in-school suspensions during the school year, while Malcolm Middle School assigned 0 Black Girls in-school suspensions for the sampled school year. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the two groups of participants. As shown in Table 1, the results were t = 3.771 p = .001.

Table 1

In-School Suspension Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
VAR00002	Equal variances assumed	9.015	.004	3.771	48	<.001	<.001	1.11905	.29675	.52239	1.71570
	Equal variances not assumed			8.713	41.000	<.001	<.001	1.11905	.12843	.85967	1.37842

This result is statistically significant, indicating that the social and emotional learning practices positively affected the in-school suspension rates of the middle school Black Girls. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question 2

Are there any differences between middle schools that utilize social and emotional learning practices and middle schools that do not use social and emotional learning practices on out-of-school suspension rates among Black Girls?

Black Girls at Sampson Middle School received 39 out-of-school suspensions during the school year, while Malcolm Middle School assigned 15 out-of-school

suspensions for the sampled population. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the two groups of participants. As shown in Table 2, the results were t = -2.238, p = .030.

Table 2

Out-of-School Suspension Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
							Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
VAR00002	Equal variances assumed	1.125	.294	-2.238	48	.015	.030	-.94643	.42280	-1.79652	-.09633
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.756	8.358	.058	.116	-.94643	.53895	-2.18005	.28719

This result is statistically significant, indicating that the social and emotional learning practices positively affected the out-of-school suspension rates of the middle school Black Girls. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question 3

` Are there any differences between middle schools that utilize social and emotional learning practices and middle schools that do not use social and emotional learning practices on DAEP rates among Black Girls?

Black Girls at Sampson Middle School received 5 DAEP referrals during the school year, while Malcolm Middle School assigned 0 Black Girls DAEP referrals for the sampled school year. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the two groups of participants. As shown in Table 3, the results were t = -.899, p = .373.

Table 3

DAEP Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One–Sided p	Two–Sided p			Lower	Upper
VAR00002	Equal variances assumed	4.039	.050	.899	48	.187	.373	.09524	.10592	–.11774	.30821
	Equal variances not assumed			2.077	41.000	.022	.044	.09524	.04584	.00265	.18782

This result is not statistically significant, indicating that the social and emotional learning practices did not affect the DAEP rates of middle school Black Girls. We fail to reject the null hypothesis.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This mixed methods research study investigated school discipline in two Houston area middle schools. The researcher explored Black Girls' perspectives on the social and emotional learning practices used to support their well-being and how those practices affected their discipline rates. Black girls are subjected to harsher discipline standards than girls of other races and are more likely to be suspended or expelled than their counterparts. The adultification of Black Girls contributes to unfair discipline practices, creating learning barriers for girls in school.

Until recently, the school-to-prison pipeline conversation has centered on Black Boys. Black Boys experience the most significant risk of suspensions among middle school students (Morris, 2012). While the livelihood of Black Boys is undoubtedly at stake with these startling discipline statistics, each year, large amounts of philanthropic dollars are funneled into programs to support the well-being of Black Boys in the United States. Equal time, money, and policy adjustments must be dedicated to the problems affecting Black Girls in schools to decrease the discipline infractions that Black Girls experience. This chapter discusses the findings of this study and shares recommendations for future research, practice, and policy.

Conclusions

The quantitative portion of this study aimed to analyze the voices of the Black Girls attending Malcolm Middle School and Sampson Middle School. The data yielded significant findings on the emotional well-being of Black middle school girls. Ultimately,

the girls shared their experiences with the social and emotional learning practices facilitated on their campus.

There was a noticeable difference in responses between the girls at the two campuses regarding relationship building. The participants from Malcolm Middle School all believed that their teachers had made a concerted effort to build a relationship with them, while all but one of the participants from Sampson Middle School shared a negative outlook on one or more of their teachers in this area.

In the area of responsible decision-making, the participants, almost across the board, understood that they should try not to engage in a conflict or to seek help from an adult should a conflict or problem arise. The participants understood that walking away from a situation was the best way to keep themself out of trouble and to ensure no loss of privileges. All participants understood the decision-making process and spoke to thinking through a decision before making a choice and understanding how their choices could affect themselves and others.

In response to the question on needing a break, all of the girls from Malcolm Middle School understood that they could go to their counselor or social worker, with one describing a calming corner where she sometimes goes and works inside the counselor's office. While the participants from Sampson Middle School all shared that there is a space where they could take a break if needed, many of the girls' first response was the hallway or the bathroom. They then mentioned a trusted adult, and those adults varied from girl to girl.

Regarding having a trusted adult on campus, all of the girls from both campuses, except one, shared that they trust at least one adult on campus. For many participants, this

person was either the counselor, social worker, or administrator on the campus. When asked if they had to make an appointment to see the counselor, the participants said they did not.

When discussing preparing for the future, many girls at both campuses noted that they have participated in classes or projects to help them plan for the future. However, some girls could only share the athletic activities they participated in as preparation for their futures.

In the area of emotional safety, most of the girls from both campuses stated that they only feel safe occasionally, with three participants sharing that they rarely feel emotionally safe.

When engaging with individuals different from them, most girls expressed not having any specific feelings, including sometimes, "you cannot even notice other people's differences." A few of the girls did convey a sense of awkwardness when around individuals with differences, sharing that it takes them some time to open up or that it might be awkward if no one is talking.

When presented with an opportunity to share anything else related to their social and emotional well-being and their school, some of the participants from Sampson Middle School believed that their campus should make staffing changes due to the teachers not caring about their needs and or stereotyping them based upon their race or past behavior. One participant from Malcolm Middle School expressed that they need more counselors to support the campus as the social worker spends most of their time working on other tasks for the campus.

The quantitative analysis addressed all three research questions presented. Research question 1 asked: Are there any differences between middle schools that utilize social and emotional learning practices and middle schools that do not use social and emotional learning practices on in-school suspension rates among Black Girls? The data presented showed a more significant occurrence of in-school suspension assignments at Sampson Middle School, a campus that does not engage in social and emotional learning practices. Zero Black Girls at Malcolm Middle School were assigned in-school suspension as a discipline sanction during this school year. As a result, the data suggests a relationship between the use of social and emotional learning practices on the in-school suspension rates of Black middle school girls.

Research Question 2 asked: Are there any differences between middle schools that utilize social and emotional learning practices and middle schools that do not use social and emotional learning practices on out-of-school suspension rates among Black Girls? While both campuses assigned out-of-school suspension to Black Girls as a disciplinary practice, administrators at Sampson Middle School were almost three times more likely to give this punishment than administrators at Malcom Middle School. As a result, the data suggests a relationship between the use of social and emotional learning practices on the out-of-school-suspension rates of Black middle school girls.

Finally, Research Question 3 asked: Are there any differences between middle schools that utilize social and emotional learning practices and middle schools that do not use social and emotional learning practices on DAEP rates among Black Girls? While the outcome was not statistically significant, Sampson Middle School referred 5 Black Girls to the DAEP, while Malcolm Middle School referred zero.

Interpretation

Ultimately, the girls feel that their social and emotional needs are being fostered on both campuses, while there are noticeable differences in structure from one campus to the other. At Malcolm Middle School, it was evident from speaking with the girls that the personnel on the campus are making a concerted effort to support their social and emotional needs. While many of the staff at Sampson are also making a valiant effort to support the girls, it was evident that these efforts are being made independently and not due to specific training or resources from the campus or the district. This shows up in the suspension data, where the girls on this campus are more likely to be subjected to in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and DAEP referrals than those at Malcolm Middle School. Although it is incredible that these educators are making an effort to build relationships with the girls they serve while also being a trusted adult they can turn to in a time of need; there should be an effort made to ensure that all staff have the training and resources to best support the social and emotional well-being of not just the Black Girls on the campus but the entire diverse student body.

Implications for Future Research

This particular subject can be further investigated in several different directions. However, the following topics are most unique to this study because either they could not be fully addressed due to the study's nature and design or they came up during the data collection and analysis process but could not be fully explored in this study.

As research in social and emotional learning continues to grow, future research must focus on how specific programs impact certain demographics of students; as with academic content, social and emotional learning should be culturally responsive to the

population of students being served. The findings in this study demonstrate how general social and emotional learning practices impact the discipline rate of Black middle school girls. Future research should focus on how social and emotional learning programs created explicitly for Black Girls support their mental well-being. This research could explore how these programs impact discipline and Black Girls' perceptions after participating in these programs. Additionally, this research could impact the field of Black Girlhood by allowing girls to share how their campus practices affect their well-being.

While this study only explored the effect of social and emotional learning on middle school girls in grades six to eight, future research could explore the connection between social and emotional learning and discipline for elementary and high school-aged girls. It is crucial to research Black Girls from various backgrounds who attend school in different educational spaces because Black Girls are not a monolith and have various experiences. This work could potentially improve educational opportunities and outcomes for Black Girls.

Education Practices

The future success of the Black Girls in this study and beyond depends on schools providing culturally responsive instruction. Social and emotional programming should be utilized to foster inclusive learning environments and teach scholars the tools needed to become well-rounded adults. Often, student misbehavior or acting out is a means of receiving attention. Social and emotional learning practices can teach students to be effective communicators.

Schools should establish student well-being teams consisting of key school stakeholders. These teams should focus on coordinating the implementation and growth of culturally responsive and emotionally safe learning environments. Student well-being teams should include teachers, counselors, administrators, and community members with access to resources that support the needs of all students on the campus. These teams should work to make the physical environment of classrooms and the campus welcoming for Black Girls and all students.

Schools should foster leadership skills in Black Girls. Targeted programming and interventions should be developed that teach girls skills they will need to thrive, including healthy communication, conflict resolution, and problem-solving skills. When funding is available, it should be used to provide extracurricular activities tailored to Black Girls so they can go on field trips, hear from guest speakers, and have mentorship opportunities.

Campuses should create safe spaces within the building for students to take a break when needed. Students should not have to find refuge in a hallway or bathroom when they need a place to gather their emotions. Classroom check-ins should be implemented campus-wide for students to connect with other classmates and their teachers.

Campus Administration Practices

Campus administrators play one of the most significant roles in school discipline. Campus leaders must understand the demographics of their school community. Administrators should fully understand occurrences of misbehavior before assigning a disciplinary outcome that removes scholars from the building. Leaders should investigate alternative forms of school discipline, including restorative practices that can solve

student discipline issues without excluding students from the campus culture. Campus leaders should analyze discipline data frequently by student populations to understand the trends and create a plan of action to support those populations best. Campus-based discipline policies and practices should be reviewed frequently to ensure they are fair and equitable to all student populations. Student handbooks, including dress code policies, should be written with all students' best interests represented.

Administrators should develop positive relationships with their teachers, parents, and students when prioritizing the mental well-being of all campus stakeholders and students. These relationships will be imperative when crucial conversations involving student misbehavior and mental wellness need to occur. Administrators should also take advantage of district and community resources to form partnerships for counseling and mentorship.

Campus leadership should diversify staffing to ensure all students see themselves in their teachers. Hiring practices should be reviewed yearly to ensure the staff share experiences similar to those of the student population. Administrators should make efforts to make sure Black Girls are seen and heard so that they are empowered to advocate for themselves now and in the future.

Teacher Training

In the quantitative section of this research, multiple participants from Sampson Middle School noted a need for staffing changes to the campus. While staffing is often an issue for many schools across the United States due to teacher shortages, the problems the participants noted may have more to do with adequate teacher training. The participants felt their teachers needed to be trained to provide them with the needed

support. To best support the whole child, teachers must receive training to best support the students they serve. To best support Black Girls, teachers must first critically examine their assumptions about what it means to be a good girl and/or what it means to act in a respectable, ladylike manner in a school environment.

District-wide, one-size-fits-all professional development often does not meet diverse student needs. School districts and campuses must seek professional development workshops geared toward the specific student population they serve.

In social and emotional learning educators should have training on the five competencies to lead SEL efforts in their classrooms. Developing positive relationships with the students in their classrooms will allow teachers to support them better when behavioral issues arise. When teachers create a classroom environment that prioritizes the emotional safety of all students, they can better understand why misbehavior may occur and administer appropriate discipline. Teachers should have relationships with administrators and counselors to collaborate to ensure the correct resources are provided to students and families. Educators should receive de-escalation training to understand appropriate intervention and communication methods to de-escalate situations.

Educators should make a concerted effort to establish positive relationships with parents before misbehavior occurs. These relationships will allow teachers to collaborate with parents to support scholars' needs. Educators and parents should work together to decide on appropriate remedies for student misbehavior, including counseling services and support. Teachers should model self-regulation, respect, and inclusiveness for their students. Most importantly, teachers should be taught how to talk to students and find out what they need to feel safe and supported.

Counseling Services

In addition to using exclusionary punishment methods for serious misconduct, having the required staff on campus is crucial to guarantee that all student needs are met—specifically, the need for trained and certified counselors on campus to support students. Often, middle school campuses have one administrator per grade level with only one or two counselors for the entire campus. If a campus is attempting to prioritize the needs of students, then the number of counselors on the campus must increase based on the number of students. The qualitative portion of this study found that the girls on the campus that prioritized the social and emotional well-being of the students had a counselor and social worker available as needed. While all of the participants noted that the counselor or social worker's office was a safe place for them to take a break on campus, it was shared that the campus should have more than one counselor as the counselor and social worker are often busy supporting students or working on other tasks for the campus. With this being said, it is also crucial that the mental health professionals on the campus are not tasked with duties outside the realm of student well-being, including student activities or being the campus testing coordinator. When counselors have many administrative duties on the campus, student needs are often overlooked.

School counselors also have wrap-around resources that can support the campus community's needs. As a part of the student well-being team, counselors can work collaboratively with educators and administrators to ensure students are heard and supported during their times of need. Counselors should be advocates for the needs of students when necessary. Scholars should be able to share programming ideas that will best support them with the counselor. When students return to campus following a

disciplinary removal, counselors should be available to ensure the scholar's smooth transition back to the campus.

Girls should have the opportunity to express their problems and ask for assistance and tools to help them process their feelings in counseling groups or individual sessions. Counselors should create a safe space to explicitly meet the needs of the girls they serve. All-girl counseling groups are a means to empower, motivate, and mentor the girls on campus. Counselors must be aware of the different needs of Black Girls and establish opportunities to meet those needs. Black Girls must have trusted adults they can rely on for help on and off school grounds.

Parental Support

As a part of the student well-being team, parents should create a positive relationship with their child's teacher early in the school year. Parents should keep an open line of communication with teachers to be proactive when misbehavior events occur. Parents should advocate for appropriate punishments for child(ren). When children have higher rates of misbehavior, parents should work with school administrators and counselors to meet student needs for counseling and/or psychotherapy. Parents should schedule check-ins with the campus to understand if changes need to be made regarding support for their scholar.

On campuses with smaller populations of Black Girls, parents should work to find community programs where their girls can meet other Black Girls and learn ways to cultivate positive relationships. Giving their girls the opportunity to participate in these organizations will amplify their voices and develop their confidence so they will be empowered to advocate for themselves now and in the future. While schools should work

to support the emotional well-being of the girls they serve, parents need to give their girls other opportunities to participate in activities that will boost their emotional health and self-esteem.

Alternative Forms of Discipline

Schools should work to create student-centered responses to discipline. Restorative justice practices offer a more positive approach to addressing school-based discipline issues. Relationship, Respect, Responsibility, Repair, and Reintegration are the five principles of restorative justice. Studies show that restorative techniques can improve relationships, student behavior, and school climate. Restorative discipline practices include evidence-based strategies, including restorative or peace circles where students can talk about an incident, the feelings of all parties, and how the issue can be resolved peacefully. Campuses prioritizing restorative discipline practices have seen fewer incidents that would have resulted in suspension. Restorative practices can help create a safe space for Black Girls to be honest and open about their lives and find commonalities with others. These practices can help girls feel empowered and overcome feelings of isolation. They can also help improve girls' connections to teachers, peers, and family.

Education Policy

Policymakers should ensure an equal approach to funding that supports the needs of both men and boys and women and girls. Policies funneling girls into the juvenile justice system should be reviewed and revised to include counseling and intervention services that could reduce the number of girls referred to law enforcement. Educational policy should utilize precise terminology to reduce the misuse of exclusionary

disciplinary measures toward particular student demographics. Exclusionary punishments for misbehaviors ought to be determined objectively as opposed to subjectively.

Policymakers should mandate intervention practices, including restorative justice practices, parent phone calls/meetings, and mediation meetings before girls can be removed from school for subjective offenses. When suspension from school is necessary, administrators should implement mandatory protocols to ensure students can complete missed assignments and tests to reduce their loss of learning while out of school. Legislators should create funding streams to cover the costs associated with restorative justice programs and other interventions that work to reduce exclusionary discipline practices on campuses.

Final Thoughts

The premise of this study was to understand the scope of social and emotional learning practices on the discipline rates of Black middle school girls. Black Girls in this study were considered more than a subject but as the voice. This research is a step in finding ways that stakeholders can work together to solve issues Black Girls are plagued with daily in schools. In summary, more is required from educators, administrators, parents, and lawmakers to guarantee that Black Girls can access equitable schooling. Black Girls deserve the necessary support to thrive because of the conditions in their schools, not in spite of them.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

TSU TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
Office of Research

April 5, 2022

Good day, Kristi Morale!

This is to inform you that your protocol #**ES072**, *"Black Girls Deserve to Be Girls: A Comparison of School-Based Socio-Emotional Practices on The Impact of Discipline Rates of African American Middle School Girls"*, is exempt from Texas Southern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) full committee review. Based on the information provided in the research summary and other information submitted, your research procedures meet the exemption category set forth by the federal regulation 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2):

> *Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording)*

The Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) number assigned to Texas Southern University is FWA00003570.

If you have questions, you may contact the Research Compliance Administrator for the Office of Research at 713-313-4301.

PLEASE NOTE: (1) All subjects must receive a copy of the informed consent document, if applicable. If you are using a consent document that requires participants' signatures, signed copies can be retained for a minimum of 3 years of 5 years for external supported projects. Signed consents from student projects will be retained by the faculty advisor. Faculty is responsible for retaining signed consents for their own projects, however, if the faculty leaves the university, access must be made available to TSU CPHS in the event of an agency audit. (2) Documents submitted to the Office of Research indicate that information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subject; and the identities of the subjects will not be obtained or published; and any disclosures of the human subjects' responses outside the research will not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation. The exempt status is based on this information. If any part of this understanding is incorrect, the PI is obligated to submit the protocol for review by the CPHS before beginning the respective research project. (3) Research investigators will promptly report to the CPHS any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects and others.

This protocol will expire April 5, 2025

Sincerely,

Marion S. Smith

Marion Smith, PhD, Chair
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

	Question	CASEL Competency
1.	How have your teachers and other school personnel attempted to build a relationship with you?	Relationship Skills
2.	What strategies have you been taught for building relationships with others?	Relationship Skills
3.	What conflict resolution techniques have you been taught this year?	Responsible-Decision Making
4.	What problem-solving strategies have you been encouraged to use this year?	Responsible-Decision Making
5.	Where can you go on campus if you need to take a break?	Self-Awareness
6.	If you need someone to talk to, is there someone on campus that you trust? Yes/No	Self-Management
7.	What activities have you done this year to plan for the future?	Self-Management
8.	How often do you feel emotionally safe at school? Always, Very Frequently, Occasionally, Rarely, Very Rarely, Never	Social-Awareness
9.	How often are you able to identify your emotions? Always, Very Frequently, Occasionally, Rarely, Very Rarely, Never	Self-Awareness
10.	What steps do you take when you have to make a decision?	Responsible Decision Making
11.	How do you feel when you are around people who are different from you?	Social Awareness
12.	When conflict arises between you and another person, what steps do you take to diffuse the situation?	Responsible-Decision Making
13.	Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your social and emotional needs or your school?	All Competencies

APPENDIX C

ASSENT FORM

TSU

TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

"Black Girls Deserve to Be Girls: A Comparison of School-Based Social and Emotional Practices on The Impact of Discipline Rates of African American Middle School Girls"

Assent Form

My name is Kristi Morale. I go to school at Texas Southern University. I am inviting you to participate in a research study about the effects of social emotional learning practices on the discipline rates of Black middle school girls. Your parent(s) know we are talking with you about the study. This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to take part in it.

What am I being asked to do?
If you decide to be in the study, I will ask you to participate in an interview with me where I will ask you questions about how your social and emotional well-being is supported by the educators (teachers, counselors, and administrators) on your campus. This interview will take about 1 hour to complete, and I will record the audio of our conversation. After the interview, I will observe you interacting with some of the educators on your campus including your teachers, counselor, and administrators. I will observe you for about 1 hour and I will take notes on how your social and emotional well-being are supported.

What are the benefits to me for taking part in the study?
Taking part in this study will help me learn how educators can better support the emotional needs of you and other Black Girls in your age group.

Can anything bad happen if I am in this study?
I do not expect anything bad happening to you but if you become tired, let me know and we can take a short break. If you do not know the answer to any of the questions you can let me know and we will move on to the next question.

Who will know that I am in the study?

If you decide to be in the study, I will not tell anyone else how you respond or act as part of the study. Even if your parents or teachers ask, I will not tell them about what you say or do in the study.

Do I have to be in the study?

No, you don't. The choice is yours. No one will get angry or upset if you don't want to do this. And you can change your mind anytime if you decide you don't want to be in the study anymore.

What if I have questions?

If you have questions about the study, you can ask me now or anytime during the study. You can also call me at (337)349-8002 or e-mail me at k.morale3490@student.tsu.edu. You can also call my advisor at Dr. Holim Song at (713) 313-7011 or email him at holim.song@tsu.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can email the Texas Southern University Office of Research at OfficeOfResearch@TSU.EDU or call (713-313-4301). You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Signing below means that you have read this form and that you are willing to be in this study:

Name of the Participant (Write your name on the line):
_____

Signature of the Participant (Put your signature on the line):
_____

Date:_____

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Research Study Title "Black Girls Deserve to Be Girls: A Comparison of School-Based Social and Emotional Practices on The Impact of Discipline Rates of African American Middle School Girls."

Primary Investigator: Kristi Morale, MAT, College of Education, Texas Southern University. k.morale3490@student.tsu.edu

Why is my child being asked to participate in this study?
Your child is eligible to participate in this study if they are a middle school African American girl.

Why is this research being done?
The purpose of this study is to examine the disciplinary outcomes of social and emotional learning practices on the discipline rates of Black Girls in sixth-eighth grades. Through the research outcomes, educators and advocates can have a clearer understanding of the impact of social and emotional learning practices on Black Girls. This realization will encourage campus administration to consider the addition of socio-emotional learning practices on campus as a viable option for improving discipline rates among Black Girls.

What happens if I say, "*Yes, I agree to participate in this research*?"
If you allow your child to participate, he or she will be asked to share in an interview how social emotional practices are used on their campus. She will also be observed during the time that the practices are being utilized. The interviews will be recorded with audio only for transcription purposes.

How long will this research last?
Your child's participation will last for approximately 4 hours.

Is there any way that being in this study could be bad for me?
There are no risks associated with participating in this study beyond those you experience in everyday life.

Will I receive compensation for participating in this study?
You will not receive compensation for participating in the study.

What should I know about this research study?
- Whether or not your child participates in this study is up to you: you can choose for your child not to participate.
- You can agree to participate in this study and then change your mind.
- There are no negative consequences for deciding not to do this study.
- You can contact us and ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Who can I talk to? If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, you can contact the study's PI Kristi Morale at k.morale3490@student.tsu.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you can call the Texas Southern University Office of Research at 713-313-4301, or go to visit the Office of Research on the Texas Southern University website (http://www.tsu.edu).

How many people will be asked to participate in this research?
We plan to enroll 10 middle school African-American girls.

What are the alternatives to being in this study?
The alternative to being in the study is not to participate, or participate in another study.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?
You can leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you.

What happens if I say "Yes", but I change my mind later?
You can decide to end your participation with us at any time and it will not be held against you.

What happens to the information collected for the research?
Research records identifying your child will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available without your permission. However, it is possible that other people and offices responsible for making sure research is done safely and responsibly will see your information. This includes auditing departments of Texas Southern University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy study records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.
To protect confidentiality of the study records and data student names will be changed in the research.

Will there be any costs to me?
Aside from time, there are no costs to you for taking part in the study.

Will photos, video or audio recordings be made of me during the study?
Interviews will be recorded with audio only for transcription purposes.

Will information from this study be kept private?

Information about you will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law. Information about you will be stored on secure servers maintained by Texas Southern University and only accessed by researchers who are managing data. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of scientific report that might be published or presented at academic conferences. Research records will be stored securely and only staff associated with this project will have access to them.

Consent to Participate

By signing this document, you are agreeing to allow your child to participate in this study. Make sure you understand what the study involves before you sign. If you have any questions about the study after you agree to your child's participation, you can contact the research team using the information provided above.

I agree to allow my child to take part in this study.

Name of the Participant: _____

Name of the Parent: _____

Signature of the Parent: _____

Date:_____

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